

THE FALSE TEACHING OF

PROTESTANT-PURGATORY

A SCRIPTURAL REFUTATION OF THE TEACHINGS OF ZANE HODGES, JOSEPH DILLOW
AND THE GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY,

*WITH RESPECT TO THE FUTURE INHERITANCE, GLORY, AND DESTINY OF THE CHURCH –
CHRIST'S BELOVED BODY & BRIDE*

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Dear brother Wilkin:

Greetings! My apologies for the long lapse of time in getting a response off to you. So, without further delay (and without taking up more space than I already have!)...

The following is a “Revised and Expanded Edition” of my earlier compilation of some passages of Scripture bearing on particular aspects of the nature, reign, inheritance, heavenly glory, and infinite blessings of Christ's beloved Body & Bride (comprised *exclusively* of *all* believers saved from Pentecost to Pre-Trib Rapture) in and with her Head, Life & Bridegroom – all by the infinite riches of His *grace*, unleashed by His infinitely precious, once-for-all shed blood.

This reworked compilation now has the added benefit [?] of being accompanied by some observations, remarks and questions, as well as liberally-interspersed commentary by a few “guest speakers” (who are not cited as sources of authority, but simply as more eloquent expounders of the truth they conveyed *in that which is quoted*).

I have necessarily confined myself to the NT books of John-Revelation, as there alone (particularly in the Epistles of Paul) will the nature, purpose, and destiny of the Church be found – not in the earthly, law, kingdom-centered Synoptic Gospels (precious and indispensable though they be).

Let me say that when it comes to my view of the (Pre-Tribulational) Rapture, it is governed and determined by my understanding of the *Soteriology* and *Ecclesiology* of the present intercalary age; which thus allows *all* (through normal, plain, literal interpretation) to be kept in its proper, perfect, scriptural perspective and harmony – without contradicting or slighting any of its constituent parts.

Likewise, it will become quite evident as we proceed that my view of such things as the *Bema-Seat of Christ*, and other related matters, is also governed and determined by my understanding of the *Soteriology* and *Ecclesiology* of the present intercalary age; which thus, again, allows *all* (through normal, plain, literal interpretation) to be kept in its proper, perfect, scriptural perspective and harmony – without contradicting or slighting any of its constituent parts.

In contrast, it seems to me, your views on the *Soteriology* and *Ecclesiology* of the present age are rather governed and determined by your (mis)understanding of such things as the *Bema-Seat of Christ*, and other related matters; which thus does not allow *all* to be kept in its proper, perfect, scriptural perspective and harmony – resulting in many of its constituent parts being contradicted, slighted, and misunderstood. The content and format of my response is thus, at least in part, intended (if not completely well designed) to make that apparent.

Let it be observed, too, in passing, that absolutely none of the passages in the Synoptic Gospels which speak, e.g., of “outer darkness” and “weeping and gnashing teeth” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28) are believed to be capable of application to any believers in general, let alone to any members of Christ's Body & Bride in particular.

Please note that the subdivisions below are not absolute; there is a good deal of overlapping, and necessarily so, as the truths taken up under each section are inextricably interrelated, due to the very nature and destiny of the Church. This too will become quite evident as we proceed.

There is much here [understatement!] to digest, dear brother; so please do take your time as you chew it over and weigh its substance.

If there are any areas that you feel have not been addressed, either adequately or at all (including points from your previous correspondence), please let me know.

May the Lord use that which is true herein to His glory and for your blessing.

Yours in Him Who is our Acceptance, Life & Hope,
James M Ventilato

Particular aspects of the nature, reign, inheritance, heavenly glory, and infinite blessing of Christ's beloved Body & Bride (comprised *exclusively* of all believers saved from Pentecost to Pre-Trib Rapture) in and with her Head, Life & Bridegroom:

I. Re Principally *the Union and Organic Oneness* of Believers with the Risen & Ascended Christ; the *Nature* of the Church as the *Heavenly Body & Bride* of Christ:

(1) “In that day [of Pentecost, after His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and descent of the Holy Spirit] ye shall know that I [am] in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:20)

(2) “And I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me, that they may be one as We.” (John 17:11)

(3) “And I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on Me through their word; that they may be all one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them, that they may be one, as We are one; I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one [at the Rapture] and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me. Father, as to those whom Thou hast given Me, I desire that where I am they also may be with Me [consequent upon the Rapture], that they may behold My glory [not “outer darkness”!] which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:20-24)

Identification. We are one with Him, and all His saints are one. The Church is His body, an organism and not an organization. He did not pray for a unity in organization, but for a spiritual unity, which exists. ‘That they also may be one in Us’ is not an unanswered petition. The Spirit Who has come unites believers to Him and baptizes them into one body. ‘I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me’ – this looks on towards the blessed consummation, when the saints will appear with Christ in glory; then the world will know....

Glorification. ‘And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one as We are one’ – ‘Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovest Me before the foundation of the world.’ This is His unanswered prayer. Some day it will be answered and all His saints will be with Him and share His glory. And oh! the wealth of grace and truth in His wonderful words we must pass by! May His own Spirit lead us deeper and fill our hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.855, 856)

“And what adequately could account for men thus called out of the earth and glorified on high? Sovereign grace had given them that heavenly portion as the fruit of His mission Who at all cost to Himself had glorified God on the earth. And now [at the establishment of His kingdom on earth] they share His glory above, and are so displayed before the wondering world. The salvation-bearing grace, which had appeared to all and had done its suited and appointed work in redeeming and purifying these to God as a people of possession, will then have given place to the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; but this through the church reigning over the earth, at any rate as the ordinary or normal method of its manifestation during the kingdom. As we by faith saw the Father in the Son to eternal life, they in that day will behold and learn them in the church, the glorious vessel of the light of Christ in Whom God's glory shines.... It is thenceforward the glory of God that is established before all eyes, so that men ‘know’ it in and by the glorified saints, instead of being objects of testimony that they might ‘believe.’” – William Kelly (*An Exposition of the Gospel of John*, p.368, 369)

“It is clear that the glory [referred to in John 17:22] is not actually ours till He comes again, and that there can be no perfecting for us into one [17:23] till then. But it is now for the world to ‘believe,’ as in v. 21. When the glory is revealed, and not before, the world shall ‘know’; because it is a fact before their eyes and impossible to deny; and such is the distinction of vs. 22, 23 from what had been already presented by our Lord. The oneness ‘perfected’ will be in the day of glory (as the oneness in v. 21 is during the day of grace in order to act on faith now), and will only be matter of fact when the Lord appears and we with Him in the same glory (Col. 3:4; 2

Thess. 1:13).” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, p. 176, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

(4) “There is no Jew nor Greek; there is no bondman nor freeman; there is no male and female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28)

(5) “For He is our peace, Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of enclosure, having annulled the enmity in his flesh, the law of commandments in ordinances, that He might form the two in Himself into one new man, making peace; and might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross, having by it slain the enmity.” (Eph. 2:14-16)

(6) “And He is before all, and all things subsist together by Him. And He is the head of the body, the assembly; Who is the beginning [of an entirely new creation, a new order of existence as] firstborn from among the dead, that He might have the first place in all things.” (Col. 1:17,18)

(7) “Thus we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of the other.” (Rom. 12:5)

(8) “For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.” (1 Cor. 12:12) [**“So also is the Christ” expresses the absolute identity and oneness of the Lord Jesus and the members of His Body. We might have expected it to read, “so also is the Body of Christ;” but the inspired Word says, “so also is the Christ”! Cross-reference (cf.) Gen. 5:2, where Adam and his wife Eve are jointly called “Adam”.**]

(9) “There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in us all.” (Eph. 4:4-6)

Where is there thus any room for the incredible assertion that “the Body of Christ [is to be] divided [!] into those who rule and those who do not rule with Christ,” seeing that there is only one Body (the unity of which is compared by our Saviour to the oneness of the Godhead!), with only one future destiny (hope)? Does not such a notion entail the recognition of the equal and obvious absurdity that the glorified Body in the perfect, eternal state (via the Pre-Trib Rapture) will thus be rent, dismembered, have its organic oneness completely destroyed, by virtue of some its members being located in vastly different places (Wedding Banquet vs. Outer Darkness), and engaged in vastly different activities (feasting, rejoicing, reigning with Christ, beholding and basking in His glory, vs. weeping and gnashing of teeth, suffering, not reigning with their Beloved, not beholding His glory)? If my own physical body were divided or dismembered in a similar fashion, could it any longer be considered one organic entity?

Christ’s glorified Body & Bride – the heavenly Eve of the 2nd Man, the Man out of heaven, the Last Adam – can no more be mutilated and divided up into separate members who co-reign with their heavenly Husband and other members who do not, while at the same time still being reckoned as one glorified Body & Bride, any more than could Adam’s bride – the earthly Eve of the 1st man, the man out of earth. Would there still have been one earthly Eve fit to co-rule with her husband, the 1st man Adam, had she been dismembered?

“This body is one with Him in life, in position and in glory. This body is the new creation, completely identified with Him, who is the Head, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all (Eph. 1:23)” – Arno C. Gaebelain (*Gaebelain’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1026)

“Here [in Rom. 12:4, 5] is Paul’s first mention of this great doctrine of the Body of Christ, a doctrine which he alone, among the apostles, sets forth, he being the one chosen ‘minister of the Church’ (Col. 1.24, 25), – as to its real, heavenly, corporate *character*. [As with the human body] Even so with us in Christ: (1) We are many [members], but (2) we are one Body in Christ. ‘Body’ is not here an illustration, but an actuality. ‘He that loveth his own wife, loveth himself, ... even as Christ also the Church; because we are members of His Body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard to Christ and of the Church’ (Eph. 5.28-32): ‘The Church which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all’ (Eph. 1.22, 23). This union is so absolute that Paul writes: ‘As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; SO ALSO

IS CHRIST (I Cor. 12.12)... the One Body of Christ [is that] of which Christ Risen in glory is the Head and they, the living, Spirit-indwelt members, are the fulness.... (3) We are individually ‘members one of another.’ Compare I Corinthians 12.27... Being members of the Body of Christ, we necessarily are members of one another; as my right hand, being a member of my body, is a member of my left hand. Mark that Paul makes this ‘membership one of another,’ an additional (though necessary) truth to the fact of the one Body in Christ.... We are members of the heavenly Head, Christ, and therefore members one of another by an operation of the Spirit of God, not by action of man.... For the great fact that we are *one*, actually *members* of other believers, is made by the Spirit of God the basis of our love toward one another! As Paul says in Ephesians 4.25: ‘Putting away falsehood, *talk truth* each one with his neighbor; for we are *members* one of another.’ Your right hand has never yet had a fight with the left: on the contrary, each constantly helps the other! And, as to suffering, ‘Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.’” – William R. Newell (*Romans Verse by Verse*, p.459-461)

(10) “And if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be glorified, all the members rejoice with it.” (1 Cor. 14:26)

Is not the **indivisibility, unity, and universality of experience** of the one Body & Bride of Christ implicit in this divine principle? If my own physical body were divided, would not *all* of the members of the dismembered body be suffering?

“...the effect is real throughout the church. It is a body – the body of Christ – and as a whole it feels in joy or sorrow: else it were not a real organic unity.” – William Kelly (*Notes on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p.214)

Is it possible that, upon entering into the glorified, perfect, eternal state, the one glorified Body & Bride of the Lord Jesus will still be in a condition of being reckoned as “suffering” – since, supposedly, many unpersevering members of His Body will be “cast into outer darkness,” “weeping and gnashing their teeth”? Or, is it possible that, upon entering into the glorified, perfect, eternal state, the one glorified Body & Bride of the Lord Jesus will be reckoned as “rejoicing” while some of its members are “cast into outer darkness,” “weeping and gnashing their teeth”?

(11) “And [God the Father] has put all things under His [the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ’s] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph. 1:22, 23)

(12) “Are ye ignorant, brethren, (for I speak to those knowing law,) that law rules over a man as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband so long as he is alive; but if the husband should die, she is clear from the law of the husband: so then, the husband being alive, she shall be called an adulteress if she be to another man; but if the husband should die, she is free from the law, so as not to be an adulteress, though she be [joined] to another man. So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ, to be [joined] to Another [of a different kind], Who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.” (Romans 7:1-4)

(13) “For I am jealous as to you with a jealousy of God; for I have betrothed you unto one Husband to present a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:2)

(14) “Wives, [submit yourselves] to your own husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the assembly. He is Saviour of the body. But even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ, so also wives to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered Himself up for it, in order that He might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present the assembly [His Bride] to Himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless. So ought men also to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ the assembly: for we are members of His body; we are of His flesh, and of His bones [the heavenly Eve of the 2nd Man, the Man out of heaven, the Last Adam]. Because of

this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly.” (Eph. 5:22-32)

“A mystery is something that was not revealed of old, and which could not be known otherwise... The mystery means that which was kept secret, not that which could not be understood, which is a human notion of mystery; but an unrevealed secret, – a secret not yet divulged in the Old Testament but brought out fully in the New. What, then, is this mystery? It is, first, that Christ, instead of taking the kingdom, predicted by the prophets, should completely disappear from the scene of this world, and that God should set Him up in heaven at His own right hand as the Head of all glory, heavenly and earthly, and that He should give the whole universe into the hands of Christ to administer the kingdom and maintain the glory of God the Father in it. This is the first and most essential part of the mystery, the second, or Church's part, being but the consequence of it. Christ's universal headship is not the theme spoken of in the Old Testament. You have Him as Son of David, Son of man, Son of God, the King; but nowhere is the whole universe of God (but rather the kingdom under the whole heavens) put under Him. In this headship over all things, Christ will share all with His bride. Christ will have His Church the partner of His own unlimited dominion, when that day of glory dawns upon the world.

“Hence, then, as we know, the mystery consists of two great parts, which we have summed up in Ephesians v. 32; ‘This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.’ Thus the mystery means neither Christ nor the Church alone, but Christ and the Church united in heavenly blessedness and dominion over everything that God has made. Hence, as we saw from chapter i., when He was raised from the dead, God set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, ‘and put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church.’ It is not said, ‘over the church,’ which would overthrow, not teach, the mystery. He will be over Israel and over the Gentiles, but nowhere is He said to reign over the Church. The Church is His body... [which] conveys an intense degree of intimacy, full of the richest comfort and the most exalted hope. The saints who are now being called are to share all things along with Christ in that day of glory. Hence it becomes of the greatest interest to know what the nature of the Church is.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p.114, 115)

“God has given Him, in fact, to be Head over all things to the assembly which is His body, – Head over all things, which is that inheritance itself of which Paul has been speaking. He is Head in the full power of such a place to the assembly. All that is implied by the place He has, implies the blessing which is to be to the Church, united as it is to Him now in the nearest way that could be attained – His body; the apostle does not hesitate to add ‘the fulness of Him who filleth all in all.’ What things to bring together! Here is One who is possessor of divine fulness; no other could fill all in all, and yet the body is His fulness. He is not complete without it. In God's thought and purpose, Christ would be incomplete if His body had not its place too; how near and wonderful a place, – ‘His body,’ filled with His love, energized with His mind, working out His thoughts as our bodies work out the thoughts and purposes of our minds! It is in resurrection, of course, that He becomes this Head... Thus, the Church could have no existence until after He had risen from the dead. Search throughout the Old Testament, you will find nowhere the first hint, even, of any company of people as the body of Christ. You will find saints put under Him for blessing, you will find His rule over man, but such a relationship is to be found nowhere, such a relationship could not, in fact, exist until Christ as Man had risen from the dead and become, therefore, the fitting [heavenly] Head for such a [heavenly] body. Then the body itself must be brought into being, and thus the descent of the Spirit follows the ascent of Christ to the throne of God.” – F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*, Vol. VI, Acts to 2 Corinthians, p.329)

“But Ephesians i. points us not merely to the heavenly glory, but to the union under Christ of the heavenlies and the earthlies – of all things both which are in the heavens and which are on the earth. It is not that all are to be reduced to the same level, but that all must be gathered in one united system, as having one head over all, even Christ. But the church is not included in any of these things. We are not confounded with either; on the contrary, we are spoken of as those who have obtained an inheritance in Christ over all. The church is not to be a glorious people only, over which Christ is to reign. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ – not merely heirs under Christ, but with Him – according to the blessed type given at the very beginning of man's history, where, while Adam had the glory of being head over this lower world, his wife shares the dominion in virtue of her union with him. The church is the spiritual Eve of the Lord Jesus, the bride of the last Adam. This may somewhat explain the force of the words in Ephesians i. 10, 23, and it shews us the importance of the day we are looking at

in Revelation xx. For ‘the thousand years’ answer to this very period, when the administration will be in the hands of the Lord Jesus, the exalted and manifested Head over all things, and the church will share all along with Him.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Book of the Revelation*, p.433)

“...He is the head of the Church, which consequently shares His place of exaltation over all things heavenly and earthly, as being the bride of the true and last Adam. ‘He has made Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.’ Christ fills all in all; but the Church is that which fills up the mystic, glorified man, just as Eve was necessary to the completeness of God’s thoughts as to the first Adam. The Church is the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on Philipians and Colossians*, p.41)

“Le me look at Christ, and I see there the very life that God has given me, and the hope of it too, even as to the inheritance. Who would dare to say, it is presumption for Christ to have it? Nay, but it is what is due to Him. God loves and delights in Him as man so well, that He could not keep back a single thing that He has made from Him. He is the heir of it all; and we, hidden in Christ, can enter into the fulness of His calling, and into the inheritance, because we merge into union with Christ. And as you can only know the calling and the inheritance in the full knowledge of Christ, so it is also with ‘the exceeding greatness of his power’ [1:19].... Nothing less than to be one with Christ is what we have here. Therefore it is added, that this blessed One, under whose feet God has put everything, has been also given to be head over all things to the Church. It is not said, ‘head over the church,’ but ‘head over all things to the church.’ (Ver. 22.) The Church shares His place of headship over all; but as His body, in inseparable union with Him. The glorified Man has universal exaltation over all the creatures of God; and this He shares with us, and will soon manifest as our portion with Him. The Christian is now a member of Christ’s body – now, therefore, by the Holy Ghost, in the most intimate association with Christ, not only as having life in Him, but as enjoying oneness with Him who is the supreme exalted Head over all. He is a member of His body; and although it was not to Eve directly that God gave the dominion, yet did she share it by His will. It was given to Adam, but by association Eve had it along with Adam. So the Church has it as the dependent and associated Eve of the heavenly Man, the last Adam. This gives us at once a bright view of what our calling is, and why God looks for complete separation from the world. In the time of the Protector in this country, it would have been improper for any one that held to the royal family to seek or even accept a post of honour. So with the Christian now. We belong to One who is hidden away from the earth – exalted now into this universal headship. The world that we see is not yet put under Christ practically, though to faith all things are; but we know that He is exalted, ‘head over all things to the church.’ We belong to Him, and He would have our hearts lifted up above all the present scene. The Church is ‘His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.’ (Ver. 23.) It is the complement, or that which fills up Christ, looked at as man risen from the dead. As Son of God He, of course, requires nothing to complete His glory; but as man He does. He would no more be complete in His resurrection-glory without the Church, than Adam would have been without Eve. And God has, in the counsels of His glory, so ordered it. He meant, from all eternity, that when His Son became this blessed, glorified man, He should share for His own honour and praise all the glory He had as the risen man with those who were by nature poor, dead sinners, but now delivered from their sins, and made one with Christ on high. By the Spirit now given He communicates the knowledge of it to them while in the world, that they may be in spirit and ways entirely above the world.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p.58-60)

“To say...that ‘some of the Church will not be accounted worthy of [inheriting] the kingdom at the judgment-seat of Christ,’ is to assert the strange doctrine without one word of proof. The exhortation to walk worthily is valid; the deduction of harsh dealing with failing saints is a fable. The idea that the question of reigning is decided at the judgment-seat is inconsistent with the likeness to Christ consummated at His coming to present the church glorious to Himself (not part but the whole), and then bringing us into the Father’s house, [such an idea] is a monstrous one.” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, p. 177, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

Any room left here for non-persevering, unworthy members of His glorious Body & Bride to be dis-jointed heirs, rather than joint-heirs of Christ, to be dismembered and cast into outer darkness, with weeping & gnashing of teeth?

By the Church's very nature, as Christ's heavenly Body & Bride in eternal union with Him, she is necessarily a joint-heir of, and Queen with, her Husband – all by pure, sovereign and infinite grace! on the ground of His infinitely precious blood and her position in Him Who is her very Life as risen, ascended, and glorified at the right hand of God.

(15) “Let us rejoice and exult, and give Him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.” (Rev. 19:7, 8)

“The marriage of the Lamb is about to be consummated....The harlot, which claimed to be the bride, being judged, the true bride of Christ is seen in glory. And it is the marriage of the Lamb. His joy is now filled full for He receives her, who is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. The second Man, the last Adam, is joined to her who is to rule and reign with Him.... the scene is a heavenly one. This marriage does not take place on earth.... this marriage is in glory.... The bride of Christ to become the Lamb's wife is the Church of the New Testament. All who accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord since the day of Pentecost constitute the bride of Christ. The Church began on Pentecost and her completion will be the translation to glory (I Thess. 4:17). She is both the body of Christ and the bride of Christ, as Eve was of the body of Adam and also his bride. The Church is the nearest and the most beloved object of His loving heart. But how has she made herself ready? And what does it mean, ‘And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white for the linen is the righteousness of the saints’? The grace of God has supplied the robe and the precious blood is her title to glory. In this respect she was ready. But the words here refer us to the judgment seat of Christ, that award seat before which we must appear. Then the hidden things are brought to light and the wood and the hay and stubble are burned (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Then ‘every man shall have praise of God’ (I Cor. 4:5) and what grace accomplished in each one and through each will be manifested. And the clean white linen ‘is the righteousness of the saints.’ The word ‘righteousness’ is in the plural. It means more than the righteousness which we are in Christ.... It includes all the blessed results in life and service produced by the Holy Spirit, the practical righteousness of the saints. And yet even these need the washing in that precious blood without which all is unclean and unholy. And so it is grace after all, as indicated by the word ‘given’ [in the phrase ‘given to her’, the Bride, in v.8, and also by the exhortation to give *God* the glory and credit for both the Bride’s preparation and the arrival of the marriage of the Lamb, in v.7].... He himself has made her ready and removed every spot, every wrinkle and every blemish. God grant that we His people may daily meditate on this coming glorious event, the marriage of the Lamb, and walk worthy of [walk in a manner in keeping with having] such a Lord and such a calling.” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1224)

“The wording of verse 7 is unusual and must not be overlooked. In normal parlance the wedding is spoken of as the marriage of the bride, but here it is ‘the marriage of the Lamb.’ And rightly so, for the chief joy is His. It takes place in heaven, and no details are given.... For this glorious occasion the bride of necessity had to make herself ready. The preparation includes: (1) acceptance of the marriage offer of the Lamb, which is regeneration; (2) the desire to be properly clothed for the wedding; (3) a willingness to receive what is given her for the joyous event. When the bride clothes herself, it is with the finest of apparel. Her basic clothing is the garment of salvation, which she received at her acceptance of the Lamb's gracious offer of marriage (cf. Isa 61:10). Now in addition to the initial clothing she has given to her (still all of grace) bright, clean fine linen. It is identified as the righteous acts (Gr is plural, *dikaionomata*) of the saints. How has she obtained these? It is inescapable that the judgment seat of Christ has already been held in order to grant rewards to [all of] the saints for faithful service to Christ (cf. II Cor 5:10). What a recognition day that will be!”

“But another important element of every wedding is the guests, so John is instructed to indicate the blessedness of those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb [Rev. 19:9]. These are the friends of the Bridegroom (cf. Jn 3:29); the guests are seen in another figure as the virgins, the companions of the bride (cf. Ps 45:9, 14). They are probably all Old Testament saints. All others than the church are the guests at the marriage supper. Lest some reader consider these words to be too good to be true, the mediating angel (cf. 1:1) informs the apostle that the words are sure and certain, because they come from God.” – Charles L. Feinberg (*A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, p.135, 136)

“Not only is the harlot's day over, but the consummation of the bride's blessing is come. It is important to observe that this is not the moment when the Lord comes to receive the heavenly church. It is a scene in heaven, not the Lord Jesus meeting His saints in the air. A few verses lower down we do get heaven opened, and Christ comes out of it, and the saints follow Him. Nothing, therefore, can be more simple or certain than the inference that the saints were already there. They must have been in heaven before, in order to follow Christ thence when He comes to judge. Now, I ask, how did they get there? They are not said to be now taken up to the Father's house. We have the old familiar parties in heaven. But we have a new fact: the bride is married in heaven – the one for whom Christ reserves the brightest grace and glory – she gets ready; and now is announced, not merely the song of triumph, because of the judgment of evil, but the marriage of the Lamb. ‘Let us be glad and rejoice.’ ”

“And now I would just ask you to pause before going farther. Is it too much to suppose that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is a different symbol, that is, represents a class of saints different from these blessed ones who are invited to her marriage? Who is it that God means by these two distinct symbols? As to the bride, the Lamb's wife, few would have the least difficulty. Almost every one sees in her the church – the one that is constantly presented in the New Testament scripture as the heavenly bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. One turns to Eph. v., where this relationship is brought out, and the development in her behalf of the fulness of Christ's affections. Observe, by the way, that there it is not merely a question of a future epoch, because the Holy Ghost shews that this is a relationship established now. ‘Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it.’ It is true, from the very first moment when God began to form the church on earth by the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.”

“For I repeat, we are put into this relationship with Christ at the present moment. It is not that we have the hope merely of being made the bride of Christ by and by: we are espoused to Christ now. We shall have the marriage or the actual consummation by and by, when all the members are brought in. But the great and blessed and practical thing for our souls is, that we are brought into this position of union now. It is not only that the affection on which the marriage is grounded is true now; but more than this, the Holy Ghost is on earth uniting the saints to Christ in heaven, and making them as truly one with Him now as they ever will be. When Christ comes, there will be the removal of all hindrances – the putting aside of what Satan employs to make us forget our relationship to Christ, and the change of our vile body according to the body of His glory. But it is important to remember that our oneness with Christ as His body depends on the presence of the Holy Ghost, who has knit us up with Christ in heaven. We are one with Him now.”

“We have all, I suppose, been in the habit of assuming that if a man [in a past or future dispensation] is a saint of God he necessarily belongs to the church, and that there is only one common blessing for all saints of all times. Here you find the contrary laid down plainly, and upon the face of scripture. You have here a marriage supper, and one singled out for especial joy, called the bride, the Lamb's wife (composed, it may be, of myriads of people, but here recognized in unity of blessing, being united under one term, that of ‘the bride,’ to shew that they have the same portion of love and blessedness). But this is not true of all saints [i.e., those of other dispensations], for there are others who are not in this position; they are present as guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb, not as His bride.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Book of the Revelation*, p. 392-395)

“This marriage is the great anticipation of Christ. Paul tells us the story in Ephesians 5 – ‘Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself up for it.’ His love for the Church is immeasurable, unchanging, infinite. It is in the very nature of the case, peculiar love. Christ wept over Jerusalem, for there was, and is, a special tenderness of our God toward those to whom He was the Messiah, and over whom He will be King on David's throne. He had ‘compassion on the multitude’ as He does today. He gave Himself a ransom for all. But His love for His Bride, the Church, is, as it must be, and that, eternally, a peculiar, particular, husband's affection, and that without measure!... In an earthly wedding, especially a wedding of the favorite one of the house, how all the relatives and also the servants of the household are stirred! Now Jehovah God appointed and directed the first wedding, in Genesis 2, and our Lord's first miracle at Cana of Galilee celebrated with ‘the best wine’ another wedding. But Ephesians 5:25, 31 and 32 proclaims that every marriage sets forth anew the relationship of Christ and the Church! It is, therefore, the height of holy joy to every heavenly being, this marriage of the Lamb!”

“The bliss of the marriage of the Lamb is without limit. It is the PERSONAL DELIGHT of Him who created all things! No other love has the person-toward-person character of marital love. Parents love their children because they are their children. Brothers and sisters alike have a love of natural relationship. Friendships are based on

common interests. But the love of bridegroom and bride is a delight each in the person of the other. This is why marital love is so often so wholly unexplainable! We say, ‘What did he see in her?’ or, ‘Why did she choose him?’ There is no answer but one – love. This love of Christ’s for His Bride is the love that is ‘strong as death . . . a very flame of Jah,’ that ‘many waters cannot quench,’ of the Song of Songs (8:6, 7 – margin). Let us dwell upon the words, ‘Christ also loved the church and GAVE HIMSELF up for it.’ He values His Bride as Himself. And upon her, He lavishes His personal affection, without limit, constantly, and for evermore! For we read in Revelation 21, after the thousand years have passed, that she is still ‘as a wife adorned for her husband.’ Here then is a marital love, a tenderness, an appreciation, and a delight, *that will grow for ever and for ever*. Oh, wonder of wonders, that such a record can be written! *Christ will never change* in His affections! What must the ages hold for the wife of the lamb! And the love of that Bride, the wife of the Lamb, will correspond to that of her husband – *unceasing, increasing, for ever and for ever!* Have you known a husband and wife whose love deepened as the years went by, whose satisfaction with each other was such as to keep them together constantly, of their own *mutual will*; whom neither ‘society’ nor ‘business,’ nor outside pleasures could separate? Let such a happy marital existence be *a whisper to you of what Christ and the Church will enjoy more and yet more for evermore!*”

“We read, ‘It was *given* unto her.’ The preparation for this marriage, ‘the supreme event for which the ages are waiting,’ is an absolute bestowal of divine grace.... it is a special *granting from God* to prepare herself for this great climax. Again, to ‘array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.’... Garments are woven little by little; and thus were woven the materials for her, the Bride of Christ.... all the works wrought through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in and by the saints of the Bride will all belong alike to that holy Bride: for the whole Church is the Bride. Linen represents *manifested righteousness*, and this is ‘*fine linen, bright and pure*.’ It has that same ‘exceeding white and glistening’ appearance as her Lord’s raiment had on the transfiguration mount – of glory as well as purity. In other words, the Church will appear, all of it, in raiment wholly befitting Christ, her glorious Bridegroom. She herself had no righteousness; Christ Himself is her righteousness and her standing. She is one with Him. But now all those blessed Spirit-led works, those ‘righteous acts’ of the saints while on earth, are wrought to produce an array manifestly befitting the Bride, herself, without ‘spot, blemish or any such thing’ – in this unspeakable scene!...Is it [the Marriage] not Christ’s presenting ‘the church to himself a *glorious church*, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,’ described so rapturously by Paul in Ephesians 5?” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.298-299, 301-302, 304-305)

Who is it, then, that would have the height of absolute temerity and effrontery to attempt to ravish, rend, mutilate Christ’s beloved Bride (having just been transfigured, made all glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things) after their long-awaited Wedding and upon her return with Him to this earth to set up and celebrate *their* (His and her) Millennial Wedding Banquet, by carving her up into pieces and casting some of those members into outer darkness – outside their Wedding Banquet and outside her adorable Husband’s precious presence! The Bridegroom would not stand for it! (let alone be Himself the One to execute such judgment [Matt 24:50-51] on His beloved!!).

II. Re Principally *the Future Reign of the Heavenly Body & Bride of Christ, His Consort-Queen:*

(1) “Do ye [**carnal Corinthians**] not then know that the saints [as such, no exceptions or distinctions] shall judge the world? and if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy of the smallest judgments? Do ye not know that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:2, 3)

Note that the Church “saints” as such, all of “you” in particular, and “we” together, are distinctly specified as the ones who will judge (govern, rule, reign over; cf. Matt. 19:28; Rev. 20:4a) the world to come, including angels! No exceptions made, no exceptions possible. No class of spiritually elite, specially faithful, worthy, persevering saints reigning with Christ on the one hand, and destitute, unfaithful, unworthy, non-persevering saints weeping & gnashing their teeth in outer darkness on the other.

The Apostle Paul thus clearly reveals here that, by the *grace* of God in Christ Jesus, all Church saints – which explicitly includes everyone of the carnal Corinthians – will judge the world and angels (as the glorified heavenly Bride-Queen of Christ over the promised, covenanted, glorious, earthly Kingdom to be set up on this earth at His Second Advent).

Where is there thus any room for some members of the beloved, glorified Body & Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ to be in “outer darkness,” “not inheriting the Kingdom of God,” “weeping and gnashing their teeth”? Where is there thus any room for “the Body of Christ [to be] divided into those who rule and those who do not rule with Christ”?! There are absolutely no exceptions here as to the reign of *all* heavenly saints with Christ.

Where can one find a distinction here between persevering (or rather, *deserving*) Christians and non-persevering (or rather, *undeserving*) Christians, with the former alone reigning with Christ? On what grounds can one wrest this passage, and the myriad of other passages, of Scripture so as to be able to take a group of unworthy, non-persevering saints (dare I even call them saints?) – as opposed to the worthy, persevering ones – and cast them into “outer darkness” (with all that that entails)? On what grounds, I say, other than a departure from the plain, normal, literal interpretation of Scripture – via a distinctionless-dispensationalism, an Arminian-infected theology, a works-based/legalistic view of (present & future tense) salvation?

(2) “To Him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us [the very same ones washed by His blood—no exceptions—no strings attached] a kingdom, priests to His God and Father: to Him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen” (Rev 1:5, 6)

“As redeemed ones believers constitute a kingdom and are priests before God. Since Christ is both king and priest, His own partake of His nature and offices. Notice the emphasis on kingdom and dominion, a dual objective of the entire book (cf. Rev. 20:6; also II Tim. 2:12). – Charles L. Feinberg (*A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, p.26, 27)

“The reference to us as a *kingdom* is entirely consistent with the whole book of Revelation. We must connect this passage with Revelation 5:9, 10.... Both these passages, of course, look forward to the millennial reign of Chapter 20.... Notice that we have been made priest’s unto *Christ’s* God and Father, for Christ is the heir, and we inherit through and in Him.... The Revelation looks forward to the exercise of royal priesthood! When our Lord Jesus shall return to earth to reign, the full Melchizedek priesthood will come in: ‘He shall be a priest upon his throne’ – and we with Him!” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.12, 13)

(3) “But ye are [not, ‘will become’ by personal merit or worthiness] a chosen race, a kingly priesthood [king-priests], a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set forth the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness [**never to be cast back into “outer darkness”!**] to His wonderful light.” (1 Pet. 2:9)

All by His pure, sovereign, infinite *grace*!

“[We are]...‘a royal priesthood’ (which the Aaronic was not), but rather after the pattern of Melchizedek [king-priest] in its display of the blessing. In the day that is coming He will exercise that priesthood, sitting as Priest upon His throne, instead of bearing us up as He now does within the veil. Meanwhile those who are His are even

now said to be a royal priesthood to manifest His praises [virtues or excellencies] before the day of His power.” – William Kelly (*The First Epistle of Peter*, p.140, 141)

“The word ‘royal’ is the translation of the Greek word for ‘king.’ The Levitical priesthood were only priests. Believers of this dispensation are king-priests, associated with the Lord Jesus who is priest after the order of Melchizedec, a king-priest.” – Kenneth S. Wuest (*Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Vol. II, First Peter in the Greek New Testament, p.56)

(4) “And he that overcomes and he that keeps [reserves, gives heed to, takes to heart] unto the end My works [in contrast to Jezebel’s works], to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod; as vessels of pottery are they broken in pieces, as I also have received from My Father; and I will give to him the morning star.” (Rev. 2:26-28)

(5) “He that overcomes to him will I give to sit with Me in My throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with My Father in His throne.” (Rev. 3:21)

All Christians (i.e., genuine Church-Age believers), are “overcomers” – by the sovereign grace of God, the floodgates of which were opened by the infinitely precious blood of the God-Man shed once-for-all on the Cross. “Overcomers” are not merely some elite group of persevering saints who deserve or earn such a status by their own good works.

Scripture leaves us with no doubt as to this.

First, let us consider the *eternal security-promises* made to “overcomers” in Rev. 2:11 & 3:5.

“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. He that overcomes shall in no wise be injured of the second death [the Lake of Fire, Rev. 20:14, 15].” (Rev. 2:11)

“He that overcomes, he shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life [cf. Rev. 20:14, 15], and will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.” (Rev. 3:5)

It is quite obvious that these promises of eternal security to “overcomers”(and eternal security is exactly what is promised, according to plain, normal interpretation) cannot possibly refer merely to some exclusive group of “perseverers” amongst the heavenly saints – as all believers have eternal salvation, and thus eternal security, in Christ Jesus. But if “overcomers” are in fact a spiritually elite group of saints in contradistinction to all other “non-overcoming” saints, then it would necessarily follow that *not all* saints have eternal security, but only these special “overcomers.” But this cannot be, if the Word of Truth be the Word of Truth! Thus, these promises must be for all believers in Christ and, therefore, all believers are “overcomers.” And since all believers are overcomers, then it would inescapably follow that all promises to overcomers apply equally to all believers (and are thus part of our so great future-tense *salvation*) – including the blessed promises that we shall all co-reign with Christ! Pure and sovereign *grace*!!

And this is in perfect keeping with the rest of NT revelation of Church-truth (a portion of which has been, and will be, set forth and commented on), which shows that all saints in Christ will reign with Him – as His beloved, heavenly Consort-Queen. Thus we have further evidence that the Hodges/Dillow view of the “overcomer” is completely erroneous and in direct variance with the rightly-divided Word of truth.

But there’s more! Thanks be to our God and Father through our Lord Jesus Christ for His all-sufficient Word. The Apostle John himself, the same (human) author of the Revelation gives, by divine inspiration of the same (divine) Spirit-Author of all Scripture, an *explicit definition* of who qualifies as an “overcomer,” which confirms all that has just been said:

“For all that has been begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory which has overcome the world, our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4, 5)

There can be no doubt as to who qualifies as an “overcomer” – every single believer in Christ!; all of whom comprise His one beloved Bride that will co-reign with Him in the day of His manifested power and glory.

“The church is the queen, sitting with the King on His throne and ruling over all the nations of mankind (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:6).... As a company of people the bride is called ‘the church of the firstborn’ (Heb. 12:23), that is, those who are higher in position than any others.” – Herman A. Hoyt (*The End Times*, p.232)

Consider also:

“Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them, because [of being specially faithful and producing good works unto the end? no, but because] greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

“But in all these things we more than conquer through Him that has loved us [not through our personal worthiness or good works!].” (Rom. 8:37)

“These things have I spoken to you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world [and thus do all that are in Him].” (John 16:33)

“There are those who overcome, and there are those who *are* overcome. These latter are lost (II Peter 2:20). They give up Christ’s words (1 Corinthians 15:2, Colossians 1:23, Mark 8:38). We note two classes – and only two – in Revelation 21:7, 8.” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.42)

“And, be it noted, the only two classes seen in this final eternal order are those who *overcome*, and those *cast into the lake of fire*. The ‘overcomers,’ thus, are shown to be *all God’s true children*. For all had the divine gift of *faith*, all were *begotten of God*. So we read in I John 5:4: ‘Whatsoever is *begotten of God* *overcometh the world*: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our *faith*.’ ” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.339)

“**He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.** There is a double negative in the Greek – ‘*not at all* be injured.’ The saints may have to bow their heads to those who execute the *first* death – who ‘kill the body’; but over these, we read, ‘the *second* death hath no authority’ (Revelation 20:6). No real believer is coming into *judgment*. See John 5:24, R.V. Believers’ *works* will be examined, but not as *sin*: that is gone forever, borne on the cross! Hebrews 9:28: ‘so Christ...shall appear...apart from sin.’ ” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.47)

“**He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.** Christ’s throne is the throne of His father David at Jerusalem (II Samuel 7:12, 13, 16; I Chronicles 29:3; Jeremiah 3:17; Luke 1:32; Acts 15:14-18). But our Lord’s royal inheritance by the Davidic covenant extends to His heavenly Bride, the Church, as Eve shared the dominion that God gave the first Adam.... Here, in [Rev.] 3:21, at the close of the unfaithful corporate testimony of the Church, we are again overwhelmed at this *infinite grace of Christ*.... Let not the most wretched, defeated believer despair – if only there be the least yearning for Christ. The most tender plea of all the seven is made to a *lukewarm* assembly. And the most distinct promise of actually sitting down with Christ upon His throne is given at the very close of the Church’s testimony. Note that our Lord speaks as one who Himself overcame, and is therefore now sitting upon His Father’s throne.* [Author’s Footnote: *Our Lord is not now on His own throne, the throne of David. He is at the Father’s right hand, on the Father’s throne....] As a Victor He calls to you and to me. It is only in sharing by faith His victory that any saint ever overcame! As Christ warned in the upper room, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation: but *be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*’ (John 16:33). He also triumphed over Satan and all his hosts at Calvary, and gives us the benefit (Colossians 2:14, 15; Hebrews 2:14, 15). ‘And *this is the victory* that overcometh – even *our faith*’ (I John 5:4).” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.81, 82)

“The overcomer here [Rev. 21:7], as in chapters 2 and 3, is the believer, the one who has drunk of the water of life [21:6]. For him there is sonship with God forever.” – Charles L. Feinberg (*A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, p.155, 156)

Before moving on, allow me to cite some comments by Hodges on the promises made to the “overcomers” of Revelation chapters 2 & 3, and Rev. 2:11 & 3:5 in particular – to serve as an example of the strained and tortuous lengths to which one goes, and what happens when one goes AWOL [i.e. “absent without leave”] from the plain, normal, literal interpretation of Scripture in an effort to force his distorted system of theology on Scripture:

“Two of them [i.e., two of the promises to the ‘overcomers,’ referring specifically to those of Rev. 2:11 & 3:5 – the very two promises that completely undercuts and refutes his position!] at least seem to employ a well-known figure of speech called litotes. In litotes an affirmative idea is expressed through the negation of its opposite. Vagueness is often the intended result of this kind of speech [which thus conveniently leaves plenty of room for your own ideas]. Thus I may say, ‘If you do me this favor, I will not forget you.’ ‘I will not forget you’ is a litotes for something like, ‘I will repay you well.’ The two promises to ‘overcomers’ which can most readily be interpreted as involving a litotes are these [i.e., Rev. 2:11 & 3:5, of course]... there is absolutely nothing in these letters to suggest that all Christians are ‘overcomers’ [your conclusion wouldn’t have anything to do with your injection of the litotes, would it?]... The promises of Revelation 2:11 and 3:5 are best understood as litotes [i.e., your theology demands a departure from the plain, normal, literal interpretation of the text]. John and all his intelligent Christian readers knew that a believer would never experience the second death. But the promise of 2:11 claims that this death will not even do him any *damage*. The Greek verb rendered ‘hurt’ might easily be translated ‘injured’ [so?]. The Smyrnan Christians who are ‘faithful until death’ (2:10) will not even be *injured* by it. By litotes [i.e., by spiritual alchemy] this intimates a superlative triumph over the second death. But since the second death is actual banishment from the presence and life of God (Rev. 20:14, 15), the litotes [alakazam!] also intimates a splendid experience of the divine life and presence [what you really mean is joint-heirship and co-reigning with Christ; but I guess even your litotes cannot embolden you enough to be so blatant in transmuting the words of our Lord]. The litotes in 3:5 is equally easy [!] to understand. Again John and his readers know that no Christian can have his name blotted out of the Book of Life. They also know that there is great honor in having one’s name inscribed there (see Luke 10:20). The litotes here is something like saying, ‘Your honored name will never be erased.’ But this suggests, ‘Your name will be glorious forever,’ [but not so for the names of the poor ‘unpersevering’ and unworthy saints] or something similar. The fact that honor is the basic issue in this particular promise is clearly [?] shown by the other [distinct!] elements of the promise. Special white garments (a mark of dignity in ancient thought) are to be granted the ‘overcomer’ [i.e., the deserving one] and his enduringly honored name is to be openly acknowledged before God and the holy angels.” – Zane C. Hodges (*The Gospel Under Siege: A Study on Faith and Works*, p.118, 119)

Does this sad display of hermeneutical gymnastics fare any better than the spiritualizing method of interpretation employed by anti-Dispensational/Covenant theologians? How much sweeter and honoring to the Lord to allow His Word to interpret itself (even where genuine symbols or figures of speech are evident) and to accept it at face value!

(6) “And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them, and judgment [that is, rule] was given to them.... Blessed and holy he who has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:4, 6)

“...‘I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.’ The thrones were already filled. Instead of judgment being executed on them, it was given to them. They themselves were to judge. Who were they? Who are the persons thus invested with judicial authority of so glorious a nature and to reign, as we see later, with Christ? Clearly the same saints whom we have seen first set forth by the elders in heaven,...next, by the bride...at the marriage-supper, and finally by the armies that followed the Lord out of heaven.... We have seen that these follow the Lord out of heaven, and are next seen enthroned. When the Lord takes His own throne, they take theirs by grace.” – William Kelly (*Lectures Introductory to the New Testament*, Vol. III p.557, 559)

“What was seen in [Rev.] 11:15 by way of anticipation is here realized [Rev. 20:4-6]. It is understood that Christ will sit on His throne and reign as the legitimate Son of David, and it is clearly stated in the last clauses of this verse. Who are the occupants of the thrones? From the combined testimony of Scripture they will be New Testament saints (cf. I Cor 6:2), who reign as the Queen of the King. Too, there will be Old Testament saints, who will rule as vicegerents of the King and Queen (cf. Deut 28:1, 13; Mt 19:28). The martyred through the

Tribulation Period, and those who resisted the idol worship of the beast, will also reign. These will come to life (only a literal, not spiritual resurrection, will meet the demands of the context where individuals have been beheaded) and reign with Christ for the Millennium.” – Charles L. Feinberg (*A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, p.145)

“The Church will reign with Christ in glorified bodies like His (*I Corinthians 6:2,3*). The Church, evidently, is the first class of the *three* mentioned in Revelation 20:4: ‘I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.’ There is no account of resurrection; for they were caught up at the end of chapter 3 of Revelation.... *Judgment*, and not the mere execution of it, will belong to – be ‘given to’ – the Church.” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.324)

“They were now to exercise judgment. Evidently this is an accomplishment of 1 Cor. vi. The apostle there, addressing the saints at Corinth, says, ‘Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?’ And here they are judging the world.... The glory above will be the rest and centre of the heavenly saints; but besides that they will judge the earth. Accordingly it is written here, ‘I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ They were the destined assessors of the Lord in judging or government.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Book of the Revelation*, p. 414, 415)

(7) “And no curse shall be any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him [**no exceptions**], and they shall see His face [**not outer darkness!**]; and His name is on their foreheads [**again, no exceptions**]. And night shall not be any more, and no need of a lamp, and light of the sun; for the Lord God shall shine upon them, and they shall reign to the ages of ages [**dare we now make exceptions or inject special conditions of good works?!**].” (Rev. 22:3-5)

“God's bond-servants will serve Him, an unsullied, gladsome, eternal service without failure or weariness and with fulness of joy and praise. Many question whether saints in heaven will see God's face. The Scripture here is plain; they assuredly will.... The name of God on the forehead indicates public acknowledgement of belonging to Him, as well as conformity to His blessed nature.... The millennial reign and the eternal reign are united. Saints will never cease to reign, as long as there will be subjects. Cf. Romans 5:17. Why do earthly reigns come to an end? They are terminated either by injustices, fraud, ineptitude, or death. None of these will be present when Christ the King reigns with His Bride. Why, then, should not the millennial phase of His reign merge into the eternal phase? Verily, it will!” – Charles L. Feinberg (*A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, p.162, 163)

“The experience of the marriage results also in an eternal and personal [communion]... with Christ. The church [His Bride] will share His name [the name of her Husband], for “his name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev. 22:4b). The church will also share His glory, for believers will ‘appear with Him in glory’ (Col. 3:4). In addition, the church will enter into the rights of inheritance along with Him, since believers are sons, ‘then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ’ (Rom. 8:17). And to crown it all, to the queen, the church, Christ said that to her ‘will I grant to sit with me in my throne’ (Rev. 3:21), and along with Him believers ‘shall reign for ever and ever’ (Rev. 22:5).... Rising above everything else, there is that magnificent and ineffable vision of His face. No word so simple and yet more sublime could be spoken of the experience of the bride: ‘And they shall see his face’ (Rev. 22:4). By this John is referring to the Person [of Christ our Life] who shall be the object of adoring wonder throughout eternity.” – Herman A. Hoyt (*The End Times*, p.110)

(8) “And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; because Thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them [**the very same unworthy ones redeemed by His precious blood**] to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth.” (Rev. 5:9, 10)

Every single believer, during the Dispensation of Grace, who has been redeemed by the precious blood of the alone worthy One, the God-Man, will co-reign with Him, as part of His heavenly Bride-Queen, over Israel and the nations, during the Millennial Kingdom and throughout Eternity – on the sole and necessary ground of the infinite value of His same once-for-all shed blood. “Grace upon grace.” No exceptions noted here or elsewhere; no distinctions made between faithful/worthy/persevering saints as over against unfaithful/unworthy/non-persevering

saints. Those redeemed in Christ = Those who will reign with Christ. Our future reign with Christ as His Bride-Queen *is based on our redemption in Christ by His blood*. The two are inseparable aspects (past-tense and future-tense) of our so-great salvation in the crucified, risen, ascended, glorified, heavenly Christ.

(9) “For this cause I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. The word is faithful; for if we have died together with Him, we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together; if we deny, He also will deny us; if we are unfaithful, He abides faithful, for he cannot deny himself.” (2 Tim. 2:10-13)

“If we endure [or endure suffering], we shall also reign with Him”: does this passage of Scripture contradict all of the other passages cited above, in supposedly making reigning with Christ a matter of personal worthiness (i.e., not by grace alone—not by His blood alone—not by *His* worthiness alone) in the spiritually elite amongst the members of His Body & Bride? Impossible!

All saints in Christ suffer – by virtue of *who* and *what* they are in Christ; thus all saints in Christ will reign with Him. Consider the following:

(A) “And if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it [**Gr. *sumpascho*, occurs only here and in Rom 8:17**]; and if one member be glorified, all the members rejoice with it.” (1 Cor. 14:26)

“...the effect is real throughout the church. It is a body – the body of Christ – and as a whole it feels in joy or sorrow: else it were not a real organic unity.” – William Kelly (*Notes on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p.214)

“Now the Greek word used in Romans 8.17 for ‘suffer with’ (*sumpascho*) is used just once more in the New Testament: in I Corinthians 12.26: ‘If one member suffer, all the members *suffer with* it.’ Here Paul is speaking of the Body of Christ into which all believers have been baptized by the Spirit (I Cor. 12.12, 13)... Here note all believers are in this Body. And then, verse 26...Here (and mark again this is the only occurrence of the word besides Rom. 8.17) ‘suffering with’ is not a voluntary matter, but one necessitated by the relationship. If someone should tread upon your foot, your whole body would be exercised. So it is with Christ and His members.” – William R. Newell (*Romans Verse by Verse*, p.317)

(B) “Because to you has been given on behalf of Christ, not only the believing on him but also the suffering for Him.” (Phil. 1:29)

“And suffering through which they passed...is viewed as a gift of God, just as much as believing on Christ. It is then a gracious, God-given privilege to suffer for His sake. Murmuring and complaining will be completely silenced when suffering is looked upon as a gift of grace [to every believer].” – Arno C. Gaebelien (*Gaebelien’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1009)

(C) “If the world hate you, know that it has hated Me before [it hated] you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on account of this the world hates you. Remember the word which I said unto you, The bondman is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My word, they will keep also yours. But they will do all these things to you on account of My name, because they have not known Him that sent me.” (John 15:18-21)

(D) “These things have I spoken to you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

(E) “For what glory is it, if sinning and being buffeted ye shall bear it? but if, doing good and suffering, ye shall bear [*endure*] it, this is acceptable with God. For to this have ye been called; for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps.” (1 Pet. 2:20, 21)

“ ‘Hereunto’ is literally ‘into this’ namely, the endurance of wrongful sufferings. The divine call of God to a lost sinner is an effectual call into salvation, and an accompaniment of that salvation is suffering for righteousness’ sake, the natural result of the Christian’s contact with the people of the world and their reaction towards the Lord Jesus who is seen in the life of the saint. Paul speaks of the same thing when he says, ‘For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake’ (Phil. 1:29).” – Kenneth S. Wuest (*Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Vol. II, First Peter in the Greek New Testament, p.66)

(F) “And having announced the glad tidings to that city, and having made many disciples, they [Paul and Barnabas] returned to Lystra, and Iconium, and Antioch, establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to abide in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21, 22)

This is a statement of *fact* concerning all believers, not a *conditional* promise based on our merit or worthiness. It is *necessary* for us believers, by virtue of who and what we are in Christ, to enter into (equivalent here to “inherit”) the Kingdom of God through many (varying degrees of) tribulations while yet in this wicked world of darkness that hates the Lord Jesus and His own.

(G) “And ye have quite forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when reprov’d by Him; for whom the Lord loves [obviously all of His born-ones] He chastens, and scourges every son [no exceptions] whom He receives. Ye endure for chastening, God conducts Himself towards you as towards sons; for who is the son that the father chastens not? But if ye are without chastening, of which all [no exceptions] have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” (Heb. 12:5-8)

All children or born-ones of God are *sons* (and consequently heirs) of God (cf. Eph. 1:4,5; Rom. 8:16-18; Gal. 3:26-29; 4:6,7; Heb. 12:23b; 1 Pet. 1:3,4) – thus *all* believers *endure suffering* in the form of chastening (for spiritual growth, whether there be specific sin involved or not).

“Contending against sin in an evil world entails suffering, and in the same suffering without chastisement. But they may and do sometimes coalesce; and in every case we wrong Him who watches over us in love, if we either slight His hand or repine under it. How often His action which calls us to suffer is to guard us from what would grieve the Holy Spirit of God, rather than because we have sinned! And it is happy for us when it is so.... So in the Gospel of John our Lord speaks of His Father purging every branch of the Vine that bears fruit, in order that it might bear more fruit. We need to believe His word that we may interpret His dealings aright.” – William Kelly (*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p.240)

(H) “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. And if children, heirs also: heirs of God, and Christ’s joint heirs; if indeed [since] we suffer with Him [Gr. *sumpascho*, occurs only here and in 1 Cor. 12:26], that we may also be glorified with Him [all saints in Christ suffer with Him; all are glorified with Him]. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to [in regard to] us [us children of God, all of us, no exceptions or distinctions].” (Rom. 8:16-18)

See Section III (19) below for a more in-depth discussion of this passage. But for now...

“To make one grace, and the other conditional, is not only error but absurdity. And so it is [to] separate heirship of God from being joint-heirs with Christ, though it is expressly a gift of grace (as in Phil. 1:29) to suffer for Him as well as with Him. He who does not suffer with Him now has not His Spirit and is none of His. It is perversion to make such a contrast in Rom. 8: 17, and 2 Tim. 2:11, 12. The contrast, if any such thing were intended, would be with the millennial saints who enjoy entire exemption from such suffering, and therefore do not reign with Christ during the thousand years. But to make this of works is utterly unscriptural....” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, p. 177, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

Let us note in passing, that, true as it may be that, individually speaking, some saints in Christ suffer more than others, nonetheless *all* believers will have the *same* future-tense *salvation* of eternal glory in and with Christ Jesus – a truth in perfect keeping with all that has been presented thus far with respect to Grace/Church Age truth. The

mind of man should have no more difficulty with this truth than with the fact that some sinners in Adam *sin* more than others prior to their salvation, and yet *all* are saved with exactly the *same past-tense* salvation! (cf. Matt. 20:14b-15, the *principle* of which is thus certainly applicable to the Dispensation of Grace). More or less suffering now does not make us more or less worthy or deserving than others of our future-tense salvation (as it is all of grace, based solely on the death and resurrection of Christ) – no more than does committing more or less sins make us less or more worthy or deserving than others of past-tense salvation (which is equally all of grace, based solely on the death and resurrection of Christ). Past, present, and future-tense salvation in Christ: *sovereign grace!* (not worthiness or reward).

Now, when it comes to the individual matter of what Scripture distinctly calls the bestowal of future *rewards* (which are clearly *not* strictly part of our future-tense salvation in Christ) some saints may indeed receive more or less rewards than others, according to their varying degrees of faithfulness. And Scripture is equally clear as to what will constitute the future *rewards* of *Grace Age believers* (members of the Body of Christ): namely, various “crowns” – *not* “places of privilege and authority” or “position and responsibility” within the coming earthly kingdom (as we will reign with Christ as His Consort-Queen *over* the kingdom, by virtue of what we are through *salvation* in Him as His heavenly Body and Bride). And even these reward-crowns (at least one of which all believers will receive, 1 Cor. 4:5c) will ultimately find their greatest use in being cast at the feet of Christ in an act of worship and adoration (Rev. 4:10), signifying that He alone is the Worthy One and the true Source (John 15) of our good works accomplished by His grace.

That the “crowns” themselves are not, and cannot be, *symbolic* of “places of privilege and authority” or “position and responsibility” within the coming earthly kingdom is also evident from the following observations in regard to the fact that the Greek word used in *all* of these references to “crowns” as rewards for the redeemed of this dispensation is *stephanos*, not *diadema*! (taken in *isolation*, your view might have been able to plead some show of reason for itself had *diadema* been the word used in the context of rewards; but *never* is it so used):

“There are two types of crowns mentioned in the New Testament, the *diadema* and the *stephanos*. The former was the ruler's diadem and signifies a badge of royalty; the latter has reference to a victor's garland which, among the Greeks, was presented as a prize to the winner in the Greek games. [According to W.E. Vine, *diadema* “is never used as *stephanos* is; it is always the symbol of kingly or imperial dignity.”] The elders, in the vision of Revelation chapter four, are said to be wearing the *stephanos*. It is noteworthy that the believer's rewards for faithful service are in several instances said to be crowns, and in each case the very same word *stephanos* is used [and never *diadema*] (Cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:24; Rev. 2:10). This argues strongly for the elders representing a redeemed company, for their crowns would point to the rewards which they had received at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).” – John F. McGahey (Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, May 1954)

III. Re Principally *the Fullness and Infinite Richness of Blessing, and the Superlative and Eternal Inheritance of the Heavenly Body & Bride of Christ:*

(1) “And ye [all believers] are complete in Him, Who is the head of all principality and authority.” (Col. 2:10)

By virtue of our position in the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ, Who is our Life – and not because of any imagined personal worthiness – every single believer is eternally *complete*, lacking of absolutely *nothing*; we are filled full according to the measure of the very fulness of Christ. In fact, *He* is our fulness, our completeness. (For the flip side, as it were, see Eph. 1:22-23, as discussed previously in Section II.) *All* that He is and *all* that He has is ours – as He is the Righteousness, Acceptance, Life, heavenly Head and Bridegroom of His heavenly Body & Bride. “Herein has love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as He is, we also are in this world.” (1 John 4:17)

“The fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him and out of this fullness we receive grace upon grace [John 1:16], and that we might also be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). In Him believers are filled full. In Him we possess perfection and completeness before God and are not wanting anything whatever as to our position before God. Believers are in Him before God, not in what they do or according to their service, or anything else, but in perfection of what He is. Who could add to His fullness and who can add to the fullness and completeness the believer possesseth forever in Him!” – Arno C. Gaebelin (*Gaebelin's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1031)

(2) “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us [every single heavenly saint, no exceptions] with every spiritual blessing [no limit possible, no omissions conceivable, nothing higher imaginable – including the spiritual blessings of inheriting the Kingdom of God and being joint-heirs] in the heavenlies in Christ [in Him, in union with Him, and thus in no way dependent on our personal merit or worthiness].” (Eph. 1:3)

“I am here upon the earth, and yet I know that I am blest there where Christ is at the right hand of God. Not only have I blessings there, but I am blessed ‘with all spiritual blessings.’ The highest blessing God can confer is that which He gives every child of His in heavenly places in Christ. In these few words we gaze at the height of God's wonderful counsel about us and love for us. He has thus blessed us according to the fulness of His value for Christ. The expression ‘heavenly places’ is in contrast with the portion of the Jews, who were blessed in earthly places. If we look at Ezekiel xxxvi., it may bring out more distinctly the character of our blessing in contradistinction to theirs.... It is chiefly learned but unspiritual men who make confusion about these matters. If readers were only simple about Scripture, they would not fall into such mistakes.... Nothing can be plainer than this. He is to bless Israel on the earth – in their soul too, no doubt: but the sphere of *this* blessing is the holy land. It is His earthly people, not the Church.... Evidently the blessing [of Israel] is in earthly places.... But I object to the inference that God has abandoned His people, and that this prophecy [Ezek. 36] about the earthly places should be confounded with our heavenly title. The earth and earthly blessings are here dwelt upon by the Spirit of God. Why should we be jealous about the Jews or the earth either? God has shown us such overflowing and surpassing favour that we may well delight and thank Him that the earth is reserved for His ancient nation. Now if we turn from this – the predicted blessing of Israel upon the earth – to our own proper blessing in Ephesians, how totally different it is! ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.’... Israel's hope is not inward only but outward, in earthly places to be made the most exalted people here below. The scene of our blessing, on the contrary, is in heavenly places, and we are blessed there now in Christ.... The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*. A Jew has nowhere in the Old Testament the hope of being blessed *in* their Messiah. To be joint-heirs with Christ, not only blessed *by* Christ, but *in* Christ, is an idea that could not possibly enter the most intelligent Israelite's mind. In a word, their portion will always be *under* their Messiah, to be ruled by Him as an earthly people. But ours, who believe in Christ now, will be to have the same blessing which God the Father confers upon Christ risen from the dead. What has He done for Christ? He has raised Him up, and put all things under His feet. This glory He will not take alone. He is waiting for His bride – for those who are now being called out of Jews and Gentiles to the knowledge of His name. So that our Lord, while personally exalted, holds it in abeyance because He is waiting for His companions to share it with Him;

heirs by His grace, not merely of the fathers, but of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Nothing can be larger or higher than the blessing spoken of here. Christ will have His heavenly ones above, and His earthly ones below; each fully blest though in different spheres. May I commend the truth brought out in Ephesians i. to the serious study of God's children?... *Now* it is as the God of the Lord Jesus Christ that He blesses – it is the full blessing that would be suitable to Christ Himself as the object of blessing. Grace puts us as common objects with Christ in order to be blessed by God who blesses after this manner and measure. Nor this only. He is the Father of the Lord Jesus, and as such also He blesses us. So that these two characters, the very highest possible in which to look at God, are those according to which we are blessed. The characters of God, both as God and as Father, as they deal with Christ, issue in a blessing, a commensurate blessing, which He gives to us. Hence there is no limit. He has blessed us 'with all spiritual blessings,' and moreover too, as we saw, not on the earth, the comparatively lower part of the universe, but in the highest scene of God's power, 'in the heavenly places;' and in order to crown and complete all, it is 'in Christ; all is secured in His person.' – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p.11-15)

(3) “I am the door: if any one enter in by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out and shall find pasture. The thief comes not but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I am come that they might have life, and **[the very same “saved” ones with eternal “life” in Him]** might have it abundantly [though some have His Life abundantly in outer darkness, with weeping and gnashing of teeth?!].” (John 10:9, 10)

(4) “So that let no one boast in men; for all things ARE yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things coming, all ARE yours; and ye ARE Christ's [the worthy Heir of all things], and Christ is God's.” (1Cor. 3:21-23)

“All things...the world...things coming” – a sweeping, all-encompassing inheritance indeed (cf. Eph. 1:10, 11, 14, 18, 22). Surely inheriting the Kingdom of God, being joint-heirs with Christ, co-ruling with Him are not, and cannot be, excepted.

“ARE” – not, “will become” in the future upon the condition of special perseverance, good works, personal merit or worthiness; but “are” *now as a present possession*, in virtue of being in Christ, by grace (though not entered into *experientially* until with Him at His 2nd Advent to this earth).

“Yours” – Can any believers possibly be excepted? Can this properly be made to refer merely to a special class of spiritually elite, persevering, worthy believers, in contradistinction to destitute, non-persevering, unworthy believers (who will be weeping & gnashing their teeth in outer darkness)? “Yours” embraces *all*, not some, members of the heavenly Body & Bride of Christ (even all of the carnal Corinthian saints); no exceptions implied or possible. Our inheritance is part and parcel of our so-great *salvation in Christ*.

(5) “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who against us? He who, yea, has not spared His own Son **[the greatest possible Gift]**, but delivered Him up for us all [every single believer], how shall He not also with Him grant us [every single believer for whom Christ died, no possible exceptions or special conditions of personal worthiness] all things [all lesser things, **be it the inheritance of the Kingdom of God/ruling with Christ, or anything else?**]?” (Rom. 8:31, 32)

“We now enter on the distinct portion which closes this division of the epistle, where the apostle interrogates and, I may say, challenges all adversaries in presence of the rich and varied provisions of redemption... It is [now]...the deduction from all that God is for us, not only superior to all that would hurt us, but leading to the bold question, Who dare be against us? All is measured by God's gift of His own Son, not spared but delivered up for us all; a plain and irrefragable answer to every doubt both of the reality of His love and of its extent; and this for the entire family of God. There was one object above all dear and precious to God, His own Son; and it was His own Son whom for us He spared in no way, but for us all surrendered Him to all that is dreadful in our eyes, to His heart infinitely worse – who knew His Father's love and felt evil as none but He could. That God should in His grace secure all things to us after such a gift is what we cannot but feel to be easily understood and suitable to His love, if not even necessarily due to the glory of Christ. Nothing can be lacking by the way: in the end we shall share all things with Him who is the Heir of all things. He made all, has reconciled all and will take all under His glorious sway; but we shall reign with Him. He is head over all to the Church which is His body, says our apostle

elsewhere. Here He does not pursue the counsels of God but affirms the principle of grace in righteousness as applied to our individual relationship. It was no sudden thought but a settled design which went right through to glory with Christ, after the full trial and demonstration of the uniform and complete failure of the first man. It is now a question of the Second man and of those that are His; and thus it is as plain as it is sure that God is for them; and if so, who is against them? Our sins have been remitted, sin in the flesh condemned, ourselves believing in Jesus and His blood, yea dead with Him and alive in Him to God: who then is against us? God has proved Himself for us where we had most ground for dread, and dread of Him above all; for against Him had we sinned. But in nothing has He shewn His grace so deep and conspicuous as in our hopelessly evil state; in nothing so exhibited the worth and efficacy of the redemption through His Son. We are entitled then in faith to ask: ‘If God [is] for us, who [shall be] against us?’ We are entitled to count that He who spared not His own Son will along with Him lavish on us everything good for us now, everything glorious by and by... His Son is the measureless measure of His love to us...” – William Kelly (*Notes on the Epistle to the Romans*, p.155-157)

“**He that even spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all** – This is the God who is for us; and this is the proof! *Spared not* – what that word shows! Of the infinite price of redemption! of the measureless unconquerable love of God that would not be stopped at such frightful cost! ‘His own Son’; His only Son; His well-beloved Son, – from all eternity! And for *us*! Ah, how wretched we are, even in our own sight! guilty, undone, defiled, powerless, worthless, – *for us all!*... Then, **delivered Him up** – We remember immediately the same word in Chapter 4.25: ‘delivered up for our trespasses.’ Yea, we know for why: but *unto* what? gainsaying, mocking, spitting, scourging, crucifying – by *men*; and to the awful cup of wrath for our sin at *God’s* hand – infinitely more appalling than any creature stroke! Yet God *spared not* – His own Son, but *delivered Him up!* **For us all** – Here the saints are spoken of. (Paul never uses ‘us’ of any others!) And who are the saints? *Sinners* who have heard God’s good news concerning His Son, and have simply *believed!*... **How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?** – The great gift, the unspeakable gift, being made, all must follow! ‘How shall He not, with *Him*?... God has not spared His Son: what are all else to *Him*? God has opened to us His *heart*, He has spared not, – giving us His best, His all – even Christ. Now, with Him, all things come! God cannot but do this. Shall He give us His dear Son, and then hold back at trifles? For ‘all things’ of this created universe, – yea, even all gifts or blessings God may give us, here or hereafter, are but nothing, compared with *Christ!*’ – William R. Newell (*Romans Verse by Verse*, p.336-337)

(6) “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, (we too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ, (ye are saved by grace,) and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, [why?] that He might display in the coming ages [including the Millennial age] the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us [every single one of us] in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:4-7)

How is such a heavenly and glorious destiny – for all ages to come, which thus includes the Millennium – of being objects and exhibits of the infinite riches of His *grace* in Christ Jesus, in any way consistent or compatible with having some of those very members (the “specially” unworthy, undeserving members) of His glorified Body & Bride disinherited of the Kingdom of God, cast into outer darkness, weeping and gnashing their teeth? “But one must ask in view of such riches of grace, as revealed in the preceding verses [of Eph. 2], What is the purpose of all this? The verse which follows [i.e., 2:7] gives the answer. We find ourselves face to face with the destiny of His masterpiece [the Church, the Body & Bride of Christ, the New Creation in Him]. ‘That in the ages to come He might show (or display) the exceeding (surpassing) riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus’ (verse 7). This is one of the richest and deepest statements in the Bible. Two ages follow the present age [and the Tribulation period]. The millennial age, and after that has lasted for a thousand years, the eternal state begins. In the coming age and in all eternity, God is going to make known His glory through and in His masterwork. All His redeemed will be with Him in glory. When He comes again He brings many sons to glory; and we shall reign and rule with Him over the earth. But this is not all. In the eternal age, from eternity to eternity, God is continuing in this. He will bring forth something new in glory, new riches of Himself for those who are one with His well-beloved Son. From eternity to eternity He displays the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. How one is overwhelmed in the presence of such a statement! And how little after all we can understand all those coming riches in glory. What a destiny! The heart may well cry – nothing but glory! What is the little suffering, the little while down here, in comparison with such never ending glory!” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.993)

“God has made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ. Now comes the display of His glorious purpose as to this. It is ‘that He might show forth in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.’ We need not be surprised then that the place should be such a place of wonder! If God is going to show that which is indeed the fruit of Christ's work and the display of the full purposes of His heart, it will be surely true that the fullest blessing possible is necessitated for this. God is acting, as it were, though only grace could say so, on His own account; but then with regard to us, it is grace and nothing but grace.” – F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*, Vol. VI, Acts to 2 Corinthians, p.331)

(7) “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times [the Millennial Dispensation]; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in Him, in Whom we have also obtained [not, ‘some will obtain’ in the future by perseverance or personal worthiness; but ‘we’ saints in Christ ‘have’ already obtained, by virtue of being ‘in Him’] an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ: in Whom ye also have trusted, having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in Whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of His glory.” (Eph 1:9-14)

“It is almost needless to say that these set times [1:10] are not yet completed, and that Christ has not yet all things in the heavens and on the earth headed up in Him, and that the Church is not yet reigning join-heir with Him.” – William Kelly (*Bible Treasury* N2:247, as cited in the *Ephesian Notes of Two Nineteenth Century Versions of the New Testament*, p.577)

“Christ, who has redeemed us by His blood, was raised from the dead. God ‘set Him [and us in Him] at His own right hand in the heavenlies’ – ‘He hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things [i.e., the very inheritance of which the Apostle Paul spoke of in Eph. 1:10, 11, 14, 18] to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all’ (1:21-23). This is the mystery: that Christ risen from the dead, seated at the right hand of God, is the Head and those who believe on Him constitute the Church, His body. This body is destined, according to the eternal purpose of God, to share the glory of the Head. This purpose is still in the future. The administration (or dispensation) of the fulness of times has not yet come.” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.990)

“The mystery here is, that God means to unite all things in heaven and in earth, under the headship of our Lord. He does not mean to have the heavens, as they are now, completely severed from the earth, but to have a united system of heavenly and earthly glory, all under Christ – this is the mystery of His will. But there is more than this. He means that we should share the glory along with Christ. Thus there are two great parts in the mystery of His will. The first is Christ, and the second is the Church: and therefore it is said in this very Epistle, ‘This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.’ It is not ‘the Church,’ of course, that is the mystery, but ‘Christ *and* the Church.’...the summing, or heading (*ἀνακεφαλαιωσις*) up of all things, heavenly and earthly, under Christ. This will be in the age to come, when Christ shall be displayed as Head over all things, and the glorified saints shall reign with Him.... It is the intervening millennium [prior to the eternal state]. This will be the fulness of the times, previous periods having been the necessary preparation for it. Meanwhile, redemption through Christ's blood having been effected, the Holy Ghost seals the believer, and is the earnest of the inheritance.”

“God's blessed cure for the world's disorder is Christ brought out from His present hidden position; and the moment that He is so, what a change! All things in heaven and earth will be united [as a system summed up or headed up] in Christ; and when that day comes, we shall enter visibly on our inheritance. We have the title already, but are not in manifest possession [cf. 1:11].... We have, first of all, (verse 5) our predestination as children. ‘And if children then heirs’ – heirs of a glorious inheritance, Christ being made the head of the universe. (Ver. 10, 11.)” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p.26-28)

“It [‘obtained an inheritance’ in 1:11] is exactly one of the marked points of contrast between the faithful [i.e., believers] now and Israel of old, that these are designated the inheritance of Jehovah, those are styled God’s heirs and Christ’s joint-heirs. Hence the force of *εκληρωθημεν* is that we were allotted our inheritance, not ‘made a heritage,’ the *καὶ* adding this to our being called. For there are two main parts in the blessing: our calling, and also our inheritance, which embraces the universe as put under Christ (cf. verse 10), given as Head *over* all things to the church which is His body. The church is in God’s grace and purpose the heavenly Eve of the Last Adam, to possess all things, not merely the things on the earth like the first man, but the things in the heavens. Here accordingly it will be noticed that the apostle speaks not of the glory of God’s grace (ver. 6), nor of the riches of His grace (ver. 7), but of His glory (vers. 12, 14). He looks not at present privilege, but onward to the redemption of the purchased possession [1:14] which will be then, as distinguished from the redemption we have now through His blood, the forgiveness of our offences. There is no doubt that God purchased the church with the blood of Christ, and that the believers from among the Jews are now reckoned a people of possession, or peculiarly His own, as indeed are all saints; but this does not at all decide the true force of the purchased possession here, which is really the inherited universe when His glory dawns.” – William Kelly (*Bible Treasury* 13:378, as cited in the *Ephesian Notes of Two Nineteenth Century Versions of the New Testament*, p.577)

(8) “Being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints [cf. 1:10,11,14,22].” (Eph. 1:18)

“...the inheritance. He wished them to know the riches of its glory, to know it better. But he uses a remarkable expression – ‘the riches of the glory of His inheritance *in the saints*.’ You must carefully guard against a prevalent error on this subject, namely, that the saints mean the inheritance. This is not at all the force of the phrase: nay, I have no hesitation in saying that it would falsify the chief blessedness of the Church’s calling. If we look at the Old Testament, we find that Israel were His inheritance and His people; and that God, by virtue of Israel, took possession of the land. When the day comes for God to be king, and more than king, when He takes under His government the entire universe, how will this be done? Will it be by Israel? No; but by virtue of His heavenly saints – the Church of God. The expression seems to be purposely large. Most decidedly it means the saints changed or risen, so as to be in the likeness of Christ, in an entirely heavenly condition. Such is the mode in which God will challenge and assume the inheritance by and by into His own hand. When He took Canaan, He did not come down and possess it by heavenly power, but by means of His people. But when God expels the wicked spirits from any connection with the heavenly places, when He puts down all power upon the earth – everything that contradicts Himself, and reduces the whole universe into subjection to the name of Christ, who are destined to take it in His name, as Israel entered on the land of Canaan? The risen saints. Hence the meaning of the words, ‘the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.’ The common notion that the saints constitute the inheritance is unscriptural. For most carefully throughout the New Testament, the saints are always represented as (not the inheritance, but) the heirs, ‘heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.’ They are nowhere treated as the inheritance, but, on the contrary, what is revealed as the inheritance means the things in heaven and things on earth; and the Church is ever and sedulously separated from them. This I consider to be a point which cannot be left as an open question; the testimony of the word is too abundant and precise. We ought never to allow what is clearly revealed in Scripture to be debatable or uncertain, because doubt always has an injurious effect upon the spirit, no less than it insults God and grieves His Spirit. Another’s certainty will not do for us; but we need not hesitate to speak plainly where we have no doubt of God’s mind upon a subject. And when looked at in this point of view, it quite falls in with the structure of the chapter. As we have found ‘the hope of his calling’ in the first clause answering to what we had in the earlier verses, so the ‘glory of the inheritance’ answers to the middle verses of the chapter. God means to have the whole universe blest and happy under Christ; not merely glory given to Him in heaven, or a people subject to Him here below. We have here an incomparably larger view of what God intends. Christ is to have universal blessedness and glory, all things in heaven and earth being put under Him; and we have obtained in Him this inheritance.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p.54, 55)

(9) “...by His own blood [He] has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption.... And for this reason He is mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, the called [i.e., **all saints in Christ, by grace; cf. 2Tim 1:9; Jude 1; Rom. 1:6-7; 8:28-30; Eph. 4:1,4; 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Cor. 1:2,9; 1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:10**] might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” (Heb. 9:12, 15)

“...His death having taken place, so that law's authority was established to the uttermost, grace could act freely and grant remission of sins, instead of keeping up their remembrance; yea more, it could righteously vindicate God's forbearance in the past [cf. Rom. 3:25] ‘for redemption of the transgressions’ under the then legal condition, with its penalty of death for the offender. Now on the contrary, death having come in, Christ is Mediator of a new covenant, that the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. All hangs on Christ and His efficacious death; and those that are called pay earnest heed to the glad tidings of God and await the eternal inheritance that is promised. For the blessing comes of faith, that it may be according to grace: no other way honours Christ to God's glory, or puts man in his true place. No less determinate is the meaning of what follows in verses 16, 17, the idea of the inheritance naturally suggesting a will, which comes into force by the death of him who made it.” – William Kelly (*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p.170)

“Peter thus describes **the eternal inheritance** [in 1 Pet. 1.4, 5]... [And] Paul...declares (Rom. 8.17) that believers are ‘heirs of God (marvelous words!) and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be (or since) we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him’ – more marvelous words! The inheritance of these Hebrew believers had formerly been earthly, the land of Israel, with millennial blessings to come. But the eternal inheritance goes infinitely beyond that!... Eternal inheritance (9.15): Compare, ‘the *inheritance* among all them that are sanctified,’ Acts 20.32; ‘an *inheritance* among them that are sanctified by faith in Me,’ (Jesus). Acts 26.18; ‘The Father made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,’ Col. 1.12; ‘an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven’ for us – I Pet. 1.4....” [and cf. Eph. 1:10, 11, 14, 18, 22; etc.] – William R. Newell (*Hebrews Verse by Verse*, p.309)

(10) “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ continually when praying for you, having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have towards all the saints, on account of [**not in order to earn or merit**] the hope which **is** [not ‘will be’] laid up for **you** [**believers, without exception or distinction**] in the heavens [cf. v.12]; of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the glad tidings [**the Gospel of the grace of God**].” (Col. 1:3-5)

What is this “hope” that is laid up in the heavens for “you” (i.e., all believers)? Surely it is not “outer darkness” with “weeping and gnashing of teeth” for some, but joint-heirship with Christ for others? Surely this *one* “hope” cannot be divided in such a fashion, let alone be divided at all! For what kind of “hope” would “outer darkness,” for the specially “unworthy” believers, be?! Thus, as “outer darkness” is obviously not involved at all in this “hope,” then how would the fearful prospect of “outer darkness” for some saints in Christ be in any way consistent with the assured “hope” which *is now* laid up in the heavens for all saints in Christ?

“But is not the difference striking between the two [Epistles of Ephesians & Colossians] as exemplified in his [Paul’s] manner of presenting the hope? In Ephesians it is the hope of God's calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. What can be more profound or boundless? Here he could scarcely say less. Their hope was laid up, it was safe, it was ‘in the heavens,’ not (spite of philosophy or of ascetic ordinances) on the earth. Of all these they had to beware, whatever their looks and promises. Of their proper hope he would remind them, recalling them to the heavens where Christ is, the true and only deliverance from all the workings of mind in divine things and from earthly religiousness. This heavenly hope, blessed as it is, was nothing new to them; they had heard it before in the word of truth of the gospel. What the Apostle taught would not weaken or undermine, but confirm that which they had heard in the good news which converted them originally....” – William Kelly (*Lectures on Philipians and Colossians*, p.87)

(11) “Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us [**every saint in Christ, no exceptions or distinctions**] fit for sharing the inheritance of the saints in light [**not outer darkness!**].” (Col. 1:12)

Observe carefully that it is our God and Father who has made us fit or has qualified us (by virtue of our position or standing in Christ, with Whom we are in eternal union and identification), for sharing the *inheritance*; thus the inheritance is part of our so-great *salvation* (by *grace* through *faith*). The inheritance can in *no way* be *detached* from our salvation in Him; it can in *no way* be construed as a *reward* to be obtained in the future by means of *good works or personal worthiness* in an effort to so qualify us for it. *The Father has* now and forever made us fit for the inheritance (the inheritance “*in light*” for *all*, not “*in outer darkness*” for *any*)! What blessed assurance! Pure and sovereign grace! Who is it that can undue *the Father’s work* of having qualified us, so as to have any of

us disinherited and cast into outer darkness? Or who is that would dare say that the Father's work in making us fit for sharing the inheritance is *inadequate*, that good works and personal worthiness must be *added* thereto so as to merit the inheritance?

How many good works, by the way, and how much personal worthiness does it take to really earn and actually deserve such a glorious and eternal inheritance of being joint-heirs with Christ? Who will say that any of us are, or ever can be, personally worthy of meriting even a glimmer of it? It must be by *grace* through *faith*, else there would be no eternal inheritance, no joint-heirship with Christ for *any* of us at all! Who besides the incarnate, crucified and risen eternal Son of God (Who being rich became poor for our sakes, in order that by His poverty we might become rich) is *personally and inherently worthy* of being Heir of all things?

“How good as well as vast the mind of the Spirit of God! Who could ever have combined with God's glory such a place for man too? No man, I will not say anticipated, but approached in thought such a portion for souls on earth. See how and for what the apostle gives thanks again. Although there were difficulties and hindrances, how much, he feels, there is for which to praise our God and Father: ‘Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet’ (and observe well, it is not merely for the certainty that He will, but in the peaceful assurance that He has made us meet) ‘to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.’ Human words fail to add to such a thought. His grace has qualified us now for His glory: such, as far as this goes, is the clear meaning of the Holy Ghost. He looks not at some advanced souls at Colosse, but at all the saints there. There were evils to be corrected, dangers to be warned against; but if he thinks of that which the Father has in view for them, and of them in view of His glory, less he could not say, neither could he say more. The Father has made them meet already for the inheritance of the saints in light; and this, too, fully taking into account the awful state of the heathen world, and their past personal wickedness when drawn to God in the name of the Lord Jesus, ‘who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love: in whom we have redemption...even the forgiveness of sins.’ ” – William Kelly (*Lectures Introductory to the New Testament*, Vol. II p.287)

“This is a present meetness. Sharing the portion of the saints in light is a most wonderful favor; but the Apostle does not hesitate to predicate it of these Colossians whom he was going to rebuke with all solemnity in the next chapter. Still he says the Father has qualified us for sharing the portion of the saints in light. It is purposely put ‘in light’ to show how absolute is the effect of God's work in Christ... Our Father *has* made us meet for *this*. The effect of law is always to put God at a distance. Therefore here the Father is put forward...This blessing depends upon two things: first, upon the effect of the blood of Christ in completely atoning for our sins; and next, upon the fact that we have the life of Christ communicated to us, which life is capable of communing with God in the light. Both these gifts of grace are absolutely true of every Christian. He has the blood of Christ cleansing him as much as he ever can have, and he has life in Christ communicated to his soul as much as ever can be. That which follows in after experience as regards this (for I speak not of service, etc., but of growth in intelligence) is simply having a deeper estimate of what Christ's blood has done and what He Himself is, who has shown us such infinite favor and done so much for us. Our Father has done more, as the Apostle shows further how we are thus qualified: ‘Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.’ It is not merely a question of wicked works, but of the power of darkness; how could we, then, be delivered from Satan? He says they were delivered and, more than that, ‘translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love.’ It is all perfectly done. The deliverance from the enemy of God is complete, and so is the translation into the kingdom of the Son of His love. ‘In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.’ ” – William Kelly (*Lectures on Philipians and Colossians*, p.94-96)

(12) “And now I commit you to God, and to the word of His grace [**not works or merit!**], which is able to build you up and give to you an inheritance among all [**not some of**] the sanctified [the saved ones, those set apart unto God, in Christ Jesus: e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2].” (Acts 20:32)

(13) “[I, the risen and glorified Head of My heavenly Body, the Church, am] taking thee [Paul] out from among the people, and the nations, to whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Me [**i.e., all saints in Christ**]. (Acts 26:17, 18)

Observe once again that our past-tense salvation (of which remission or forgiveness of all our sins is a most blessed feature) and our future-tense salvation (of which our eternal inheritance in and with Christ is a most blessed feature) go hand in hand; they are inseparably linked as part of our so-great salvation in the crucified, risen, ascended, and glorified Christ. Such a heavenly salvation, with all of its infinite blessings of grace, is received by simple *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!*

Both the forgiveness of sins and the inheritance (joint-heirship with Christ) are essential parts of *the one Gospel of the grace of God* in this present age – the good news which is received *by faith*. Thus no part of it – neither the forgiveness nor the inheritance – is a matter of works or personal worthiness. *All* believers receive the eternal forgiveness of sins; thus *all* believers receive the eternal inheritance. It is all by sovereign grace through faith: the precious blood of the God-Man being the ground of all.

No room is thus left for a divided Body, with a special class of worthy or deserving saints as the sole joint-heirs of Christ, and the remaining unworthy ones as the dwellers of outer darkness.

If any of us were to actually be judged, as to our persons, according to our works, it would not be merely our works that would be consumed or burned up (1 Cor. 3:15)! We would *all* have to be cast into outer darkness! What believer in their right mind will say that they are not personally worthy of being cast into outer darkness, let alone that they are, or ever can be, *personally worthy* of being a joint-heir with Christ? But thanks be to God, we have an absolutely infinite, eternal, changeless, perfect Righteousness, Acceptance, Life and Hope *in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

(14) “And He that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He says, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And He said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be to him God, and he shall be to Me son [all children or born-ones of God are sons, and consequently heirs of God through Christ; cf. Eph. 1:4, 5; Rom. 8:16-18; Gal. 3:26-29; 4:6, 7; Heb. 12:23b; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4]. But to the fearful and unbelieving, and those who make themselves abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part is in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.” (Rev. 21:5-8)

I refer you to all comments made previously in regard to “overcomers” (i.e., all genuine children of God), in Section II (5) above. But briefly, as noted earlier:

“There are those who overcome, and there are those who *are* overcome. These latter are lost (II Peter 2:20). They give up Christ’s words (1 Corinthians 15:2, Colossians 1:23, Mark 8:38). We note two classes – and only two – in Revelation 21:7, 8.” “And, be it noted, the only two classes seen in this final eternal order are those who *overcome*, and those *cast into the lake of fire*. The ‘overcomers,’ thus, are shown to be *all God’s true children*. For all had the divine gift of *faith*, all were *begotten of God*. So we read in I John 5:4: ‘Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.’ ” – William R. Newell (*Revelation: A Complete Commentary*, p.42, 339)

“The overcomer here [Rev. 21:7], as in chapters 2 and 3, is the believer, the one who has drunk of the water of life [21:6]. For him there is sonship with God forever.” – Charles L. Feinberg (*A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, p.155, 156)

(15) “But when the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared, not on the principle of works which have been done in righteousness which we [**all believers**] had done, but according to His own mercy [cf. 1 Pet. 1:3] He saved us [**all believers**] through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us [**all believers**] richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, having been justified by His grace, we [**all believers**] should become heirs according to [not works, but] the hope [springing from the present possession] of eternal life [or new birth; cp. 1 Pet. 1:3, 4].” (Tit. 3:4-7)

“Some object to ‘heirs’ standing alone; but it is all the more absolute because it does. In Rom. viii. 16, 17, we are told that we who believe are children of God; and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and Christ’s joint-heirs. It is

not inheriting this or that but ‘heirs also,’ and to make it indefinitely rich, ‘heirs of God and Christ’s joint-heirs.’ Again, in Gal. iv., the believer is no longer a bondman but a son, and if son, heir also through God (assuredly not through man, himself or others). Thus we learn the double truth, that by faith, not by works of law, we are heirs of God, and this through God. What can be less tied to limits than this title? All is sovereign grace. It is He Who made us His heirs; and we are to inherit what Christ will inherit in glory. To Titus the apostle speaks so as to leave us ‘heirs’ all the more largely, because it is quite indefinite. It was all by God’s grace; and what of good for us has He withheld? Yet we have important words which accompany it: ‘Heirs according to hope of eternal life.’ This life in Christ is the believer’s now; but we have it in a body full of weakness, compassed with infirmities, and in fact mortal. Our bodies will enjoy the life when our hope is accomplished at the coming of Christ. Eternal life will be no longer hid with Christ in God, but manifested according to all the power of His glory, as it is even now the gift to faith, the inestimable gift of God’s grace. [See Phil. 3:20, 21]... What a privilege for the believer to enjoy now! What a responsibility to walk accordingly and bear a true witness to Him! It is nothing less than Christ in us the hope of glory. When He comes to Israel, the glory will be possessed and manifest. We have Him as life while He is hidden in God; and when He shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory.” – William Kelly (*An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul to Titus and of that to Philemon*, p.111-113)

(16) “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His great mercy [**cf. Tit. 3:5**], has begotten us again to a living hope [true of every believer, no exceptions or distinctions] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you [the identically same born-again believers], who are kept guarded by the power of God through faith [not our works, merit or worthiness] for salvation [and thus of grace] ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Pet. 1:3-5)

Observe carefully that those who have been “born again” (i.e., **all** believers) have been born again “to an inheritance.” That is, our present possession of the inheritance (reserved for us in the heavens) is the result of being born again, i.e., children of God (if children, heirs also: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ). As the new birth is not the result of good works or personal worthiness, then neither is the eternal inheritance. The inspired Word does *not* say: “*all* believers have been begotten again unto a living hope; but only *some* specially worthy, persevering, deserving believers will obtain, *in the future*, an eternal inheritance.”

There is absolutely no distinction made, or even remotely implied, between all born-ones of God and an imagined sub-set of super-spiritual saints who earn the inheritance in the future by perseverance and good works in the present. The Apostle Peter, by the Spirit, is all too clear. The inspired language leaves no room for our possession of the eternal inheritance, our join-heirship with Christ, to issue from anything other than *God’s work* – that of making us, by sovereign grace, partakers of the divine nature, making us present possessors of Eternal Life in the risen Christ, our Living Hope (Christ in us the hope of glory). What ground does the Spirit-Author here afford you to disassociate the certainty of eternal inheritance (the effect) from the new, heavenly birth (the cause), and, instead, to base a rather uncertain prospect of it on personal merit?

And notice, too, that we are not kept guarded by the power of God, for final salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, through personal merit or worthiness! Impossible! Future-tense *salvation*, as with our past and present-tense salvation, is through faith that it might be according to grace. As the Apostle Peter says in v.13 of the same chapter: “Wherefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope perfectly for the grace that is to be brought to you at Jesus Christ’s revelation” (1 Pet. 1:13)

“The hope of such an inheritance reserved for them in the heavens was most cheering. But in thinking of themselves and the wilderness through which they pass, they needed and have another source of blessed comfort – you, says he, ‘that are being guarded by (or, in) God’s power.’ What more suitable, what more precious and welcome, than such a divine assurance? The inheritance was kept or reserved for them in the heavens. This was just what was wanted, while they were on the earth waiting and learning self as well as God, and suffering for righteousness’ sake or, still more blessed, for Christ’s name. But, as proving their own weakness and men’s hostility and Satan’s active malice, they were constantly exposed to difficulties, trials, afflictions, and dangers. Hence their need to be meanwhile guarded all the way through. And so they are – garrisoned by God’s power. And if God be for us, who against? Is He not immeasurably more than all? Still God has His means; and this the apostle proceeds next to tell us. It is ‘through faith.’...Thus the new life imparted, as abundant as the mercy that

begot us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from out of the dead, has a result no less worthy of the God and Father of our Lord. It is for an inheritance incorruptible in itself, undefiled by evil, and unfading in its beauty. It is not on earth as Israel looks for their portion, but reserved in heaven for saints who in their weakness are being guarded in the midst of difficulties and dangers through faith unto salvation, founded on a sacrifice even now accepted, and therefore ready to be revealed...in a last season which will manifest the grand purpose of God.” – William Kelly (*The First Epistle of Peter*, p.23, 26)

“Nor is it only that we find here the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, but the life that grace has given us is characterized by resurrection power. ‘We are begotten again,’ says he, ‘to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ The blood of Jesus Christ, however precious and indispensable, does not of itself constitute a man a Christian either in intelligence or in fact of standing. It is the foundation for it; and every one who rests on the blood of Christ is surely a Christian; but I repeat that, both for position before God and intelligent perception and power of soul, we need and have much more... Still the Christian does need the effect of the resurrection of Jesus following up the sprinkling of His blood – I do not say the resurrection without His blood, still less the glory without either. A whole Christ is given and needed...[We are not] in scripture limited to that most wonderful of all foundations – redemption through Christ Jesus our Lord. To restrict yourself to it would be a wrong, not so much to your own soul as to God’s grace; and if there be any difference, especially to Him who suffered all things for God’s glory and for our own infinite blessing. In this case then we have the Christian by divine grace possessed of a new nature which loves to obey. He is sprinkled with Christ’s blood, which gives him confidence and boldness in faith before God, because he knows the certainty of the love that has put away his sins by blood. But, besides this, what a spring is conveyed to the soul by the sense that his life is the life of Jesus in resurrection. So, he adds, there is a similar inheritance for the saints with Christ Himself – ‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven,’ where He has already gone. More than this, there is full security, spite of our passing through a world filled with hatred and peril, for the Christian above all. ‘For you,’ says he, ‘who are *kept*,’ for Christian doctrine is not, as men so often say, that of saints persevering. In this I, for one, do not believe. One sees alas! too often saints going astray, comparatively seldom persevering as the rule, if we speak of their consistent fidelity and devotedness. But there is that which never fails, – ‘the power of God through faith,’ – by which the believer is kept to the end. This alone restores the balance; and thus we are taken out of all conceit of our own stability. We are thrown on mercy, as we ought to be; we look up in dependence on One who is incontestably above us, and withal infinitely near to us. This ought to be the spring of all our confidence, even in God Himself, with His own power preserving us. There is given to the soul of him who thus rests on God’s power keeping him a wholly different tone from that of the man who thinks of his own perseverance as a saint. Far better is it, then, to be ‘kept by the power of God through faith.’ In this way it is not independent of our looking to Him.” – William Kelly (*Lectures Introductory to the New Testament*, Vol. III p.236-238)

(17) “For **ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** For as many of you as were [Spirit] baptised into Christ, have put on Christ. There is no Jew nor Greek; there is no bondservant nor freeman; there is no male and female; for **ye are all one in Christ Jesus:** but if [since] ye be Christ’s [**which all believers are**], then ye are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise [not according to works, merit, perseverance, or worthiness].” (Gal. 3:26-29)

“Manifestly, if each one of us is in Christ, Christ must be the same for each and all of us. There can be no distinction here. For distinction, we must look away from Christ; but if then we ‘are Christ’s,’ then ‘are we Abraham’s seed [or Seed],’ in the fullest way identified with the very One in whom the blessing was to be, identified with the very Heir of all blessing, and therefore heirs according to promise, ‘in the Seed:’ that is Christ, in whom we are.” – F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*, Vol. VI, Acts to 2 Corinthians, p.306)

“The object of the whole is to show that, important as the law was for bringing people’s transgressions plainly before them, yet now that a Christian has Christ, he has already confessed his sins, and has to do with another state of things altogether.... He takes up the grand distinctions of men naturally, and shows that these things did not characterise them as Christians. That which alone stamps me as such, is that I have Christ, and have put on Christ. ‘For ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.’ That is to say, they had not to pass under circumcision, or any other rite of the law, in order to get the promises. The Holy Ghost brings into these promises by having Christ. If you are striving to gain them by the

law, you lose them; if you receive Christ, they are assuredly yours. *He* is the true seed of Abraham, and, having Christ, I have all the promises of God. ‘For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.’ Thus, you see, he is giving the final touch to the great argument of the Holy Ghost throughout the whole passage: that the Gentile believer has nothing whatever to do with the law as a means of blessing from God; that he may use the law as a weapon against the ungodly, but that in Christ he has done with the question of law [as a principle] – has emerged definitely out of it all, and now he is in Christ. And if I am there, I have all that Christ can give. The point is, to give all the glory to Christ. The force of the passage must strike any thoughtful mind in looking round upon the present time. The evil against which Paul was warning them has now become overwhelming. In one shape or another the law is mingled with Christ; and therein you have poor Christians endeavouring to keep the two husbands at the same time [cf. Rom. 7:1-5]. It is not something that we merely describe about others, but most of us know it from experience. We have proved both its misery and the blessing of deliverance from it. And may God be pleased to vouchsafe the same deliverance to every child of His who has tasted as yet only the misery and not the deliverance.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 85, 86)

(18) “But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if [since] son, heir also through God [i.e., *through God constituting us such; not through works or merit potentially making us heirs in the future*].” (Gal. 4:6-7)

“... ‘thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.’ Observe, it is not what they shall be; not that they are always infants in this world, and shall get their blessing in heaven, but ‘*thou art no more a servant but a son*.’ If you were a Jew, you would be the servant of the law. But now, no matter what you were, if you had been an idolater, you have passed, in receiving Christ, into the fulness of the blessing that is due from God to His beloved Son [not due to us for imagined personal worthiness]. God has no blessing too great for the heart that bows to Him – ‘if a son, then an heir of God through Christ [cp. Rom. 8:17].’ He enlarges the sphere: it is not merely heir of this or that, but heir of God. What God possesses, what God will have in the blessed day that is coming, He will share with His children. And that is the meaning of the last clause in Ephesians i. 18. See also Romans viii. Such and no less, is the place for which God destines us; He does not mean to keep anything back. As grace has been, so the glory will be, God's answer to the devil's insinuation in Eden.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on the Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 100, 101)

(19) “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we ARE children [born-ones, regenerated] of God. And if children, heirs also: heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs [*Gr. sunklēronomos, used also in Eph. 3:6 and 1 Pet. 3:7*]; if indeed [since] we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him [*all saints in Christ suffer with Him; all are glorified with Him*]. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to [*in regard to*] us [*us children of God, all of us, no exceptions*].” (Rom. 8:16-18)

The “coming glory” to be revealed, according to the immediate context, pertains to entering *experientially* into the present *position and possession* of joint-heirship with Christ – upon glorification with Him at the Rapture and return with Him at the Revelation. Thus, as the coming glory will be revealed in regard to all of us who are the children of God, so also are all the children of God to be glorified with Christ and to enter experientially into their present position and possession of joint-heirship with Him.

Observe carefully that the Apostle Paul does not say that certain special suffering ones (or persevering, worthy ones) will become in the future joint heirs of Christ; but rather, that all children of God are now positionally joint heirs of Christ, which is *proven* by the fact that we all co-suffer with Him and will thus be co-glorified with Him (and enter *experientially* into our *present position and possession* of joint heirship with Him who is Heir of all things).

The passage does not read, “And if children, heirs also: heirs of God; *but we will become* Christ's joint heirs if suffer with Him....” Rather (and how blessedly full of Christ's grace and truth!), “And since [we ARE, v.16] children, [we ARE] heirs also: [we ARE] heirs of God, and [we ARE] Christ's joint heirs; since we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him.” And this – the *present position and possession* of joint heirship

with Christ by *all* believers – is clearly confirmed by all that has been brought out from the Scriptures thus far, as well as by Eph. 3:6 and 1 Pet. 3:7 (see below).

Suffering *with Him*, then, is a necessity (by the very nature of the case: by virtue of who and what we are *in Christ*), but in no way as a *meritorious* or *legal prerequisite* to joint-heirship.

Further observe that the Apostle Paul states that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed in regard to us”; thus, how can this future glory (that of being co-glorified with Christ and entering experientially into joint-heirship with Him) possibly be a matter of, or be based on, *our own* works, merit, worthiness, “perseverance,” reward?? – since our present sufferings are of *no weight in comparison* to that blessed future glory! Therefore, it *must be*, and is, a matter of *grace, all grace, and nothing but the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus!* It is totally unlike the situation of things where the *wages* of sin – physical and spiritual death – *are earned and can be compared* to that which earns it (i.e., sin). Sin’s just and equitable pay, reward, and merit is death (sin *deserves* death). In stark contrast, our blessed future glory is exactly like the situation of things where the *grace-gift* of God – eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord – *is not and cannot be earned* by man, and thus *no* amount of *imagined* personal worthiness or merit of man is *worthy to be compared* to that which *cannot* be earned by man (i.e., eternal life in Him). Actually, eternal life in Christ Jesus for those who trust in Him are some of the wages of *His work – the work of the Cross!*

As noted previously, cf. also Eph. 3:6 and 1 Pet. 3:7 (below) for more overwhelming evidence that *all* believers *are now*, indisputably, joint-heirs with Christ – by *grace*, as part of their so-great *salvation* in Him.

“The subjects of the grace of the Cross are children of God. The [New Creation] race of the risen Christ have God for their Father. But if those who are participators with Christ in His risen life are the children of God, then they are heirs – and what heirs! Heirs of God – possessors with Him of what He possesses, all things ours! But it is through Christ that we have come into this wonderful inheritance. It is as being joint-heirs with Him it is all ours. We have no claim upon it. We are absolutely without title to it save as He holds the title to it for us. But if we are joint-heirs with Him, then we share with Him the sufferings of the time of His patience, so that our glorification will also be a joint-glorification with Him (verse 17).” – C. Crain (*Readings on the Epistle to the Romans*, p.83)

“If born-ones, then heirs – We have noted that the word for children here [v.17], *tekna*, is different from the word for adult-sons (*huiioi*) of verse 14. The word indicates the fact that we are really begotten of God through His Word by His Spirit, and are partakers of His nature. Heirship is from relationship... Now, if a man is really a child of God by begetting and birth, he becomes indissolubly God’s heir! This is a fact of such overwhelming magnitude that our poor hearts hardly grasp it. It is said of no angel, cherub, or seraph, that he is an heir of God. Believer, if you will reflect, meditate deeply, on this, *I am born of God; I am one of His heirs!* earthly things will shrink to nothing.”

“Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ – I could not have the presumption to write these words if they were not in God’s holy Book. That a guilty, lost, wretched child of Adam the First should have written of him, a **joint-heir with Christ**, the Eternal Maker of all things, the Well-beloved of the Father, the Righteous One, the Prince of life – only God, the God of all *grace* could prepare such a destiny for such a creature! And, we may humbly say, perhaps, that God could only do this by joining us in eternal union with His beloved Son, as the Last Adam, the Second Man; having released us from Adam the First and all his connections, at the cross, and having placed us in Christ Risen, in all the boundless and everlasting rights of His dear Son, whom He has ‘appointed heir of all things!’ Ages after ages of ever-increasing blessing forever and forever and forever, lie in prospect for believers – for the joint-heirs!”

“ ‘That we may also be *glorified together.*’ This is the key to our question: WHO are to be glorified with Christ when He comes [all saints or some saints in Christ]? In Chapter Five Paul says (and that of, and to, all the saints), ‘We rejoice in hope of the *glory* of God.’ And in II Thessalonians 1.10 we read, ‘When He shall come to be glorified *in His saints*, and to be marveled at in *all them that believed.*’ ...And again (Col. 3.4): ‘When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall *ye* also (evidently all the saints!) with Him be manifested in glory.’ Again (I John 3.2): ‘Now are *we* (all the saints) children of God ... We know that, if He shall be manifested, *we* (all the

saints!) shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is!’ Such passages leave no room at all for a ‘partial rapture!’ [or for a ‘partial joint-heirship’ in a divided Body!] All the saints will share Christ’s glory.”

“It is difficult, impossible, to depict in language all of, or any real measure of, what is meant by the glory which shall be revealed toward us [v.18]. In fact, as we know, we are to be glorified with Christ, to share His glory, and appear with Him in glory.* [Author’s Footnote: *The expression ‘the glory which shall be revealed toward us,’ is translated ‘in us’ in the King James. This preposition (*eis*) is used twice, for example, in II Thess. 2.14: “Unto which also He called you through our gospel unto the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ This ‘glory’ is to be revealed ‘to usward’: not only to us, but in us, and therefore through us, to an astonished universe; and that forever!].... Such passages [as Colossians 3.4 and II Thessalonians 1.10] show that not only will the saints behold Christ’s glory, but, beholding, they will share that glory, and be glorified with Him. This is the great object before God’s mind now, to ‘bring many sons unto glory’ (Heb. 2.10), that they may be conformed to Christ’s image (Rom. 8.29). In constant view of that glory to be revealed in and through the Church, the sufferings which God called the saints to go through, no matter what they were, seemed as nothing.” – William R. Newell (*Romans Verse by Verse*, p.315-317, 319)

“Here the reasoning, it will be remarked, is not to our being God’s children, but from it. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God: the inference is, that if children, we are also heirs. Wondrous to say, we are ‘heirs of God;’ more wonderful still, ‘joint-heirs with Christ.’ Israel were the lot of Jehovah’s inheritance. Not such is our place; we are heirs of what God possesses; and this is both asserted in all its fulness as well as accounted for in our added title – ‘joint-heirs with Christ’ [the Heir of all things]. We are to share all things with Him, for as all things are His by right of creation and redemption, so are they ours by His grace who has placed in the utmost possible nearness to Himself. There is indeed the condition of suffering with Him in order that we may be glorified together; but this He makes good in all that are His.... all suffer with Him, who have the divine nature, even Himself as their life, in an evil world, which constantly wounds and tries those who have that nature.... This suffering [together] flows from possessing life in Him whilst passing through a scene where all is opposed to Him.... Hence, if this place of suffering in the world as it now is be a necessary consequence of divine life surrounded by all that is working out its way of misery, estrangement, and rebellion against Him, it is an immense privilege to suffer with Christ, cheered along the road by the prospect of sharing His glory.” – William Kelly (*Notes on the Epistle of the Romans*, p.142-144)

“Again, Rom. 8:17 draws out the mistaken comment that the Greek particles ‘always signify contrast.’ They may mean no more than distinction, like our ‘on the one hand’ and ‘on the other.’ All depends on the nature of the case intrinsically. Thus in 1 Cor. 12: 8 to one ($\mu\epsilon\nu$) a word of wisdom to another ($\delta\epsilon$) a word of knowledge, though here of different persons, were varieties rather than contrasts; and in Eph. 4:11 ($\mu\epsilon\nu$) apostles, and those ($\delta\epsilon$) prophets, were so far from being in contrast that they form a joint class in 2:20 and 3:5. But we need not go so far from here. Take for instance Rom. 6:11, ‘dead indeed to sin ($\mu\epsilon\nu$) and (or, but) ($\delta\epsilon$) alive to God in Christ Jesus.’ To make one grace, and the other conditional, is not only error but absurdity. And so it is [to] separate heirship of God from being joint-heirs with Christ, though it is expressly a gift of grace (as in Phil. 1:29) to suffer for Him as well as with Him. He who does not suffer with Him now has not His Spirit and is none of His. It is perversion to make such a contrast in Rom. 8: 17, and 2 Tim. 2:11, 12. The contrast, if any such thing were intended, would be with the millennial saints who enjoy entire exemption from such suffering, and therefore do not reign with Christ during the thousand years. But to make this of works is utterly unscriptural; for good works characterize all saints as born of God.” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, p. 177, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

For further discussion of the fact that *all* believers suffer with Christ see comments on 2 Tim. 2:12 in Section II (11) above.

May I ask, in passing, in regard to those believers or “bastards” (Hodges’ label) which are cast into “outer darkness”: of what real value or good is it to these poor unworthy ones that they are reckoned as “heirs of God” (which you acknowledge all believers to be, though not all are “joint-heirs with Christ”)? What precisely is your understanding of the significance of being an “heir of God,” and what Scripture(s) do you base that on? Does not being an “heir of God” imply having an “inheritance”? What sort of inheritance might that be in the outer darkness? Or can the benefit of being an “heir of God” also be lost after all, by unpersevering or unworthy believers? If so, then why the great emphasis on differentiating between, and bifurcating, “heirship of God” and

“joint-heirship with Christ”? Is “heirship of God” by *grace*, or is it really similar to your *works-based* view of being a “join-heir with Christ”?

(20) “[The mystery] that the Gentiles ARE **joint heirs** [Gr. *sunklēronomos*, as in Rom. 8:17], and a joint body, and joint partakers [Gr. *summetochos*] of His promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings [i.e., by grace through faith in the Person and work of Christ – not by works, merit, reward, perseverance, faithfulness].” (Eph. 3:6)

“Now the [believing] Gentiles are ‘fellow heirs and of the same body.’ Fellow-heirs with whom? With Christ, and with all who are in Christ. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they are fellow-heirs. Grace has put them on common ground.” – William Kelly (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p.122, 123)

“The heirship itself...is different, therefore, from that which the Old Testament promises revealed [in regard to earthly saints]. It is in another sphere altogether. The Christian blessings are in the heavenly places, and the inheritance, as has been already shown us [in Eph. 1], is an inheritance with Christ [the Heir of all things]. We are co-heirs in this way, also, in a higher and more wonderful position than the Old Testament ever spoke of for any saints whatever.” – F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*, Vol. VI, Acts to 2 Corinthians, p.336)

“In this mystery of the Church there is revealed an inheritance which is far greater than any blessing promised to earthly Israel during the coming kingdom. Both, believing Jews and Gentiles are joint-heirs of Christ, and in the coming day of glory they will reign and rule with Him.... Israel's promises will be fulfilled, and they will be under Christ as King, when He comes to reign. But the body of Christ has far greater promises in Christ. The body will be joined to the head, share the glory of the head and be where the head is. The Head, Christ, and the body, the Church, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, joint-heirs, joint-members, joint-partakers – this is the mystery.” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.995, 996)

(21) “Ye husbands likewise, dwell with them according to knowledge, as with a weaker, even the female, vessel, giving them honour, as also fellow-heirs [joint-heirs, Gr. *sunklēronomos*, as in Rom. 8:17] of the *grace* of life, that your prayers be not hindered.” (1 Pet. 3:7)

“Another consideration consists of a still higher plea: – ‘as also fellow-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.’ Though the married estate is essentially of the earth, yet those here in view were the redeemed of God, His children. ‘And if children, heirs also; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.’ Husband and wife, being Christians, are appealed to as in a relationship by grace which shall never pass away. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall they exchange the present exposure to sorrow and suffering, in which we give God thanks, for that exceeding weight of glory, into which Christ has entered as our fore-runner, whilst we are waiting for Him. O dear brethren, recognise your blessedness, and count the heaviest trial but light affliction and momentary. Look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal.” – William Kelly (*The First Epistle of Peter*, p.186,187)

(22) “But ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to the assembly of the firstborn-ones [plural] who are registered in heaven; and to God, judge of all; and to the spirits of just [O.T.] men made perfect; and to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel.” (Heb. 12:22-24)

Believers – all believers – who form the Body & Bride of the Lord Jesus are here designated as “the Church of the firstborn-ones;” their title being drawn from Him who is *the Firstborn Heir* of all things (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2), as they are in eternal union, oneness, and identification with Him.

“As a company of people the bride is called ‘the church of the firstborn’ (Heb. 12:23), that is, those who are higher in position than any others.” – Herman A. Hoyt (*The End Times*, p.232)

“Further, the Christian Hebrews are said to have come ‘to the assembly of firstborns enrolled in heaven.’ There need be no hesitation in identifying this heavenly company. It is the church of God.... The day of Pentecost (that followed His death, resurrection, and ascension) first saw the new sight [of the Church, Christ's heavenly Body & Bride]. It is described here according to the divine design of the Epistle. This accounts for putting forward the

aggregate of those who compose it, firstborn ones, rather than the elsewhere familiar [terms]...of the body of Christ, and of the temple of God – His habitation by the Spirit. And those who compose it are here characterised: (1) in relation to Him who was carefully shewn us in chap. i. to be the Firstborn, the established Heir of all things; (2) in relation by grace to our proper and destined sphere of glory, heaven, and not earth where Israel as such rightly look for their blessedness and triumph under Messiah’s reign. Those who are holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, being children, are heirs also, heirs of God and Christ’s joint-heirs. He is Firstborn, alone in personal right and result of His work; but they are also firstborn truly though of divine grace. And further, they are enregistered or enrolled in heaven by divine counsel and the same grace, citizens of heaven which justly pales every other citizenship and lifts above it.” – William Kelly (*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p.250)

“[‘Church of the firstborns’:] those who, expressly as lost ones saved irrespectively of special promises (after all seemed a hopeless ruin of Jew no less than Gentile in the cross of Christ), were brought into the nearest association with Him for heavenly places. ‘And an assembly of firstborns, enrolled in heaven’ by sovereign grace as angels are not, and called to reign with Christ which a created angel never is. If we do not hear of them as Christ’s body and bride of the Lamb, as the apostles Paul and John speak elsewhere, their being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ is here recognized in the remarkable title of these as individuals. Contrary to nature which admits of but one in human limits, here they were all and equally firstborns, as He who in His own right infinitely above them deigned to treat them as His ‘fellows,’ in no way ashamed to call them ‘brethren’ (chaps. 1, 2), His holy brethren partakers of a heavenly calling, not like Israel of an earthly one however grand. They were enregistered in heaven as their proper fatherland in sovereign grace.... The richest manifestation of grace in Christ is toward the church....” – William Kelly (*Not Sinai, but Zion, With Other Coming Glories Heavenly and Earthly*, an article originally appearing in *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 5:106ff, and cited in the Jan/Feb 1998 issue of *Thy Precepts*, Vol. 13, #1, p.18,19)

(23) “Hear, my beloved brethren: Has not God chosen the poor as to the world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to them that love Him [i.e., all of His elect; cf. Rom. 8:28]?” (James 2:5)

To whom has God promised that they should *inherit the kingdom*? The Word is clear: “*those that love Him*.” And who are those that love God? The answer is obvious, and the Word is clear: “But we do know that all things work together for good to *those who love God*, [that is,] *to those who are called according to purpose*. *Because whom He has foreknown, He has also predestinated* to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the firstborn among many brethren. But *whom He has predestinated, these also He has called*; and *whom He has called, these also He has justified*; but *whom He has justified, these also He has glorified*. (Rom. 8:28-30) Paul here unmistakably equates the elect/believers of this Grace Age with those who love God.

Thus we see that James unquestionably teaches that *all of the Church Age elect/believers inherit the kingdom of God* – as they, and they *all*, are lovers of God (necessarily so, by virtue of the new birth, being partakers of the divine nature; “according to His own will begat He us by the word of truth,” James 1:18).

Notice too that, according to the inspired words of James 2:5, our inheritance of the kingdom of God is based on His *election* (thus according to grace): for God has “*chosen*” us to be “*heirs of the kingdom*.” Just as every believer has been chosen out of the world by God in eternity past unto salvation (2 Thess. 2:13), likewise has every believer been chosen out by God in eternity past to inherit the kingdom of God (which inheritance is actually a facet of that to which we have been saved in Christ as His heavenly Body & Bride).

Will anyone dare posit the ridiculous notion of a double election, or an election within an election (after the Arminian sort), in a poor and desperate attempt to circumvent the plain teaching of James 2:5? That is, posit an unbiblical idea that in eternity past God *chose out some*, from amongst all those whom He elected unto salvation, *to be the special inheritors of the kingdom of God* (i.e., those particular elect ones whom He foresaw would be personally worthy, deserving, and persevering); while “passing by” the non-chosen elect (i.e., those particular elect ones whom He foresaw would be unworthy, undeserving, and unpersevering, and thus fit themselves for “outer darkness”)?!

(24) “Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly One, such also the heavenly ones. And as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly One. But this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood [i.e., saints of Body of Christ, in mortal, unglorified bodies (v. 53, 54), which bear not yet the image of the heavenly One – not, ‘undeserving or unpersevering saints’!] cannot inherit God’s kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruptibility. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed [and thus we shall all inherit God’s kingdom – there being no longer a ‘flesh and blood’ impediment].” (1 Cor. 15:48-51)

“Again in [1 Cor. 15] vs. 49, 50, as we bore the image of the dusty man, we shall bear also the image of the Heavenly One; and this in connection with inheriting the kingdom with Christ...not a hint of some of the sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:36) falling short of their inheritance! And when from v. 51 he opens the ‘mystery’ of the living saints changed without death, the modern legend of excluding many real saints, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (else they are not properly Christian), is itself excluded as an unscriptural invention. For though we shall not all die, ‘we shall all be changed.’ For (v. 52) ‘the trumpet shall sound: and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the then living saints) shall be changed.’ ” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, p. 179, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

The Spirit-Author of the Scriptures cannot contradict Himself; hence, His Holy Word cannot contradict itself. That being indisputably so, no passage of Scripture will be found, when correctly understood, to contradict the clear teachings of His Word as presented thus far – including 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5. On the contrary, the proper interpretation of such passages will further display the perfect harmony of God’s infallible and inerrant Word.

(A) “Do ye not know that unjust persons shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor those who make women of themselves, nor who abuse themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor abusive persons, nor the rapacious, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor. 6:9, 10)

Who are the “unjust” persons that shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? As we have amply demonstrated from the Scriptures that *all* believers, in this intercalary mystery age of the Church, inherit the Kingdom of God (and infinitely more), the answer obviously *cannot* be that the “unjust” are some unworthy, undeserving, unpersevering members of the Body & Bride of Christ. This consideration alone (in view of the divine origin of Holy Writ) should suffice to answer, unhesitatingly, that the “unjust” are, and *must* be, the *unsaved*.

But, thanks be to God, we have even more to guide us in ascertaining, unequivocally, the identity of the “unjust” – we have the immediate context!

“Dare any one of you, having a matter against another, prosecute his suit before the unjust, and not before the saints?” (1 Cor. 6:1)

“And these things were some of you; but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified [declared righteous] in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:11)

The Apostle Paul, in verse 1 of 1 Cor. 6, clearly identifies the “unjust” of verse 9; there can be no doubt that they are the *unsaved* (the lost), for they are squarely contrasted with the “saints” (the saved).

And in v.11 we are told that some of the Corinthians saints were, prior to their past-tense salvation in Christ (regeneration, positional sanctification, justification), those types of sinful and perverted (unjust/lost) persons depicted in v.10 (being *characterized* by those particular evils).

The Holy Spirit, by the Apostle Paul, is thus exhorting the Corinthian saints to depart from, to flee such iniquity – *not* because they will lose their inheritance of the Kingdom of God if they engage in such heinous activities (and even more so heinous because of who and what they are in Christ) – but because such activities *are* perverted and heinous (these *evils* are in no way *normal or natural*; these *evils* in no way characterize the Kingdom of God

which the saints inherit as part of their so-great salvation), and because believers, who are eternally justified or declared righteous in Christ (rather than being “unjust”) should rather walk in a manner worthy of (*consistent with*) the calling with which they have been called of God, and not be conformed to this wicked world (which consists of unjust/unsaved persons characterized by such evils, who shall not inherit the Kingdom of God).

(B) “For this ye are well informed of, knowing that no fornicator, or unclean person, or person of unbridled lust, who is an idolater, has inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God.” (Eph. 5:5)

Again, is Paul, in Eph. 5:5, speaking of *genuine believers* (unworthy, unpersevering believers) in his declaration that persons *characterized* by such evils have no inheritance in the Kingdom? Absolutely not! Read the next few verses:

“Let no one deceive you with vain words, for on account of these things **the wrath of God** [take note!] **comes upon the sons of disobedience**. Be not ye therefore fellow-partakers with them; [**why?**] for ye were once darkness, but now light in the Lord; walk as children of light.” (Eph. 5:6-8)

The essence of all that has been said in regard to the 1 Cor. 6 passage above applies equally here. Additionally, note the following:

The “wrath of God” comes upon the *unsaved*, and never upon saints in Christ (cf. **Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 5:9**). The wrath of God, in contradistinction to inheriting the Kingdom of God, is what comes upon *the unsaved*; whereas, in regard to *the saints* (the children of light), they inherit the Kingdom of God, in contradistinction to coming under His wrath (in any shape or form).

We are left in no doubt as to the identity of the “sons of disobedience,” as Paul specifically identifies them in 2:1-3 as the unsaved: “And you, being dead in your offences and sins – in which ye once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in **the sons of disobedience**; among whom we also all once had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do, and **were children, by nature, of wrath**, even as the rest.” (Eph. 2:1-3)

Cf. also the passage in Colossians chapter 3: “Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, vile passions, evil lust, and unbridled desire, which is idolatry. On account of which things **the wrath of God** comes upon **the sons of disobedience**.” (Col. 3:5, 6)

(C) “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, schools of opinion, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revels, and things like these; as to which I tell you beforehand, even as I also have said before, that they who do such things [**those who are “doers of such things,” as being characterized by them**] shall not inherit God's kingdom [**as they show themselves to be unsaved: the unjust, children of wrath and of disobedience**].” (Gal. 5:19-21)

In connection with 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, Eph. 5:5, and Gal. 5:19-21, let us note the significance of the following scriptures:

“But to the fearful and unbelieving, and those who make themselves abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part is in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.” (Rev. 21:8)

“Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, vile passions, evil lust, and unbridled desire, which is idolatry. On account of which things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience [cf. also Eph. 5:6].” (Col. 3:5, 6)

“In Revelation 21:8, 27, certain persons identified as *liars* it is said will be excluded from heaven. In this connection, it may be observed that a child of God who has told a lie is not a liar in the sense in which that word is used to classify the unbelievers – a Christian who has lied is not, from the Biblical viewpoint, the same as an

unregenerate liar. This distinction applies equally to other sins [as enumerated, e.g., in Rev. 21:8, Eph. 5:5, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10] by which the unsaved are identified, and to assert this does not even suggest that a sin is any less so when committed by a Christian. The whole intrusion of works of merit into the sphere of grace is the ground of misinterpretation of various passages....” – L.S. Chafer (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. III p.311-312) [I’ve finally gotten in a quote by our beloved Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (though it is quite evident that he has been present *in spirit* throughout!) – that faithful servant of the Lord, and undisputed heavy-weight champion of grace and dispensationalism in the 20th Century!]

You, Hodges, Dillow, et al take 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, Eph. 5:5, and Gal. 5:19-21 as applying to believers – specifically to unworthy and unpersevering saints who ultimately *lose their inheritance of the Kingdom of God*. Using the same reasoning by which this conclusion is reached, why should it not also be concluded that such passages as Rev. 21:8 and Col. 3:5 actually teach that the same unworthy and unpersevering saints will ultimately *lose their salvation* (the wrath of God coming upon them in the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death)?

Does not your reasoning force you to the absurd and awful conclusion that there is actually no eternal security of the saints, just as there is (according to you and others) no eternal security of their inheritance?

After all, according to 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, Eph. 5:5, and Gal. 5:19-21, those who, e.g., are characterized as fornicators, idolaters, impure persons, covetous persons, sorcerers, murderers, etc. – *these all shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; and likewise, according to Col. 3:5 and Rev. 21:8, those who, e.g., are characterized as fornicators, idolaters, impure persons, covetous persons, sorcerers, murderers, etc. – *upon these all comes the wrath of God in the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death*.

I submit that, as a matter of fact, the application of the very same defective interpretative techniques, which you (and company) typically apply in seeking to establish the *insecurity* of our inheritance/joint-heirship with Christ, will similarly result in the *insecurity* of our salvation in Christ. Far be the thought! (As has been shown throughout this little “study,” our eternally secure joint-heirship with Christ is, in fact, an inseparable aspect of our so-great, eternally secure salvation in Him; thus, *they do stand or fall together*.)

IV. Re Principally the *eternal glory of the Church in and with Christ, His Heavenly Body & Bride:*

(1) “For this cause I endure all things for the sake of the elect [***all believers from Pentecost to Rapture***], that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory [***which encompasses far more than (but not less than) our joint-heirship/co-rulership with Christ as His Body & Bride; but absolutely no ‘outer darkness’!***].” (2 Tim. 2:10)

(2) “But the God of all grace Who has called you [***every believer, by that grace, not by merit or works***] to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus [***what can be higher than that?***], when ye have suffered for a little while, *Himself* shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground.” (1 Pet. 5:10)

“...for He called us, not to salvation of souls alone, great as this grace is, but to His everlasting glory in Christ. For it is a glory which far exceeds the earthly kingdom, with its thousand years of righteousness reigning, and Satan shut up, and creation rejoicing after its long thralldom of vanity and groan. The God of all grace, who has called saints to His everlasting glory in Christ Jesus, is the best security against all that creature can or cannot do meanwhile; and the more, because as Father He carries on a constant, watchful, and righteous government of His children all through the wilderness (chap. i. 13-17).” – William Kelly (*The First Epistle of Peter*, p.259, 260)

(3) “Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we [***all believers***] have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by Whom we [***all believers***] have also access by faith into this grace in which we [***all believers***] stand, and we [***all believers***] boast in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1, 2)

“Peace with God has been secured to us then in a way which never can be disturbed: faith has given us access into a place in which we stand in grace – the free favor of God, which as such cannot be forfeited. As a consequence, the future also is absolutely clear: ‘we boast in hope of the glory of God.’ It is not a doubtful hope that one can boast in [as it is not based on our works or merit].... Saul of Tarsus saw it, as Stephen had seen it, with the Son of man standing in it; and that which goes out now, as we have seen, is ‘the gospel of the glory.’ ” – F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*, Vol. VI, Acts to 2 Corinthians, p.213)

“There is entrance into favour, and nothing but favour. The believer is not put under law, you will observe, but under grace, which is the precise reverse of law. The soul is brought into peace with God, as it finds its standing in the grace of God, and, more than that, rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Such is the doctrine and the fact. It is not merely a call then; but as we have by our Lord Jesus Christ our access into the favour wherein we stand, so there is positive boasting in the hope of the glory of God.” – William Kelly (*Lectures Introductory to the New Testament*, Vol. II p.24)

“...there is a third result [of justification, according to Rom. 5:1, 2] which must not be passed by. The greater the boon, whether you look at the past with its dark sin or at the present with the settled sunshine of God's favour, so much the less can one bear to think of such blessedness coming to nought; and to nought it must all come, did the rich effects of justification depend on ourselves. But they do not. They come to us faithwise, and they rest on Christ through whom alone they are our portion. They are not temporal like Adam's tenure of Eden, or Israel's possession of Canaan. They are secured through Him who died for our sins and is raised out of the dead. Can He lose the blessings He has thus won? No more can we for whom He won them. Hence we can exultingly look on the future. Not more certainly do we stand in present grace than ‘boast in hope of the glory of God.’ Less than this does not suit our God to hold out before us. He will have us to be with and as Christ in His own glory. With us who believe He deals as to past, present, and future, ***according to what our Lord Jesus deserves and His eternal redemption***. If the righteousness be God's righteousness, not man's, if divine righteousness be the starting-point, no wonder that the grace of God is the ground in which we stand, and that the glory of God is the sole adequate hope, whether we consider the person or the work of the Saviour. May we boast of it and Him!” – William Kelly (*Notes on the Epistle of the Romans*, p.58, 59)

(4) “As ye know how, as a father his own children, we used to exhort each one of you, and comfort and testify, that ye should walk worthy of [***walk in a manner in keeping with or consistent with***] God, Who calls you [***every believer***] to His own kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess. 2:11, 12)

How can *God's work* thus be undone, so that any member of the Body & Bride of the Lord Jesus ends up (nay, is cast out by Him!) in outer darkness?!

“**Having** such a portion in the coming kingdom and **being** an heir of glory [not in order to futilely attempt to obtain such], the walk of every believer should indeed be worthy of God.” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1043)

(5) “...the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven...when He shall have come to be glorified in His saints [all of them, no exceptions]...” (2 Thess. 1:7, 10)

“When the Lord comes [to this earth] in that day He will be glorified in His saints and then wondered at in all who have believed. When He comes thus in judgment upon the world the true Church is no longer on earth, but the saints, having been previously caught up to meet Him in the air, come with Him in glory. It is the time of the manifestation of the sons of God, transformed into His image, each reflecting His glory, who is the leader and the first begotten. And so these poor, persecuted, despised Thessalonians would then be the marvels for the inhabitants of the earth when they appear with Him. Blessed future for all the redeemed to come with the Lord in glory and to be like Him!” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1055)

“The careful reader will observe that the Lord is not said in that day to come for the saints and receive them to Himself, and present them in the Father's house, as in John xiv. Here He will have come to be glorified in them, and to be marvelled at in all those [same ones] that believed. It is an evidently different and subsequent part of His advent: not the hidden scene, so near to the Lord's desire that where He is, they also may be with Him, that they may behold His glory which the Father had given Him; but the outer display, Christ in them and the Father in Him, when they are in glory thus perfected in one... The world will then know thereby that the Father sent the Son and loved the saints, appearing with Him in glory, even as He loved Him. Compare John xvii. 22, 23. The translation of His saints to heaven is one thing; quite another and subsequent is their appearing with Him in glory and judgment of the world.” – William Kelly (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians*, p.68)

“...the saints [will, at His return with us,] shine out in glory – their inheritance for evermore. It is the time of which we hear in Romans as ‘the manifestation of the sons of God.’ Such by creation, but redeemed and immeasurably exalted by new creation, they now are seen as the fruit of Christ's work [not ours!], their glory His glory: He is glorified in them...” – F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*, Vol. VI, Acts to 2 Corinthians, p.431)

(6) “But we ought to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, that God has chosen you [**all believers**] from the beginning to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereto **He has called you by our glad tidings** [by grace through faith, not by good works or merit], **to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

“What blessed reasons are stated here to give thanks to God for what He has done for us and for all who believe! Brethren, beloved of the Lord, this is what believers are. Chosen we are to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. And glory is before all [and outer darkness before none!] who have believed ‘the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ And that glory may burst upon us at any time. For this God's people wait. Therefore we are ‘to stand fast and hold fast’ [v. 15].” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1059)

“The manifested character and awful doom of those who abandoned the truth when most fully brought out had been laid before us. Now we are told of the simple blessedness of those who cleave to the grace of our Lord in the gospel, and its effect upon the heart of those who wrought in the work, and were sharers in the blessing. It would be a poor ground of thanksgiving if the salvation were precarious; but this is quite to mistake the nature of Christianity, which is founded on the glory of Christ's person and on the everlasting efficacy of His atoning work. Hence on the one hand the unspeakable guilt of rejecting, and above all of apostatizing from it; as on the other hand the blessedness and security of those who enter in by faith... Doubts and fears are not of faith any more than the presumption founded upon our own estimate of ourselves, the natural effect of law acting upon the human mind for despair or false confidence. Christ and His work of redemption alone give a true foundation

before God, and as the foundation is immutable, so with faith there need be hesitation neither in the channels nor in the objects of this grace, as we see here.”

“Thus, if we have God’s purpose in Himself before time, we have the object He proposed as to the saints for eternity. He chose them from the beginning unto salvation. This He effectuated in time for the saints in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, not by a law curbing the lusts and passions of a fleshly people under the elements of the world....And then the end, how high and holy as well as excellent! How worthy of God and suitable for His children! It was not merely to attain blessing, but ‘to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ As He is the One in whom all the divine counsels centre for the display of His own excellency, so would His grace have us who now believe to share it with Him. ‘If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

“It is remarkable how the thoughts of men cross the word of God when His grace is brought out as a living, believed, and applied reality. Speculative men wonder and judge after their puny way that the apostle should call the saints to steadfast adherence in ways and words to the truth [v. 15-17], after he had just owned their calling of God to obtain the glory of our Lord. The mere mind of man regards this as logical inconsistency, conscious or not: why, reason they, should those elected to salvation be exhorted to aught more? Is not all sure and settled on divine grounds? But it is the elect, the consciously blessed and happy children of God, whom scripture everywhere urges to vigilance and prayer, to reading the word of God and all other means of spiritual wellbeing; never do we find such calls to the unbelieving and the fearful. Those who owe all, and who own that all is due, to sovereign grace, are the very persons to show diligence in their responsible services day by day. And how can this be known save by the revelation of His mind? If we are God's workmanship, we were created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them. To faith alone all is plain and sure. If Christ is believed on God's testimony, we believe His love from first to last, and His word is a law of liberty to our souls. The reasoning that sets His grace at issue with our responsibility is seen at once to be of Satan. Subject to the word we believe both, go forward in peace, but acknowledge the need of all He lays on us.” – William Kelly (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians*, p.132, 133, 137-139)

(7) “To whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you [all believers], the hope of glory [heavenly glory with Christ Who is our Life].” (Col. 1:27)

“The things to come for the church – the preparation for marriage, the presentation to the Bridegroom, the manifestation with Him, the exaltation with Him, and the experience with Him – are the hope of the church. The church is now being prepared for that day, for it is asserted, ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Col. 1:27). This hope should encourage us to endure present sufferings. ‘For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us’ (Rom. 8:18).” – Herman A. Hoyt (*The End Times*, p.111)

“The mystery of which he writes [Col. 1:25-27] is not the coming of Christ to this earth, His incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again. All this was not a mystery, for it was revealed in the Old Testament. The mystery made known through him and of which he writes is a glorified Christ who unites all [believers of the present age] in His person, the Head in glory, who has a body composed of saved Jews and Gentiles, who are one in Him, and ‘Christ in...you the hope of glory’ which looks forward to the consummation, when this body which is now forming, through the preaching of the gospel, is to be with the Head in glory. This is the mystery which was hid in former ages. It is unrevealed in the Old Testament and therefore exclusively a New Testament revelation.”

“And what is this mystery of God [Col. 2:3] in which the treasures, yea all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden? The mystery of God is Christ. But it is not Christ in incarnation, in His life on earth, His death on the cross and His resurrection. Nor is it Christ [without reference to His Body & Bride *in Him*] at the right hand of God, or Christ coming again [without reference to His Body & Bride *with Him*] to rule over the nations on earth and establish His kingdom of glory. All these things are subjects of divine revelation in the Old Testament. They are not a mystery. It is Christ, the Head of the body and believers in union with the glorious Head, joined to Him by His Spirit, possessing His life, one with Him, destined to share His glory. This is the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And what treasures these are! How

little His people know of all this mystery of God contains! It will take eternity to know and enjoy these treasures, the unsearchable riches.” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1028, 1029)

“There are two great parts in this hid but now manifest mystery (v. 26). The first is that Christ should be set in heaven above all principalities and powers, and have the entire universe given to Him, as Head over the inheritance on the footing of redemption – Himself exalted as Head over all things heavenly and earthly, and the Church united to Him as His body, He being thus given as Head to the Church over all things. Then the other side of the mystery is Christ in the saints here below, and in such a sort as to bring in the Gentiles with the utmost freedom.... The hope of glory is the hope of all the glory that flows out of His heavenly place as now at God’s right hand. In Ephesians the Apostle dwells more upon the first of these aspects, in Colossians on the second. Hence the point here is not our being in Christ as Head over all, but Christ in us, the hope of all. But it is in contrast in both cases with Jewish things. The Messiah’s reigning on earth over Israel, with the nations rejoicing also, is a true expectation gathered from the Old Testament prophets. In Colossians it is Christ now in us, but the glory not yet come. Christ in us is the hope of the glory that is coming by-and-by when we shall be glorified and appear with Christ. This was a state of things entirely foreign to Jewish anticipations. Christ in heaven and the saints not yet with Him there, but waiting to be with Him, and meanwhile Christ in them the hope of glory, but of a glory not yet come. There was nothing like this in the older oracles. Then they could not have expected that Christ would be in heaven and a people be one with Him there, still less that Christ should be in them, Gentiles or not, here.... Christ is said to be in us here, not dwelling in our hearts by faith, but actually the hope of glory. The hope of glory is contrasted with the Jews having Christ to reign over them in Palestine, bringing in manifested glory. The Apostle speaks of saints as now down here, but Christ in them the hope of the glory they will have with Him by-and-by above. It is Christ’s life in us in its full risen character of display.”

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus’ [v. 28]. Perfect in Christ means full grown. A man may be very happy, may enjoy the pardon of his sins, etc.; but without the unfolding of this heavenly secret (that is, Christ in the saints and the heavenly glory connected with it), he can hardly be said to be full grown in Christ. This ‘every man’ is very striking here; the repeated individualizing is the more beautiful in connection with the body. The two truths are singularly characteristic of Christianity, which unites the more opposite things in a way that nothing else does. In the Millennium, individuals will not have such an important place as now; nor will there be ‘the body’ on earth.... there is the richest place of blessing given both to the individual and the Church, the body of Christ; and both are brought out in the fulness. The human way, on the contrary, is that if what is public and corporate be much pressed, the individual suffers; so also vice versa.” – William Kelly (*Lectures on Philippians and Colossians*, p.107-109)

(8) “If [since] therefore ye [all believers] have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye [all believers] have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God. When the Christ is manifested Who is our Life, then shall ye [all believers] also be manifested with Him in glory. Put to death therefore [based on what is true of us according to 3:1-4] your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, vile passions, evil lust, and unbridled desire, which is idolatry. On account of which things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience [the unsaved in Adam – not us, the saved in Christ!].” (Col. 3:1-6)

After the any-moment Rapture, and after the subsequent 7-year Tribulation Period, when Christ – Who is our Life – shall be manifested and shall return as King to establish His millennial (and ultimately eternal) kingdom on this earth, then shall we also – the heavenly Bride of the Bridegroom-King – be manifested with Him in glory; and as His Bride-Queen, we shall thus share His throne and reign with Him forever and ever.

“Christ is not always as now to be hidden; He is about to be manifested; and when He is, we too shall be manifested with Him in glory. God will bring us along with Him, as we learn elsewhere. We shall have been translated to Him, in order that, when He shall be seen by every eye, we may have the same portion with Him. The expression ‘hid with Christ in God’ is a much more emphatic one than simply saying, He is absent in heaven.... It is not merely glorification in heaven, but what Christ has now in Himself. It is while He is hidden in God, as was said in verse 3, and in contrast with the display of His glory when He comes by-and-by, as in verse 4.

The Colossians had lost sight of this truth in great measure and were in danger of getting on a track that would have deprived them of all enjoyment of peace and confidence in God. The theory was to add what they could to Christ in order to increase the saints' blessing and security, and make a present display to His glory. The Apostle shows them that their life is *hid* with Christ *in God*. Consequently, though they possess the most perfect security, it is in accord with Christ's place, hidden and not displayed yet. 'When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness,' etc. v. 5. Because ye are dead, because ye have this new life, even Christ, and so are dead and risen with Him, mortify your members which are upon the earth. What were they? Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Such is what they – what we – really are [according to our Adamic nature, the flesh, wherein dwelleth *no good thing*].” – William Kelly (*Lectures on Philipians and Colossians*, p.139,140)

“Risen with Christ; such is the believer's position. ‘Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.’ These are the great truths of Christianity: The believer dead with Christ; risen with Christ and in possession of a life which is hid with Christ in God and therefore safe and secure. **And these facts constitute the controlling motive of the believer's life on earth.** If apprehended in faith they will lead the soul to seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The mind will then be constantly set on the things above and not on things which are on the earth. The more a believer enters into those blessed truths...by reckoning himself dead with Christ and risen with Him, with his life hid with Christ in God, the more will the things above be for him the great attraction and the things on earth will lose their charm. The things above are Christ and His glory. The things on earth include all the deceiving things mentioned in the previous chapter, such as the rudiments of the world, philosophy and words of vain deceit, legalism, ritualism, ordinances, as well as worldly ambitions, honors, pleasures and achievements. All these will fade away when the believer's heart is occupied with Him who fills the throne in glory. This is the true and only way of sanctification – heart occupation with the risen Christ. [“And I sanctify Myself for them {for them I set Myself apart positionally in My ascension into glory, entirely outside this earthly scene}, that they also may be sanctified by truth {that they might be, by the Spirit, associated and identified with Me there, and thereby be morally, experientially, progressively sanctified}.” (John 17:19)]

“When the eyes of the heart see the risen and glorified Christ and faith lays hold of the wonderful meaning for us who believe, then we learn to walk in that separation into which God has called His people. What the Christian therefore needs is an ever increasing realization in faith of his position in Christ, and then to be energized by the indwelling Spirit to seek those things which are above and not the things on earth. Such a life means joy and peace. It is a life of obedience and quietness, victorious over all earthly circumstances. And because it is a life which is hid with Christ in God, it is hidden from the world. ‘Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not’ (I John 3: 1).”

“But it will not be always thus. A day is coming when this life, hidden now, will be fully manifested. ‘When Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory.’ It will be a manifestation in glory. It comes when He comes again.... It is not the day when He comes for His saints; it is the day of His visible manifestation, when *all* His own share His glory and come with Him, when He brings His many sons unto glory. To look constantly in holy anticipation to this promised glory-event, is inseparably connected with the statements of the preceding verses. What blessed links these are: – dead with Christ – risen with Christ – a life hid with Christ in God – a life to be manifested when He comes again! May God's people know the reality of all this in power and be kept from a mere profession, lifeless and powerless, of these fundamental facts of the gospel.” – Arno C. Gaebelain (*Gaebelain's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1033)

(9) “To Him be glory in the assembly [all members of the Body & Bride] in Christ Jesus unto *all generations of the age of ages*. Amen” (Eph. 3:21)

“He has thus taken hold upon us for this very thing, and to make the Church the vessel of His praise, not simply for the present time, but in a way which nothing will exceed, forever: ‘To Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, unto all the generations of the age of ages.’ How he seems to contemplate there the whole history as it were of the future, filled with wonderful and new displays continually, to new spectators also of God's goodness and power, and to all these and in the midst of all these, the vessel of His glory will still be the Church in Christ

Jesus. Think of it, that this is what God has brought us into! Is it possible, one would ask, to add more to a revelation such as this?" – F.W. Grant (*The Numerical Bible*, Vol. VI, Acts to 2 Corinthians, p.339)

Addendum:

1. “Then we, the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them [the dead in Christ] in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we [all of us] ever be with the Lord [where can the least opening thus be found after the Rapture for any to be cast into outer darkness?]. So then encourage one another with these words [except for the unworthy, unpersevering saints?!].” (1 Thess. 4:17)

2. “Because God has not set us for wrath, but for obtaining [future-tense] salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ **[not through our personal worthiness or merit, but through Him]**, Who has died for us, that whether we may be watching or sleep, we may live together with Him. Wherefore encourage one another, and build up each one the other, even as also ye do.” (1 Thess. 5:9-11)

3. “Let not your heart be troubled [but shouldn't our hearts in fact be troubled, if there be outer darkness hanging over our heads?]; ye believe on God, believe also on Me. In My Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to Myself, that where I am ye also may be [Will He ever be in outer darkness?! We, likewise, will never be!].” (John 14:1-3)

May I ask if it is possible for any of us to know in this life, with any *certainty*, that we are amongst the elite group of super-spiritual, persevering, worthy saints? If so, how might that be? Or are we all supposed to live in fear and terror of the possibility of being cast into outer darkness, with weeping of gnashing of teeth? *Then how can our hearts be anything but troubled?* If the real possibility of being cast into outer darkness in the future is hanging over our heads throughout our present life on earth, would it not be *meaningless, delusional, and deceptive* to be, e.g., *comforting and encouraging* each other as to the *certainty* of the “blessed hope” of our being *ever and always* with the Lord in glory *upon* our imminent meeting Him in the air?

Are we really talking about scriptural Christianity anymore, or of the true nature and vast implications of salvation in Christ (*past, present, and future-tense*)? “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him”!

Did the Apostle Paul, *by the Spirit*, get it backwards [!] when he wrote: “For ye have **NOT** come to [LAW, to] the mount that might be touched and was all on fire, and **to obscurity, and darkness**, and tempest, and trumpet's sound, and voice of words; which they that heard, excusing themselves, declined the word being addressed to them any more: (for they were not able to bear what was enjoined: And if a beast should touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and, **so fearful was the sight, Moses said, I am exceedingly afraid and full of trembling;**)” (Heb. 12:18-21)

“Some good men who, in grievous error, would impose the law as a rule of life for the believer mean very well by it (for they strive to be pious); but the whole principle is false. The law, instead of being a rule of life, is necessarily a rule of death to one who has a sin nature. Far from being a delivering power, it can only condemn such. Far from being a means of holiness, it is, in fact, and according to Paul, ‘the strength of sin’ (I Cor. 15:56).” – William Kelly

“And the blessedness ‘to meet the Lord in the air’! We shall see Him then as He is and gaze for the first time [and henceforth forever] upon the face of the Beloved, that face of glory, which was once marred and smitten on account of our sins. And seeing Him as He is we shall be like Him... ‘It [the Rapture] is a solemn act of God's power, which seals the Christian's life and work of God, and brings the former into the glory of Christ as His heavenly companions. Glorious privilege! Precious grace! To lose sight of it destroys the proper character of our joy and our hope’ (*Synopsis of the Bible* [by JND])” – Arno C. Gaebelain (*Gaebelain's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1049)

“At His coming all will be complete and perfect for the heavenly family; ‘and so shall we ever be with the Lord.’ What can lack, or what be added, to such words of infinite and everlasting joy? ‘So encourage one another with these words.’ ” – William Kelly (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians*, p.38, 39)

4. "...awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall also *confirm you* [all believers, no exceptions or distinctions] *to the end, unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. 1:7, 8)

5. "But to Him that is able to keep you [all believers, no exceptions or distinctions] without stumbling, and to set you [all believers, no exceptions or distinctions] ***with exultation blameless before His glory***, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen." (Jude 24, 25)

How preposterous and monstrous is the notion of any saint in Christ, having been, by infinite grace, fully, perfectly, finally and eternally conformed – in a twinkling of an eye at the Rapture, in the consummation of our so-great salvation – to the image and moral likeness of the glorified Son of God, and presented before the Father unblamable, unimpeachable, and in the full blaze of His glory, that he should then be cast into outer darkness! – and that by the very One whose heavenly image he now bears experientially in perfection!!

"In what state does the believer appear before the Lord at the Bema? He is raised in glory. No judgment can apply to him which can affect his being in glory, for he is in it already when he appears There. What is judgment, if we are completely like the Judge – we in His image, in a body like unto His glorious body, and Himself our righteousness and very Life? "Herein is love made perfect with us [marg.], that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). We shall be in glory. We shall not have the nature, the flesh in which we sinned. But we shall know as we are known, and give account of ourselves to the Father, re-pass our whole life and all His blessed ways with us. We shall see it all as our Father sees it, and wonder at the all-perfect grace which has led us onward from our birth. We shall see the thousands of instances of how His loving eye has watched over us to bless us." (JND, as cited by MJS)

"[Citing JND:] 'When the Christian is thus manifested, he is already glorified, and, perfectly like Christ, has then no remains of the evil nature in which he sinned. And he now can look back at all the way God has led him in grace, helped, lifted up, kept from falling, not withdrawn His eyes from the righteous. He knows as he is known. What a tale of grace and mercy! If I look back now, my sins do not rest on my conscience; though I have horror of them, they are put away behind God's back. I am the righteousness of God in Christ, but what a sense of love and patience, and goodness and grace! How much more perfect then, when all is before me! Surely there is great gain as to light and love, in giving an account of ourselves to God; and not a trace remains of the evil in us. We are like Christ. If a person fears to have all out thus before God, I do not believe he is free in soul as to righteousness – being the righteousness of God in Christ, not fully in the light. And we [our persons] have not to be judged for anything: Christ has put it all away' (*Synopsis of the Bible*).' Thus the believer has no more fear of death, for he knows what awaits him; and the judgment seat of Christ has also no terror for him." – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.961)

Now seems like as good a time as any, in bringing this little "study" toward a close, to pose a few more questions...

Are those poor, unworthy, undeserving, non-persevering children of God, whom Hodges labels as "bastards," to remain as "bastards" in "outer darkness," "weeping and gnashing their teeth" *for all eternity*? If not, what Scripture do you have for the timing, circumstances and ultimate deliverance of these children of God from the Protestant-Purgatory of "outer darkness" and "bastardship"?

Will only those saints who are alive and remaining until the coming of the Lord Jesus at the Rapture be potential candidates for being "bastards" and cast into "outer darkness"? Or will all the dead in Christ – those who have been absent from the body and present with Lord, for, let's say, hundreds of years, without the flesh or sin nature, in sweet, blissful and unbroken communion with their Beloved – also be potential candidates for being "bastards" and cast into "outer darkness"?

Also, why is there not simply a "partial" Pre-Trib Rapture for the worthy, deserving, persevering, "sons" of God? Why is it even necessary for the unworthy "bastards" to be caught up in the same company with the worthy "sons" to meet the Lord in the air prior to the 7-year Tribulation on this earth? Why doesn't the Pre-Trib Rapture

itself do the “dividing up of the Body of Christ”? Why are not the unworthy “bastards” simply left behind to undergo the Tribulation-Purgatory on earth?

As Alva J. McClain wrote:

“The lofty position of the Church [in and with Christ] in relation to the coming Kingdom would be seriously inconsistent with subjection to the terrible judgments [of the Tribulation] which will prepare for its establishment. For the Church is the very ‘body’ [and ‘bride’ of Christ]...a term of intimacy never applied to any other group of people. To the members of the Church is promised that they have a part in *judging* the world (I Cor. 6:2) and that they are ‘joint-heirs with Christ’ (Rom. 8:17), destined to ‘reign’ with Him [as queen]....” (*The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*, p.464)

Would not the lofty nature and position of the Church in and with Christ, as His heavenly Body & Bride, be equally inconsistent with a subjection of some of His members to the terrible judgements said to be issuing from the Judgment-Seat of Christ?

What precisely do you deem to be the *purpose* of the Judgment-Seat of Christ? Is it *disciplinary* in nature? Or, perhaps, *punitive* in nature?

If you believe in past-tense salvation (from the penalty of sins) in any real sense, then you certainly cannot hold the *Bema* to be *punitive* in nature.

“...‘Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified’ [Psalm 143:2]. Were God to enter into judgment even of His servant, there could be no justification for him; for judgment must deal inflexibly with sins. And what servant of His has not sinned since his confession of the Savior? No, salvation is by grace through faith, but impossible on the ground of judgment according to works, which is reserved for those who refused the Lord and rejected His so great salvation.”

“The rapture of the saints is the crowning act of sovereign grace instead of being when the day of grace is past. The throne of judgment only comes into view when the heavenly saints are seated on their thrones around it above. And ‘who is worthy?’ is answered by the Lamb alone, not by them (Rev. 4, 5).” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, p. 173, 177, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

But would it be any less absurd to hold the *Bema* to be *disciplinary* in nature?

“As to failure and sin on the part of true saints through unwatchfulness, there is the plain duty of the church to exercise discipline; and the Lord acts as we read in 1 Cor. 11, dealing even to death of the body; just as the Father judges in loving care, as 1 Pet. 1: 17 says no less than John 15. They are thus chastened in this life. Nowhere is there a hint of saints detained in [outer darkness]...while their brethren reign. Saints by call are disciplined now that they may be saints practically.” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy*, p. 176, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

What possible need would there be for disciplining any glorified saint, perfectly conformed to the heavenly image of the Son (1 John 3:3), fully knowing even as also he has been fully known of God (1 Cor. 13:12)? How completely incompatible is such a notion with “the likeness to Christ consummated at His coming to present the church glorious to Himself (not part but the whole)”!

According to 1 Cor. 3, the *quality* of our “works” will be “tried” or “tested,” now, if *any* of these works have do to with sins committed in general (rather than having to do entirely with our works of *service*; some of which may be determined to be “bad,” because they were wrought in the worthless energy of the flesh with sinful motives, rather than according to the divine nature in Christ-centered faith by the indwelling Holy Spirit), *then what conceivable reason would there be to “try” or “test” the quality of a sin, to ascertain if it be “good” or “bad”* (2 Cor. 5), rewardable or unrewardable? Do I really need to ask if there is even the slightest possibility that some *sins* (which by their very nature are contrary to the will, character, and nature of God) might turn out to be *good*?! or *rewardable*?!

Allow me to close now with the following:

All that Christ is, all that Christ has, all that Christ has done – from the Cross forward – is ours, by virtue of *our Life in Him, our identification with Him, and our eternal union with Him* (through the regenerating, baptizing, indwelling and sealing work of the Spirit at the moment of salvation). For example: we were crucified together with Him; we died together with Him; we were buried together with Him; we have been made alive together with Him; we have been raised from among the dead together with Him; we have ascended and been seated together with Him in the heavenlies at the right hand of the Father; we have been glorified together with Him (again, *now* positionally so); we are new creation in Him; we have redemption in Him; we have been blessed in Him with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies; we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; we have sonship in Him; we are crucified and dead with Him to law and to the world; we are dead to the sin nature but alive unto God, in Him; we have been justified in Him; we are accepted in Him; we have been brought near in Him; we are complete in Him; He is our peace; He is our righteousness; He is our Life; He is our sanctification; He is our Hope; we are one heavenly Body and Bride in and with Him; we have been made joint-heirs with Him; we have obtained the inheritance of the universe in Him. All this, and infinitely more, will be *entered into perfectly, or manifested fully, in an experiential sense*, and everlastingly so, at the Pre-Trib Rapture and the subsequent Second Advent to the earth – all by the infinite and sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus! Absolutely no room or ground for outer darkness!!

“Herein has love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as He is, we also are in this world.” (1 John 4:17)

“Oh! wonderful grace which has saved us! Grace which has saved us in Christ and through His ever precious blood delivered us from eternal perdition! Grace which saved us from Satan's power, from sin and all its curse! Grace which has lifted into such heights of glory and has made us the sons of God and the joint-heirs of the Lord Jesus Christ! And how little after all we enter into all these things, which ought to be our daily joy and delight. How little we know of the power of the coming glory of being with Christ and reigning with Him!” – Arno C. Gaebelein (*Gaebelein's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p.1227)

“[Our] calling [cf. Eph. 4:1, 4]...embraces God's dwelling-place, and Christ's body in union with the Head over all things, immeasurably beyond the kingdom.” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly's Writings on Prophecy*, p.177, 178, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

“To construe His words here [in Luke 22:29, 30] or *anywhere else* [e.g., Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12] as a reward of their righteousness is distressing error and real self-righteousness.... Besides, glorious as ‘the kingdom’ may be, it is not so deep or precious, as life eternal or union with Christ. The kingdom will be a magnificent display of honor; but eternal life and union with Christ suppose communion with God and enjoyment of His love which is intrinsic and far beyond any display. The scheme spiritually is thus a total fallacy.” – William Kelly (*W. Kelly's Writings on Prophecy*, p. 177, “The Prize of Our High Calling” by J. Sladen: A Review by W. Kelly)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.” (Eph. 1:3)

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, (we too being dead in offences,) has quickened us with the Christ, (ye are saved by grace,) and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that He might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:4-7)

“To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, Who has created all things, in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3:8-11)

“To Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen” (Eph. 3:21)

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