

Jesus and the End Time | Issues: Proposed Conclusions

The Issues Page of the End Time Prophecy Website *Jesus and the End Time*

Status

This page shows and discusses Issues 1 through 9, and is now complete.

Introductory Notes

The documents that make up this End Time prophecy website raise a number of questions that would have been tedious and repetitious for the author to discuss at length at each of the points at which they arose. It is the purpose of this page to deal with these questions by presenting and discussing the issues on which their answers depend. To save time and space, the author will do this by presenting each issue as a short, broadly framed proposed conclusion, and then adding to it a longer, more narrowly framed discussion of its meaning. By presenting and discussing issues in this way, the author makes it possible for readers to consider each issue on either a broad general level, or on a narrow specific level, and to frame any comments they may have in correspondingly broad or narrow terms. Presenting issues in this way also makes it easier for readers to identify and comment on issues that are of interest to them. Readers who wish to post such comments may do so by going to the Facebook page of this website, <https://www.facebook.com/113484129347653/> and adding a post of their own, or commenting on an existing post. Readers can also get to this page by clicking on the Facebook link that appears on the Home page of this website.

Because the author is presenting the issues shown on this page in their present form and in their present order for the first time, he expects to revise them from time to time to include newly discovered information and/or to make improvements suggested by readers. As a result, readers should regard both the words the author uses to present these issues, and the way in which he presents them, as tentative and subject to change at any time. In order to make this process easier, the author includes on his Home page links that readers may use to contact him privately either in writing or by telephone. These links include a 'Call Us' link that readers may use to reach the author by telephone, and an 'Email Us' link that they may use to contact him in writing. Because these links are located near the bottom of the Home page of this website, some readers may find it necessary to scroll down to the bottom of that page to find and use them.

Finally, because the author believes that some of the issues he might have included on this page can result in needless controversy, he has limited the issues he did include to issues that relate more or less directly to the things Jesus taught about the End Time, e.g., the time or manner of its coming, the persons, places and things that will be associated with it, and the things that will happen before, during and after its coming. Among the issues that the author did not include for these reasons are issues that involve theological or Christological questions, such as the nature of God, the divinity of Jesus, or the existence of a Holy Trinity. Also among the issues he did not include for these reasons are issues that involve beliefs about the birth or childhood of Jesus, the ancestry of his parents, or things said by or about any of his brothers, sisters or other family members. The fact that this page does not discuss subjects of these kinds should not, however, be regarded as an indication that the author regards them as unimportant, but rather as an indication that these subjects have no direct bearing on the End Time teachings of Jesus.

Issue 1

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke portray Jesus as a Jewish teacher and apocalypticist whose teachings may be summarized as follows: the Kingdom of God is at hand; the coming of this kingdom will result in the overturning of the present social-political order and the destruction of evil; this Kingdom will be ruled by God through His anointed representative, His Messiah or Christ; people should repent and prepare themselves for entry into this Kingdom by being baptized for the remission of their sins and living good lives in accordance with God's commandments. The Gospel of John is broadly similar, but portrays Jesus as a heavenly figure who was sent to earth by God to teach men

how to gain eternal life, and who, after completing his task, returned to heaven where he will remain until the time when he returns to earth to judge the living and the dead.

Discussion of Issue 1

While the foregoing summary of the teachings of Jesus is generally accurate, it is too short to explain why it describes Jesus as an apocalypticist. To make up for this, the author includes the following discussion of how one well-known Biblical scholar defines an apocalypticist, and how the teachings of Jesus seem to fall within the scope of his definition. This definition is adapted from the Great Courses video lecture collection titled 'The New Testament' presented by Bart D. Ehrman.

(A) An apocalypticist has a dualistic view of the world. The fact that Jesus has such a world view is suggested by the fact that he frequently describes people and things as divided into pairs of opposites. Examples of such pairs of opposites include: the good and the evil (Matt. 5:45); the poor and the rich (Luke 6:20 and Luke 6:24); the blessed and the cursed (Matt. 25:34 and 25:41); the children of this world and the children of God (Luke 20:34 and 36); the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29).

(B) An apocalypticist is pessimistic about the possibility that people can improve the present age (i.e., improve the existing social-political order) by their own efforts, and therefore regards such efforts as futile. The fact that Jesus has a pessimistic view of the ability of human beings to improve the age in which they live is suggested by his teaching that people should not resist evil (Matt. 6:38-44 and Luke 6:27-35); that they should not try to interfere with the occurrence of events that are prophesied by Holy Scripture (Matt. 17:21-23); and that they should not take up the sword to resist actions taken by persons who hold positions of power (Matt. 26:51-52). See also the things he says about violent men who try to take the kingdom of heaven by force (Matt. 11:-15).

(C) An apocalypticist believes that there will come a time or Day of Judgment that will involve both the living and the dead, and result in the overthrow and destruction of evil and a reversal (or inversion) of the existing social-political order. The fact that Jesus accepted a version of this idea is suggested by his teaching that there will be a day of judgment that will result in great changes (Matt. 11:22-24, Mark 6:11, and Luke 29-32); that there will be a resurrection of the dead (Matt. 22:28-32, Mark 12:23-27, and Luke 20:33-38); that people will be judged and recompensed according to their works (Matt. 13:37-42 and 13:49-50, Matt. 16:27-28, Matt. 25:31-46, and Luke 14:14); and that there will be a reversal of peoples' fortunes (Matt. 19:28-30, Mark 10:29-31, and Luke 6:20-25 and 13:25-30). See also the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-26).

(D) An apocalypticist believes that a divine intervention in human affairs is imminent, and will result in the establishment of a Kingdom ruled by God through his chosen representative, His Messiah or Christ. (The KJV Bible often describes Jesus referring to this person as 'the Son of man'.) The fact that Jesus accepted a version of this idea is suggested by his teaching that the kingdom of heaven/God is at hand (Matt. 4:17 and Mark 1:15); that the Son of man would come before the disciples he sent out had gone through the towns of Israel (Matt. 10:23); that the Son of man and/or his kingdom would come before the deaths of some of those then standing near him (Matt. 16:27-28 and Mark 8:38-9:1); and that the Son of man would come in glory before 'this generation' passes away (Matt. 24:30-34, Mark 13:26-30, and Luke 21:27-32).

Issue 2

Jesus taught that, while the time of the coming of the Day of Judgment is unknown, its coming will be preceded by a time of sorrow and tribulation on earth, by signs and wonders on earth and in the heavens, and be followed by the coming of the Son of man with power and great glory. Many of these End Time teachings are based on prophecies that appear in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, especially those of Isaiah, Daniel, Joel, and Haggai.

Discussion of Issue 2

Some specific examples of prophecies that Jesus made about the Day of Judgment, and of the Old Testament prophecies he appears to have relied on when made them include the following:

(A) Signs of its coming will begin with a time of sorrows when many deceivers will come in Jesus' name and claim to be Christ. During this time there will be wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (Matt. 24:5-8, Mark 13:6-8, and Luke 21:8-11).

(B) Then will come a time of affliction when some followers of Jesus will betray one another and be hated and killed, and be deceived by false prophets and lose their faith. The time of the end the disciples ask about in Matt. 24:3 will come when the Gospel has been preached in all the world. Those that endure to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:9-14, Mark 13:9-13, and Luke 21:12-18).

(C) The time of affliction will reach its climax during a tribulation greater than any seen from the beginning of the world to that time. This tribulation will come when 'the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet' is seen standing in the holy place, and will continue until God intervenes to shorten its duration and save the elect (Matt. 24:15-22 and Mark 13:14-20). This abomination arguably corresponds to the 'abomination that maketh desolate' mentioned in Dan. 12:11, although there are other possibilities, such as Dan. 8:13, Dan. 9:27 and Dan. 11:31. The latter, in turn, seem to be based on v. 30 and 34 of Jer. 7:29-34.

(D) Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light (Matt. 24:29 and Mark 13:24), or there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon (Luke 21:25). With some variations in wording, these prophecies seem to be based on Isaiah's prophecy that the sun shall be darkened and the moon not shine (Is. 13:10), and Joel's prophecies that the sun and moon shall be dark or darkened (Joel 2:10 and 3:14-15), or his prophecy that the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood (Joel 2:31). See also Is. 24:23.

(E) The stars shall fall from heaven, and the heavens or the powers in them shall be shaken (Matt. 24:29 and Mark 13:25), or there shall be signs in the stars: for the powers in heaven shall be shaken (Luke 21:25-26). With some variations in wording, these prophecies seem to be based on Isaiah's prophecies that God will shake the heavens (Is. 13:13) and that the host of heaven shall fall down (Is. 34:4), and on Daniel's prophecy that some of the host and stars will be cast down to the ground (Dan. 8:10). See also Joel's prophecy that the heavens and the earth shall shake (Joel 3:16) and Haggai's prophecies that God will shake the heavens and the earth (Hag. 2:6 and 2:21).

(F) In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark Jesus prophesies that the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and send angels to gather his elect (Matt. 24:30-31 and Mark 13:26-27). In Luke he prophesies that men will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory, and lift their heads as their redemption draws near (Luke 21:27-28). Luke also describes Jesus exhorting men to be sober and watchful so that they may be worthy 'to stand before the Son of man' (Luke 21:34-36). These prophecies seem to be based on Dan. 7:13-14 and Dan. 7:27. It is unclear, however, exactly how these prophecies are related to the prophecy of the coming of the messenger and the judgment described in Mal. 3:1-5, or to the prophecy of the fiery destruction of the wicked on the great and dreadful day of the Lord described in Mal. 4:1-5.

Issue 3

The things the New Testament describes Jesus saying about the fates people will have after the Day of Judgment are in some ways similar to and in other ways different from the things the Old Testament says about the fates people will have when God intervenes in human history at the time it refers to using terms like 'the day of the Lord', 'day of vengeance', 'day of wrath', etc.

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Discussion of Issue 3

The similarities and differences between the fates the Old Testament describes some people having after the 'the day of the Lord', 'the day of vengeance', etc., and the fates Jesus describes some people having after 'the Day of Judgment', 'the Judgment', etc., may be summarized as follows:

(A) The Old Testament teaches that people who God judges to be good (or righteous) will be rewarded with life in an earthly Kingdom that is free of war and oppression by foreign enemies, and that is ruled by God's anointed one (or chosen representative), a descendant of king David. Some examples of Old Testament passages that describe rewards of this kind include: Is. 40:3-11, which describes God coming to gather, protect and lead his people; Is. 61:1-11, which describes a time of divine vengeance and national restoration when Jews will exercise dominion over the Gentiles; Zech. 12:1-10, which describes a time of great glory for the house of David; and Mal. 4:1-6, which describes God burning the wicked to ashes, but lovingly caring for the good. See also Deut. 28:1-14, which describes the many blessings God's people will enjoy if they live up to their covenant with Him.

(B) The New Testament includes numerous passages which describe Jesus suggesting that the rewards of the saved (or blessed) will be enjoyed in an earthly (or earth-like) Kingdom. Examples of passages of this kind include: Matt. 19:27-30 and Mark 10:28-31, which describe the thrones, family lives and lands that disciples will have in the regeneration (Matt. 19:28) or the world to come (Mark 10:30); Luke 13:24-30, which describes people coming from all directions and sitting down in the Kingdom of God; and Matt. 22:8-13, which describes worthy people of all types and kinds being admitted to a feast that Jesus seems to use as a symbol for the so-called Messianic banquet.

(C) The New Testament also includes numerous passages which describe Jesus teaching that the rewards of the saved (or blessed) will be enjoyed in heaven, or experienced in bodies like those of angels. Examples of passages of this kind include: Matt. 6:19-21, which portrays Jesus describing treasures in heaven as better than treasures on earth; Matt. 18:4-10, which describes Jesus speaking of children (or little ones) whose angels always behold the face of his Father in heaven; Matt. 22:28-30, which describes Jesus saying that the resurrected dead will be 'as the angels of God in heaven'; and Luke 6:22-23, which describes Jesus saying that those who suffer evil for the Son of man's sake will have a great reward in heaven.

(D) The Old Testament teaches that the people God judges to be wicked (or cursed) will be punished by being killed, destroyed, devoured, consumed, burned, cut off, etc. Some examples of Old Testament passages that describe punishments of this kind include: Ps. 9:1-8, which describes God judging and destroying the wicked; Ps. 97:1-10, which describes God burning up His enemies with fire; Is. 1:28-31, which describes transgressors being consumed and burned with unquenchable fire; and Ezek. 30:2-19, which describes the day of the Lord and the destruction of God's enemies by fire and sword, and the cutting off of multitudes of people. See also Deut. 28:15-44, which describes the many curses God's people will suffer if they do not live up to their covenant with Him.

(E) The New Testament includes a number of passages which describe Jesus (or John the Baptist) suggesting that sinners and evildoers will be punished with destruction or by being burned to death. Some examples of passages of this kind include: Matt. 7:13, in which Jesus warns people to avoid the gate and way that lead to destruction; Matt. 21:41 and Mark 12:9, in which Jesus speaks about the destruction of wicked husbandmen; and John 16:6, in which Jesus says that those who do not abide in him are cast into the fire and burned. See also Matt. 3:11-12, in which John the Baptist says that he that cometh after him will gather his wheat into the garner, but 'burn up' the chaff with unquenchable fire.

(F) The New Testament also includes a number of passages that describe Jesus teaching that evildoers, the wicked, etc. will suffer punishments by fire which will continue for a time that he leaves unmentioned, or describes using terms that are open to interpretation. Some examples of passages

of these kinds include: Matt. 5:25-30, in which Jesus speaks about a person who is cast into prison and will not come out until he has paid the last farthing (v. 25-26); Matt. 13:41-42 and 13:49-50, in which Jesus describes wicked people being cast into a furnace of fire and wailing and gnashing their teeth; and Matt. 25:31-46, which portrays Jesus describing the cursed going away into everlasting punishment (v. 46) in everlasting fire (v. 41). See also Luke 16:19-31, in which Jesus describes a rich man being tormented by fire in hell before the coming of the Day of Judgment.

Issue 4

In spite of some ambiguity in the way the KJV New Testament describes the fates people will experience in the afterlife, all but one of the clearest and harshest descriptions of these fates appear in verses that describe words spoken by Jesus. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Jesus and like-minded Jews of his time are the persons most responsible for the harshness of the New Testament's teachings about afterlife punishment.

Discussion of Issue 4

The New Testament passages and other facts that relate to Issue 4 may be summarized as follows:

(A) Except for two unusual uses of the word 'hell' in James 3:6 and 2 Peter 2:4, and four cryptic uses of that word in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:18, Rev. 6:8, Rev. 20:13, and Rev. 20:14), the only person that the KJV New Testament describes using the word 'hell' is Jesus himself*. Jesus is also the only person that the New Testament describes using harsh terms like 'everlasting punishment' (Matt. 25:46), 'hell fire' (Matt. 5:22 and 18:9), 'everlasting fire' (Matt. 18:8 and 25:41), 'furnace of fire' (Matt. 13:42 and 13:50), and 'eternal damnation' (Mark 3:29). * Note: Peter's uses of the word 'hell' in Acts 2:27 and 2:31 are not included here because these verses describe him quoting from or commenting on Ps. 16:10.

(B) The novelty and harshness Jesus' use of the word 'hell' to describe a place of afterlife punishment by fire is evident from the fact that all 31 occurrences of the word 'hell' in the KJV Old Testament are English translations of the Hebrew word 'Sheol', a word which only means the world or abode of the dead, or things closely associated with it, e.g., the grave, the pit, corruption, etc. It is also evident from the fact that Jews believed that the rephaim (or shades) of all of the dead ended up in Sheol, regardless of the kinds of lives they lived. Importantly, however, these facts should not be understood to mean that the God described in the Old Testament did not judge and punish people with fire, but rather that God judged and punished people WITH death rather than AFTER death.

(C) To achieve a deeper understanding of the way the KJV New Testament describes the teachings of Jesus about hell, it is necessary to understand the different Greek words which underlie it, and which the persons who translated the New Testament into English translated as the English word 'hell'. Specifically, of the 22 New Testament verses that use the word 'hell', 11 use it to translate the Greek word 'Gehenna', 10 use it to translate the Greek word 'Hades', and one (2 Peter 2:4) uses it to translate the Greek word 'Tartaros' ('Tartarus' in modern English).

(D) Of the 10 verses in which the Greek version of the New Testament uses the word 'Hades', 9 verses (including 3 of the 4 verses in which Jesus uses it) use it in a sense in which it means 'Sheol', the word Jews traditionally used to mean the world or abode of the dead, or things closely associated with it, such as the grave, the pit, corruption, etc. Surprisingly, however, in the last of the 4 verses in which the Greek New Testament describes Jesus using the word 'Hades', Luke 16:23, it describes him using it in a harsh sense in which it means a place of afterlife punishment by fire.

(E) In the Old Testament there are a small number of verses which describe the valley of the son of Hinnom (Ge-Hinnom) as a place where the carcasses of slain evildoers will be left exposed to 'the fowls of heaven and the beasts of the earth' (Jer. 7:30-33 and 19:3-7). This place appears to be the same as the unnamed place near Jerusalem which Is. 66:15-24 describes as the place where the

carcasses of those slain of the Lord will be exposed to the worm and a fire that shall not be quenched. By the time of Jesus this valley had become a place where trash, human and animal waste, and the bodies of criminals were disposed of in fires that never went out.

(F) The Greek version of the New Testament includes 10 verses in which Jesus is described as using 'Gehenna', a Greek transliteration of Ge-Hinnom, to refer to a place where there is a fire that is not or will never be quenched. In Mark 9:43-48 of the KJV Bible Jesus refers to this place as hell and to its fire as hell fire and, in Mark 9:44, 46, and 48, explains what he means by quoting parts of v. 24 of Is. 66:15-24. Unfortunately, it is unclear whether he is using these words in their traditional literal sense to mean the above-mentioned valley near Jerusalem, or in a new and broad sense to mean a place which is similar to that valley, but which is located below the earth or even in a place that is not on the earth. What is clear, however, is that Jesus' teachings are harsher than traditional Jewish teachings on this subject. This is because Mark 9:43-48 makes clear that the things cast into this fire are living persons and not just their carcasses. This harshness is confirmed by the eleventh New Testament verse that uses the word 'Gehenna', James 3:6, in which James writes about a tongue being set on fire by Gehenna.

(G) The one and only verse in which Greek versions of the New Testament use the word 'Tartaros' is 2 Peter 2:4. In the latter Peter seems to use Tartaros in its traditional pagan Greek sense to mean the deepest part of Hades, the place to which the Olympian gods sent their defeated enemies, the Titanic gods, for eternal punishment.

(H) Although, as explained in the Introduction page of this website, the Book of Revelation is too large and difficult a subject to discuss in a writing of the present kind, the author will here make an exception to briefly explain why he earlier described its four uses of the word 'hell' (Rev. 1:18, Rev. 6:8, Rev. 20:13, and Rev. 20:14) as cryptic. One reason is that all four of these uses are in verses that use the words 'hell' and 'death' together in peculiar phrases like 'hell and death'. Another is that one of these verses, Rev. 20:14, makes clear that hell and the lake of fire cannot be the same thing. This is because the latter verse describes hell and death as things that are cast into the lake of fire.

(I) The author will close his discussion of Issue 4 by pointing out that, although the writers of the Gospels and the writers of other New Testament books both use the words like 'damnation' and 'damned', readers should not assume that all of these writers are using these words to mean the same thing, or that many or most of them are using these words as synonyms or euphemisms for the word 'hell'. This is because these words are used to translate the Greek words, *krima* and *krisis*, which have meanings similar to those of English words like condemnation and condemned and, consequently, convey the idea of a decision with an unfavorable outcome without specifying how severe or harsh that outcome is. Paul, for example, can speak about damnation in Rom. 3:8 and 13:2, and yet say in Rom. 6:23 that 'the wages of sin is death'. Jesus, on the other hand, can use the same word more harshly in Matt. 23:33, and speak about 'the damnation of hell'. As a result, careful readers should consider the context in which the Bible describes people using words like 'damnation' and 'damned' before they draw conclusions about the severity of the outcomes that these people are writing about.

Issue 5

Except for the story Jesus is described as telling in Luke 16:19-31, all KJV New Testament passages that describe Jesus using terms like 'hell', 'hell fire', 'furnace of fire', 'everlasting fire', 'everlasting punishment', etc. to describe the harsh future punishments to which some people will be condemned portray him teaching or suggesting that these punishments will be imposed on or decreed for them at the time of a Judgment and/or a resurrection that is associated with the End Time. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the teachings of Jesus about places or punishments of these kinds were closely associated with, or embedded in, his teachings about the End Time.

Discussion of Issue 5

The New Testament passages and other facts that relate to Issue 5 may be summarized as follows:

(A) Except for a few New Testament passages that relate to ordinary human judgments, the New Testament describes the teachings of Jesus about the Day of Judgment (or 'the Judgment') as associated with the coming of the End Time. Examples of passages like these include: Matt. 16:27-28 (the Son of man shall come with his angels to reward every man according to his works); Matt. 25:31-46 (the Son of man shall come with the holy angels, sit on the throne of his glory, and judge a gathering of all nations); Mark 13:24-30 (after the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars of heaven, the Son of man shall come in the clouds and send his angels to gather his elect; and Luke 21:27-36 (the Son of man shall come in a cloud on a day which will come as a snare upon all men; all men should be prepared to stand before him on that day).

(B) The New Testament describes Jesus teaching that the Judgment will result in harsh punishments being imposed on persons who are judged unfavorably. Examples of passages which describe such punishments include: Matt. 8:12 (being cast out of the kingdom of heaven into outer darkness); Matt. 13:41-42 and 13:49-50 (being cast into a furnace of fire where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth); Matt. 25:41 and 25:46 (being made to depart into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and to there suffer everlasting punishment); Mark 9:41-48 (being cast into hell / hell fire, an unquenchable fire 'where their worm dieth not'); and Luke 16:22-28 (being imprisoned in a place of torment by fire called hell).

(C) Surprisingly, however, Jesus includes one of his most vivid descriptions of a harsh afterlife punishment in his story (or parable) of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke 16:19-31, a story which implies but does not actually describe a judgment. In this story Jesus describes the rich man being tormented by flame in hell (Hades in the original Greek) after he died because he was indifferent to the suffering of Lazarus, but describes angels carrying Lazarus into Abraham's bosom after he died. What makes this story surprising is that Jesus describes these things happening at a time when the rich man's brothers are still alive, thereby suggesting that the Day of Judgment had not yet come. One possible explanation is that this story is an example of Jesus putting consistency aside so that he could make larger points about individual responsibility and the importance of the teachings of 'Moses and the Prophets'. Another is that this story preserves a genuine early oral tradition about an immediate post-mortem judgment which was later disavowed by the Church, but which nevertheless continues to be accepted by many ordinary Christians.

(D) Unlike the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Gospel of John does not portray Jesus specifically describing either harsh afterlife punishments by fire, or a Judgment proceeding presided over by the Son of man. John does, however, portray Jesus describing two mutually exclusive fates, one for people who believe in him, and the other for people who do not, and teaching that both groups of people will enter into these fates at a time he calls 'the last day'. More particularly, John describes these two fates as either having everlasting or eternal life (John 3:15-16, John 5:24, and John 11:25-26, among many others), or perishing or suffering condemnation or damnation (John 3:15-16 and 18, John 5:29, and John 10:28, among others). In addition, John makes clear that these fates are associated with the End Time by saying that they will occur when people in their graves hear the voice of the Son of God (John 5:25-29), and are resurrected either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29). See also John 6:38-40. Thus, like the other three Gospels, the Gospel of John describes people having final fates that are associated with the coming of the End Time, but unlike them, describes these fates as including arguably less severe punishments like perishing, rather than the punishments by fire described in the other Gospels.

(E) The remaining books of the KJV New Testament other than the Book of Revelation* describe the final fates that await people as more similar to that described in the Gospel of John than to those

described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. More specifically, except for James 3:6 and 2 Peter 2:4, which use the word 'hell' in unusual ways, none of these remaining books use the word 'hell' even once, or otherwise clearly support the idea of an afterlife punishment by fire. Instead, these books describe the adverse final fates that await people using broad general words like damnation or perdition (Rom. 3:8 and 13:2, 2 Peter 2:3, and 2 Peter 3:7), or narrow specific words like death and destruction (Rom. 6:21-23, Philip. 3:17-19, 1 Tim. 6:9, and 2 Thes. 1:9). Unlike the Gospel of John, however, these books include numerous references to a Judgment or Day of Judgment (Rom. 2:3 and 14:10, Heb. 6:2, 1 John 4:17, and Jude 6). It would therefore be reasonable to say that these later books support the general teachings of Jesus about an End Time Judgment, but not necessarily his specific teachings about the harsh final punishments that may be associated with it. * Note: As explained in the Introduction page of this website, the Book of Revelation is too large and difficult a subject to discuss in a writing of the present kind.

(F) In summary, in spite of the above-discussed differences between the ways the New Testament describes the Day of Judgment and/or the resurrection, and the final fates associated with them, it describes the teachings of Jesus about these final fates as more harsh and more specific than those of anyone else, and as closely associated with or embedded in his teachings about the End Time. Interestingly, however, while New Testament books other than the Gospels and the Book of Revelation describe their teachings about these fates less specifically or less harshly than the Gospels do, they also describe them as closely associated with their teachings about the End Time.

Issue 6

Does the KJV New Testament describe Jesus making predictions about the time when the End Time would come and, if so, when did he predict that this Time would come? What do New Testament books other than the Book of Revelation reveal about the things that the disciples of Jesus, and the Christians who lived not long after they did, believed about when this Time would come?

Discussion of Issue 6

The New Testament passages and other facts that relate to Issue 6 may be summarized as follows:

(A) The early chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark describe Jesus echoing the preaching of John the Baptist that the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God) is at hand. See Matt. 3:1-2 and 4:17, and Mark 1:15. These Gospels also describe John basing his teachings on passages from Mal. 3:1-3 and 4:1-3, and Is. 40:3-5, which indicate that he (John) believed that his teachings and his mission were preparing people for the arrival of the End Time. Matthew later describes Jesus reiterating the idea that the kingdom of heaven is at hand when he describes Jesus sending out his disciples to spread this message (Matt. 10:5-15), and telling them that they would not have gone through the cities of Israel 'till the Son of man be come'. In addition, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all describe Jesus saying, with variations in wording, that those standing near him shall not taste death 'till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom' (Matt. 16:28), 'till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power' (Mark 8:38-9:1), or 'till they see the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:26-27).

(B) In an early part of his Gospel, Luke 4:16-21, Luke describes Jesus speaking in the synagogue of Nazareth and quoting from v. 1-2 of Is. 61:1-10 (which clearly relates to the End Time because the last part of v. 2 thereof specifically mentions the 'day of vengeance of our God'), and saying that this scripture was that day fulfilled in their ears. Later, in Luke 9:1-6, Luke includes a first, short account of Jesus sending out twelve disciples to preach the kingdom of God that does not explicitly mention its nearness. He does, however, mention its nearness in v. 9 of Luke 10:1-16, a second, longer account of his sending out 70 other followers. Still later, in Luke 19:11, Luke confirms the giving of these instructions when he reveals that Jesus' disciples 'thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.' Finally, in Luke 21:27-31, Luke makes clear that the nearness of the kingdom is tantamount to the nearness of the End Time when he says that, when they 'see the Son

of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory' (Luke 21:27-28), they will know 'that the kingdom of god is nigh at hand' (Luke 21:31).

(C) Like the other three Gospels, the Gospel of John describes Jesus teaching that there would be an End Time event at which people would enter into their final fates. See John 5:25-29, in which Jesus describes the Son of God calling the dead to a resurrection of life or to a resurrection of damnation, and as having the authority to execute judgment (John 5:27). See also John 6:39-40. Unlike the other Gospels, however, John does not describe Jesus giving a clear indication of the time when this resurrection and judgment would occur. It is therefore reasonable for today's readers to ask whether this indicates that, by the time this latest of the Gospels was written, the hope that the End Time would come during the lifetime of some of the people who lived when Jesus did was beginning to fade. The possibility that this might have been true is suggested by the fact that John's Gospel ends with a peculiar passage (John 21:20-24) that seems to be intended to discourage speculation about the time when the End Time would come.

(D) Other important information about the time of the coming of the End Time appears later in the Synoptic Gospels in three set piece speeches about the End Time which Jesus is described as giving on the Mount of Olives, and which are commonly known as his Olivet discourses. For present purposes these discourses will be referred to as Matthew's Olivet discourse, Matt. 24:3 through Matt. 25:46, Mark's Olivet discourse, Mark 13:3 through 13:37, and Luke's Olivet discourse, Luke 21:5 through 21:36, although some scholars prefer to break these discourses into smaller units and give these smaller units special names. Since the author has already discussed the specifics of the events that Jesus predicts in these discourses in his Discussion of Issue 2, he will not discuss these specifics again in detail here, and instead focus on what they reveal about the teachings of Jesus about the time when these events these would occur.

(E) All three of Jesus' Olivet discourses include verses which describe Jesus teaching that the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; Matthew's and Mark's discourses go on to describe him teaching that the Son of man will send his angels to gather his elect from all parts of heaven and earth. All three discourses then follow these words with his teaching that 'this generation' shall not pass till: 'all these things be fulfilled.' (Matt. 24:34); 'all these things be done.' (Mark 13:32); or 'all be fulfilled.' (Luke 21:32). Importantly, if these verses are given a simple literal interpretation, they would seem to confirm the teachings of Jesus discussed earlier in (A) above, i.e., that these things would happen before some of those standing near him 'taste of death' (Matt. 16:27-28, Mark 8:38-9:1, and Luke 9:26-27). Not surprisingly, this interpretation is controversial, with most of the controversy involving the true meanings of the words 'this generation'. While the true meanings of these words is too large a subject to discuss in detail here, it is discussed at some length in this website's PDFs titled 'The Matthean (or Markan or Lukan) End Time Discourses', under the subheadings 'The Meaning of This Generation'. Accordingly, the author will not further discuss these meanings here.

(F) In the Olivet discourses of Matthew and Mark there is another important piece of information Jesus gives about the things he teaches will happen before the Son of man comes, namely, that the 'abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet' would stand in the holy place (Matt. 24:14-16 and Mark 13:14), i.e., the Temple at Jerusalem. In the NRSV Bible this abomination is referred to as the 'desolating sacrilege'. While the meaning of these words is too large a subject to discuss in detail here, it is discussed at some length in this website's PDFs titled 'The Matthean (or Markan or Lukan) End Time Discourse'. What is important to know here is that this Temple was totally destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. And since Jesus' teachings about the abomination of desolation standing in the Temple could only be fulfilled while the Jerusalem Temple still stood, these teachings seem to confirm the above-expressed idea that Jesus believed that the Son of man would

come before the deaths of the last of the people standing near him or, in other words, before the passing of the generation of people that lived when he did.

(G) Finally, although Matthew's and Mark's Olivet discourses both include passages which describe Jesus saying that no man or angel, or even the Son, but only the Father, knows the day and hour when the Son of man will come (Matt. 24:36 and Mark 13:32-33), Matthew and Mark may well have included them primarily to encourage believers to be ready for this coming at all times, and to discourage them from making exact predictions that might fail and damage the credibility of Christianity. This possibility is at least consistent with the most nearly similar passages in Luke's Olivet discourse (Luke 21:34-36), which do not describe Jesus speaking about the day or time of the coming of the Son of man, but instead portray him focusing on the idea that people ought to be prepared for this time, whenever it comes, so that they are not caught unaware, and become caught up in it as in a snare.

(H) Generally speaking, KJV New Testament books other than the Gospels and the Book of Revelation include numerous passages which, although they use a number of different terms, all suggest that their writers expected the End Time to come in the very near future, if not within their own lifetimes. Examples of passages and terms of these kinds include 1 Cor. 15:50-54 and 1 Thes. 4:13-17, in which Paul expresses his expectation that a resurrection of the dead will occur before some of the people to whom he is writing 'sleep'. See also Heb. 1:2 and 2 Tim. 3:1, in which Paul speaks about his own time as 'these last days' or 'the last days'. Other examples of these kinds include 1 John 2:18, in which John writes about 'now' being 'the last time'; 1 Peter 1:5 and 2:20, in which Peter writes about 'the last time' or 'these last times'; and Rev. 1:1 and 1:3, in which John writes about 'things which must shortly come to pass' and states that 'the time is at hand'.

(I) Ironically, the belief of the writers of these later books that the End Time was near is confirmed by the fact that some of the things they wrote appear to have been written in order to answer the claims of contemporaries that their expectations about the nearness of this time had already failed. Examples of passages of these kinds include 2 Thes. 3:1-4, in which Paul writes that 'that day shall not come until there come a falling away first', and that the man of sin (or son of perdition) must sit 'in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God'. See also 2 Peter 3:1-10, in which Peter writes that scoffers shall come in the last days, and that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years. Finally, these possibilities appear to confirm the things the author said earlier about the ending of the Gospel of John (John 21:20-24), in which John seems to try to discourage people from speculating about the time when the End Time will come.

(J) In view of the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that, in spite of the fact that there are numerous differences between the things that New Testament writers say about the End Time Judgment and the final fates associated with it, these writers are in broad general agreement that this Judgment would come at a time during or not long after the time that they lived.

Issue 7

Have all of the conditions that the KJV New Testament describes Jesus teaching about the time when the Son of Man and Day of Judgment will come already been met? And, if they have, and these things did not come, is it reasonable to dismiss his teachings about their coming as failed prophecies?

Discussion of Issue 7

The KJV Bible passages and other facts that relate to Issue 7 may be summarized as follows:

(A) Because some of the End Time teachings that the author discussed in connection with Issue 6 use words or phrases which have meanings that are unclear, or which differ in different Gospel accounts of the same event, the process of determining whether all of the conditions that Jesus

taught must be met before the coming of the End Time is not a simple one. Accordingly, to make this process as simple as possible, the author will avoid discussing broad general conditions that could be met at most times in human history, e.g., wars, famines, pestilences, unusual celestial events, etc., and instead focus on narrow specific conditions that are directly related in some way with the coming of the End Time, or that could be met, if at all, only at particular places or times.

(B) Turning first to the question of the things that the Bible describes Jesus directly associating in some way with the coming of the End Time, there are a number of things and/or events that seem to qualify. One of the most important of these is the coming of the entity that Mark, Luke, and John usually describe Jesus calling the kingdom of God, but that Matthew usually describes him calling the kingdom of heaven. The Gospels also describe Jesus occasionally using other kingdom-based terms to refer to this entity, e.g., my Father's kingdom, his kingdom, my kingdom, or simply 'the kingdom'. Other things or events that seem to qualify include: the day of judgment (or simply 'the judgment'); the resurrection of the dead; the coming of the Son of Man in a cloud (or in the clouds) with power and great glory with his angels; the Son of Man sending his angels to gather his elect or sever the wicked from the just; the entry of the just into the kingdom or into everlasting or eternal life; and the casting of the wicked into fires variously referred to as hell, hell fire, everlasting fire, and the furnace of fire, among others. The writers of other New Testament books generally avoid using specific terms like these and instead use broad general terms like 'damnation'.

(C) Turning next to the question of the times at which the Bible describes Jesus teaching that one or more of the above-described End Time-related things or events will come or occur, or imposing a condition that must be met before they come, the Bible includes teachings of a number of different types. One of these types includes assertions that are framed in broad general terms, and that are not linked to any specific present or future event. Examples of assertions of this type that use kingdom-based terms like 'the kingdom of God' or 'the kingdom of heaven' include statements like the kingdom of heaven is 'at hand' (Matt. 4:17 and 10:7, Mark 1:15), the kingdom of God is come 'nigh' unto you (Luke 10:9 and 10:11), and the kingdom of God is 'nigh at hand' (Luke 21:31). Given their plain meaning, words like 'nigh' (or near) and 'at hand' suggest that this kingdom will come in the near future, and not in the distant future. Accordingly, given what we know has happened since Jesus spoke these words, teachings of these types can reasonably be regarded as failed prophecies.

(D) Another type of teaching about the time when End Time-related things or events will come or occur includes assertions that are framed in relatively broad terms, and that are linked to a specific event which must occur, if at all, in the very near future. An example of an assertion of this type that uses Son of Man-based terms appears in v. 23 of Matt. 10:5-23, a passage that describes what Jesus said when he sent his twelve disciples on an early missionary journey. In v. 23 Jesus says, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." While Matthew does not specifically describe the results of this mission, he suggests its failure in Matt. 11:20-24, in which he describes Jesus speaking about the woes which the cities which failed to repent will suffer on the Day of Judgment. Curiously, Luke includes two accounts of the sending out of different numbers of disciples, Luke 9:1-10 (the twelve) and Luke 10:1-20 (the seventy), neither of which mentions Matthew's prediction about the Son of man, and only the second of which Luke suggests was successful (Luke 10:17). Considered together, these accounts make it reasonable to think that the teaching of Jesus about the time of the coming of the Son of man in Matt. 10:23 is a failed prophecy.

(E) Still another type of teaching about the time when End Time-related things or events will occur includes assertions that are framed in relatively specific terms, and are linked to specific events which will occur at times that may be years in the future, but that cannot be centuries or millennia in the future. Three somewhat differently worded but good examples of teachings of this type appear in Matt. 16:27-28, Mark 8:38-9:1, and Luke 9:26-27. This is because each of these passages describes Jesus saying, with some variations in wording, that 'there be some standing here' which

shall not taste of death 'till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom' (Matt. 16:28), 'till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power' (Mark 8:38-9:1), or 'till they see the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:26-27). This is also because the idea that Jesus meant these statements to be understood as referring to a short rather than a long period of time is suggested by Luke 19:11, which describes the disciples thinking that 'the kingdom of God should immediately appear'. Thus, teachings of Jesus of these kinds appear to be further examples of failed prophecies about the time when the End Time will come.

(F) Yet another type of teaching about the time when End Time-related things or events will occur includes teachings that are framed in relatively specific terms, and that are linked to events which are described in terms that are potentially open to very different interpretations. Three differently worded examples of teachings of this type appear in the three lengthy discourses which Jesus is described as giving on the Mount of Olives, and which the author will here refer to as Matthew's Olivet discourse, Matt. 24:3 through 25:46, Mark's Olivet discourse, Mark 13:3 through 13:37, and Luke's Olivet discourse, Luke 21:5 through 21:36. In addition, to save time and effort, the author shows below the full text of those parts of these discourses that are of interest for present purposes, with colors and bracketed words added to make these passages easier to compare and contrast with one another.

Matt. 24:30-34

30 And **then** shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and **they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds** of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: 33 **So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it** [i.e., the kingdom of God] **is near, even at the doors.** 34 **Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.**

Mark 13:26-30

26 And **then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds** with great power and glory. 27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. 28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 **So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it** [i.e., the kingdom of God] **is nigh, even at the doors.** 30 **Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.**

Luke 21:27-32

27 And **then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud** with power and great glory. 28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. 29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; 30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31 **So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.** 32 **Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.**

From the above-quoted passages the author submits that several important conclusions may be drawn. One is that all of these passages closely associate the coming of the Son of man with the kingdom of God, and that one of them, Luke 21:27-32, associates these with his listeners' redemption (Luke 21:28). A second is that Jesus clearly speaks about his listeners as among those who shall see the coming of the Son of man. The third, and arguably most controversial, is that 'this generation' shall not pass until all the things Jesus describes have occurred. This is because, if 'this generation' is taken to mean the generation of people who were alive when Jesus spoke these words, and if all of those people died long ago, then it is reasonable to conclude that the above-quoted teachings are failed End Time prophecies, a position with which the author is in full agreement. There are, however, people who disagree, and who claim that the term 'this generation' should be interpreted in a way

that enables it to mean people who are alive today. Those who are interested in knowing more about the merits of this controversy should read the Notes included under the heading 'The Meaning of *This Generation*' in the PDF versions of the documents titled 'The Matthean End Time Discourse', 'The Markan End Time Discourse', and 'The Lukan End Time Discourse', all of which can be found on the Table of Contents page of this website.

(G) Importantly, Matthew's Olivet discourse does not end in the same way that Mark's and Luke's Olivet discourses do. More particularly, it does not end with an admonition for people to be watchful because they do not know the time when the Son of man will come (Matt. 24:36-51, Mark 13:32-37 and Luke 21:34-37). Instead, it goes on to tell parables about ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) and servants and talents (Matt. 25:14-30), and then ends with a lengthy description of the Son of man sitting as a king on the throne of his glory to make the Last Judgment and decree the final fates of the saved and the damned (Matt. 25:31-46). This is important because the latter passage includes the Bible's only statement about people being condemned to everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46), and its only statement about their being sent into a fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). This is also important because Matt. 25:31-46 has a number of peculiarities that make it reasonable to question its authenticity. Those who want to read more about this subject should read the Notes included under the headings 'Appendix: Comparative Notes on the End Time Judgment' that appear at the ends of the PDF documents titled 'The Markan End Time Discourse', and 'The Lukan End Time Discourse'.

(H) One other teaching of Jesus about the time when the End Time will come is so specific and distinctive that it is worth discussing here, namely, his teaching about the entity the KJV Bible describes as 'the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet' in Matt. 24:15 and Mark 13:14. This entity, which the NRSV Bible describes somewhat less mysteriously as the 'desolating sacrilege', is important because Jesus teaches that this entity will stand 'in the holy place' (Matthew) or 'where it ought not' (Mark), i.e., in the Jerusalem temple, before the tribulation (Matthew) or affliction (Mark) that will occur just before the coming of the Son of man. See Matt. 24:16, 21, and 29; and Mark 13:14 and 19. This entity is also important because Jesus' reference to Daniel suggests that this entity will be an idolatrous statue of the kind the Book of Daniel describes in v. 11 of Dan. 12:8-13 and possibly also in Dan. 8:13, Dan. 9:27, and Dan. 11:31. Finally, this entity is important for present purposes because the Jerusalem temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE and never rebuilt, a fact which means that Jesus' teaching that it would stand in the temple before the coming of the Son of man can no longer be fulfilled or, in other words, is just one more example of a failed End Time prophecy. Those who want to read more about this subject should read the Notes included under the heading 'The Meaning of *The Abomination of Desolation*' in the PDF versions of the documents titled 'The Matthean End Time Discourse' and 'The Markan End Time Discourse'.

Concluding Summary:

Even if a person assumes the meeting of all of the broad general conditions that Jesus taught must be met before the time of the coming of the End Time, e.g., wars, famines, pestilences, unusual celestial phenomena, etc., his remaining teachings about the coming of the End Time can reasonably be dismissed as failed prophecies.

Issue 8

If a person concludes that the teachings of Jesus about the time when the Son of man and the Day of Judgment will come can be dismissed as failed prophecies, is it reasonable for him to also dismiss all of his other teachings about the End Time? If not, are there any other critically important End Time teachings of Jesus which can be dismissed on other, independent grounds? If so, which teachings are they, and on what independent grounds can they be dismissed?

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Discussion of Issue 8

The KJV Bible passages and other facts that relate to Issue 8 may be summarized as follows:

(A) Historical Background. It is important for readers to know that, at the time Jesus lived, he was not the only Jewish teacher who taught the coming of a time when God would intervene in human affairs to save his people, destroy His or their enemies, and usher in new age of peace and justice. This intervention would also include the establishment of a kingdom which would never be destroyed, and which would be ruled by His anointed one (or Messiah), a king of the house of David. In the older books of the Old Testament this time is often referred to using a variety of different terms such as, 'the day of the Lord', 'the day of vengeance', and 'the day of wrath', etc., although it is also referred to simply as a time when God will judge or execute judgment. As a general rule, these books are vague or silent about the time when this intervention and judgment will come, but clear about what God will do to his enemies, namely: kill, destroy, devour, consume, or burn them. While later books, especially those from the time of the Maccabean wars down to Jesus' time and beyond, would add some new ideas about a resurrection of some or all of the dead, and about afterlife rewards and punishments of various kinds, these later books were not ultimately included among the canonical books of the Jewish Holy Scriptures. These facts are worth mentioning because they indicate that Jews who lived in the time of Jesus are likely to have regarded him as a person whose teachings were much like those of earlier Jewish teachers, except that they included some new apocalyptic (or Messianic) ideas from these later books.

(B) If a person believes that the Bible is error-free and should be interpreted more or less literally, the answer to the question asked in the first part of Issue 8 is clear. This is because, if Jesus was wrong when he taught that the Son of Man and Day of Judgment would come while some of the people of his own time were still alive, then it is reasonable to conclude that he was also wrong about the things he taught were closely associated with his teachings about this coming. This is also because the Bible often describes Jesus presenting his time and other teachings about the End Time in passages that link these ideas together in a number of different combinations, and thereby make these ideas inseparable from one another. Two examples of passages that illustrate this linking are included in the Discussion of Issue 7 above. A first of these appears in paragraph E of Issue 7, and links the idea of nearness in time with ideas about the coming of the Son of Man, the rewarding of every man according to his works, and the kingdom of God; see Matt. 16:27-28, Mark 3:8-9:1, and Luke 9:26-27. A second appears in paragraph F of Issue 7, and includes Matt. 24:29-36, Mark 13:24-32, and Luke 21:25-37. Arguably the best example of a passage of this kind, however, is the description of the Last Judgment that appears in Matt. 25:31-46, and links not only these ideas, but also the idea of everlasting punishment by fire (v. 41 and 46), and thereby lays a foundation for the now widely held conception of hell, although this passage does not actually use that word. Other, shorter passages of the latter kind include Matt. 13:37-42 and 13:49-50, which use the words 'furnace of fire'. Reasonably interpreted, passages like these clearly suggest that these ideas are so closely associated that Jesus' teachings about them must stand or fall together.

(C) Alternatively, a person may take the more flexible position that the KJV Bible may include errors that reflect the result of power struggles between early Christianity and its non-Christian rivals, or doctrinal disputes between early Christian factions. It may also include errors which take the form of passages that well-intentioned Christian writers fabricated or changed in the hope that they would motivate non-Christians to become Christians, or help Christians find the courage to stand up to the persecutions they might face at the hands of their non-Christian contemporaries. Ironically, accepting the idea that the Bible includes errors can prevent the failure of Jesus' teachings about the time when the End Time will come from causing his other teachings about the End Time to fail with it. This is because, if there are sound historical or textual reasons for concluding that Jesus' teachings about the coming of the End Time are not authentic, or not credible, that conclusion would break the

connection between his teachings about this coming and his teachings about other aspects of the End Time, and thereby allow his teachings about those other aspects of the End Time to stand or fall on their own merits.

(D) If, as is usually the case, there is no surviving documentary or other evidence that bears on the question of whether a teaching is credible, there are other ways of testing its credibility. A first test is whether a teaching has some basis in, or continuity with, earlier Biblical teachings on the same subject, or whether it represents a major unexplained departure from those earlier teachings, i.e., whether it has Scriptural credibility. A second test is whether a new teaching is a teaching of the kind religious authorities would be motivated to introduce, even without any substantial basis for doing so, because doing so serves their personal or institutional interests. In the next two paragraphs the author will discuss what these tests reveal when they are applied to the credibility of the teachings of Jesus about the time when the Son of Man / Day of Judgment / kingdom of God will come. In later paragraphs, he will discuss what these tests reveal when they are applied to a second important End Time teaching of Jesus: the idea that there is a place of everlasting fire where persons who are condemned on the Day of Judgment will suffer everlasting punishment.

(E) Turning first to the time when the Son of Man / Day of Judgment / kingdom of God will come, the author submits that the teachings of Jesus on this subject fail both of the above-discussed tests of credibility. Specifically, it fails the first of these tests because the books of the KJV Old Testament do not provide information that would enable readers to determine even an approximate time for the fulfillment of its prophecies about the coming of the most nearly similar events, i.e., the Day of the Lord, Day of Vengeance, Day of Wrath, etc., or of the Messiah. As a result, the teachings of Jesus about the nearness of this time have no substantial basis in the Old Testament. In addition, while the Old Testament Book of Daniel does include several references to 'the time of the end' (Dan. 8:15-19, Dan.12:4, etc.), the information it provides about the time of its coming is expressed in such enigmatic numerical terms, e.g., Dan. 9:21-27 and Dan. 12:8-13, that this information has frustrated numerous attempts to convert that information into actual dates. One well-known recent attempt of this kind is that of William Miller, who used this information to predict that the time of the end would come in 1843. The possibility that Jesus himself may have made such an attempt is suggested by the fact that the New Testament specifically describes him speaking about Daniel as a prophet in Matt. 24:15 and Mark 13:14. For all of these reasons, it seems clear that the teachings of Jesus about the time of the coming of the End Time fail to pass the test of Scriptural credibility.

(F) The author submits that teachings of Jesus about the time when the Son of Man / Day of Judgment / kingdom of God will come also fail the second of the above-discussed tests of credibility. This is because it is only natural for human beings to be more highly motivated by events that are described as coming while they are still alive, than they are by events that are described as coming in an unknowably distant future. As a result, early Christian writers, who wanted people to become committed to their cause and help propagate it, would have had strong personal and institutional incentives to teach that the subject events would come in the near rather than the distant future. The idea that the writers of the Synoptic Gospels were motivated to make this time as short as possible is suggested by the fact that their earliest description of the time when the Son of man will come includes the short and definite time mentioned in Matt. 10:23, while their latest description of it includes the much longer and less definite time mentioned in Matt. 24:30-34, Mark 13:26-30, and Luke 21:27-32. See paragraphs E and F of Issue 7 above. It is also suggested by the fact that the latest Gospel, the Gospel of John, has little to say about this time, except that it describes Jesus criticizing a person who asked him about it. See v. 23 of John 21:21-23. Thus, the teachings of Jesus about the time of the coming of the End Time also fail to pass the second of the above-discussed tests of credibility.

(G) Turning next to the teachings of Jesus about a place where some people will suffer everlasting punishment by fire, the author submits that the teachings of Jesus on this subject also fail both of the above-discussed tests of credibility. Specifically, it fails the first test because the KJV Old Testament does not say anything about a place or punishment of this kind. On the contrary, the Old Testament describes God punishing the people he regards as enemies or sinners by killing them, destroying them, devouring them, consuming them, burning them to ashes, etc. In addition, in its original Hebrew, it describes all of the dead as having their abode in Sheol, although a few passages do say that Sheol includes places where the unrighteous dead are kept separate from those of the righteous dead. Finally, the Old Testament says nothing about a place of afterlife punishment or torment by fire like the one Jesus refers to as hell in v. 23 of Luke 16:19-31, or about the everlasting punishment Jesus speaks about in v. 46 of Matt. 25:31-46. As a result, the teachings of Jesus about everlasting punishment by fire can reasonably be regarded as a major unexplained departure from the teachings of the Old Testament and, consequently, to fail the test of Scriptural credibility.

(H) The author further submits that teachings of Jesus about a place of everlasting punishment by fire also fail the second of the above-discussed tests of credibility. The main reason is that the idea of a place and punishment of this kind is so terrifying that early Christian writers would have been highly motivated to introduce it as a way of increasing their power and influence over their fellow Christians, and thereby advancing their personal and institutional interests. Their fellow Christians, in turn, could be expected to be receptive to these ideas because they would allow them to imagine themselves and those they love from being saved from this fate, while imagining their enemies and persecutors would be hopelessly trapped in it. Christian writers may also have been influenced by the fact that there were some similarities between these Christian ideas and pagan Greek and Roman ideas about the fates that the wicked dead might face in the parts of their underworlds they called Tartarus, and the possibility that these similarities might make it easier for people to convert to Christianity. Thus, the teachings of Jesus about hell as a place of everlasting afterlife punishment by fire also fail to pass the second of the above-discussed tests of credibility.

Concluding Summary:

If a person believes that the Bible is error-free and nevertheless concludes that the teachings of Jesus about the time of the coming of the End Time are failed prophecies, it is reasonable for him to conclude that his other teachings about things closely associated with that Time are also failed prophecies. If, on the other hand, a person believes that the Bible may include errors and concludes that the teachings of Jesus about the time of the coming of the End Time are failed prophecies, it may nevertheless be reasonable for him to think that Jesus' other teachings about things closely associated with that Time are true, if there are other, independent reasons for thinking that they are, e.g., that these other teachings pass the test of Scriptural credibility. Because the teachings of Jesus about everlasting punishment by fire do not pass these tests, it is reasonable for a person to conclude that his teachings about a punishment of this kind may be dismissed as unsound or untrue.

Issue 9

If a person concludes that the teachings of Jesus about everlasting punishment are untrue, is it reasonable for him to also conclude that all of Jesus' other teachings about the End Time and things associated with it are also untrue? If not, which other End Time teachings of Jesus is it reasonable for a person to think are probably untrue, and why? Finally, once a person identifies and dismisses all of the End Time teachings of Jesus he thinks are probably untrue, what is it reasonable for him to believe about what may happen to him when he dies?

Discussion of Issue 9

(A) Even if a person concludes that the teachings of Jesus about everlasting punishment by fire are untrue, it would be unreasonable for him to conclude, without more, that his other teachings about the End Time and things closely associated with it are also untrue. This is because there may be

other, independent reasons for thinking that at least some of his other teachings on these subjects are or may be true, namely, that they pass one or both of the two above-described tests of credibility. While there are no small number of these other teachings, the writer will here limit himself to discussing the most important of them, and the basic questions or ideas that underlie them. Among these are questions about: (1) a Day of Judgment at which God will decree the final fates of some or all human beings, (2) a resurrection of some or all of the dead, (3) the afterlife rewards that God will give to persons He judges favorably, and (4) the afterlife punishments that God will impose on persons He judges unfavorably. In the paragraphs which follow, the author will discuss each of these subjects individually, and explain why he thinks that the Bible's description of the teachings of Jesus about them may or may not pass the above-described tests of credibility. After he has done this, he will go on to discuss what is or may be reasonable for a person to believe about what is likely to happen to him when he dies.

(B) A first subject that was often discussed among Jews who lived about the same time as Jesus involved questions about a Day of Judgment, e.g., what would this Judgment entail, who would it affect, when and how would it come, etc. In the Old Testament a number of different terms are used to describe this Judgment. These include terms like day of the Lord, day of vengeance, day of wrath, etc., but not the term 'Day of Judgment' as such. Ideas about this Judgment range from simple ideas like those described in Ps. 97:1-10, Is. 66:15-24, and Mal. 4:1-5, which visualize God coming to earth, slaying or burning up his enemies, and saving or restoring the fortunes of His people, to more ambitious ideas like those described in Is. 61:1-11, Dan. 7:9-14, and Dan. 7:21-27, which visualize a kingdom or world in which Gentiles will be subservient to and yet revere God's people. Interestingly, except for the Judgment that Jesus describes at length in Matt. 25:31-46 (See Issue 8 above.), the New Testament portrays Jesus describing his ideas about the Judgment by quoting from or alluding to traditional Bible passages about it. In Luke 4:16-21, for example, Jesus quotes from the first two verses of Is. 61:1-11, a messianic text that visualizes a Judgment that will result in a time of Jewish supremacy over the Gentiles (Is. 61:5-9). On the other hand, the fact that Mark 9:10-13 describes Jesus teaching that John the Baptist is the Elias (Elijah in the Old Testament) that Mal. 4:5 predicts must come before the day of the Lord, suggests that he also visualized a Judgment, like that described in Mal. 4:1-5, in which the wicked will be burned up and become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Mal. 4:3). In view of examples like these, the author submits that, except for Matt. 25:31-46, the teachings of Jesus about the Day of Judgment are similar enough to those described in the Old Testament that it is reasonable to think that they pass the test of Scriptural credibility.

(C) A second subject that was often discussed among Jews who lived about the same time as Jesus involved questions about a resurrection of the dead, e.g., if there will be a resurrection of the dead of some kind and, if so, will it involve all or only some people, will people who are resurrected have physical or spiritual bodies, etc. One extreme view on this subject was the idea that there will not be a resurrection of any kind, as Mark 12:18 and Luke 20:27 describe the Sadducees teaching. Other, more widely held views on this subject included the idea that there will be a physical resurrection of the bodies of the people of the whole house of Israel, as described in Ezek. 37:1-14, or of the bodies of particular individuals, as described in Job 19:23-27. Another Old Testament view of the subject is that described in Dan. 12:1-3, which teaches that many of the dead shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. The New Testament also includes passages which support the idea of a physical resurrection, although its ideas about a resurrection include more supernatural elements than those described in the Old Testament. In Matt. 22:28-32, Mark 12:23-27, and Luke 20:33-38, for example, Jesus describes persons who are resurrected from the dead as neither married nor given in marriage, but 'as the angels of God in heaven' (Matt. 22:20), 'as the angels which are in heaven' (Mark 12:25), or as 'equal unto the angels' (Luke 20:36). Similarly, in Matt. 19:28-30, Mark 10:29-31, and Luke 18:29-30, Jesus describes the lives that people who will live in the regeneration (or in the world to come) in seemingly physical terms, but adds that they will

have everlasting life. Unless a person believes that having everlasting life in a body like that of an angel is too supernatural to be compatible with existence in the physical realm, however, it is reasonable for him to think that Jesus' ideas about a physical resurrection of some kind are similar enough to those described in the Old Testament that they pass the test of Scriptural credibility.

(D) While Jews who lived about the same time as Jesus discussed questions about the Judgment and the resurrection separately, they also discussed them together, as related parts of an event associated with the coming of the End Time. In the Book of Daniel and the Gospel of John, for example, the writers fuse the two events and speak of the dead as 'awaking' to everlasting life or everlasting contempt (v. 2 of Dan. 12:1-4), or as coming forth to the resurrection of life, or to the resurrection of damnation (v. 29 of John 5:25-29). In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, on the other hand, the writers describe the Son of man coming with power and great glory, and sending angels to gather his elect from the four winds and all parts of heaven (Matt. 24:30-31), or from the four winds and the uttermost parts of earth and heaven (Mark 13:26-27), without using the word 'resurrection', or saying anything about what happens to those who are not among his elect. Still other Gospel passages include Luke 14:13-14, in which Jesus speaks about a person being recompensed at the resurrection of the just, without using any form of the word 'judgment'. Passages like these, however, both involve events very different from that portrayed in Matt. 25:31-46, in which Jesus describes a trial-like Judgment proceeding at some length, but includes in that proceeding a gathering of all nations without revealing whether the people of those nations include the living, the resurrected dead, or both. In view of examples like these, it seems clear that, even if a person believes that the teachings of Jesus about a Judgment and a resurrection have Scriptural credibility, he still faces the problem of determining if and how those teachings fit together into a coherent whole.

(E) Part 1. Another subject that was often discussed among Jews who lived about the same time as Jesus involved questions about the rewards that God will give people at or as a result of the Judgment, e.g., the forms that these rewards will take, the place(s) where people will enjoy them, how long they will last, etc. In the earliest written books of the Old Testament, the generally accepted view was that God will reward good people with long and blessed lives on earth (Deut. 28:1-14), but that all men, good and bad, will die and end up in Sheol, i.e., in the abode or world of the dead. In books of the Old Testament that were written later, after Jews experienced defeat and oppression at the hands of hostile neighbors, ideas about rewards that are associated with a Judgment and/or a resurrection began to appear. Even these ideas, however, visualized God rewarding people with lives of peace and justice in an earthly kingdom established and ruled by God or his anointed representative, the Messiah. See, for example, Joel 2:21-32, in which God promises his people lives of safety and plenty, and assures them that they will never be ashamed. A number of passages in the New Testament also support the idea that the rewards people will enjoy when the kingdom of God comes are rewards that will be enjoyed on earth. In Matt. 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 (i.e., the Lord's Prayer), for example, Jesus prays, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.", a prayer which suggests that the kingdom of God will be present on earth when people live their lives in accordance with God's will. In addition, in Luke 1:26-33, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that the Lord God will give her son the throne of his father David, that he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and that his kingdom shall have no end. Finally, in Matt. 19:28-30, Jesus says that, in the regeneration when the Son of man sits on the throne of his glory, those who have forsaken earthly things for his sake will sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel, receive these things back a hundredfold, and have everlasting life. If teachings like these were the only teachings of Jesus about the rewards people will receive at the Judgment, it would be reasonable for a person to think that these rewards will be physical, earthly rewards of the kind described in the Old Testament and, consequently, that these teachings pass the test of Scriptural credibility.

(E) Part 2. The problem with the conclusions expressed in paragraph C and Part 1 above is that the Gospels and other New Testament books also include teachings, including teachings of Jesus, which seem to support the idea that people will be resurrected as angels or spirits, that their rewards will be eternal or everlasting life, and that they will enjoy these rewards in heaven, rather than on earth. As explained in paragraph C, for example, Matt. 22:28-32, Mark 12:23-27, and Luke 20:33-38 all describe Jesus stating that the resurrected dead will be 'as or equal to angels', a statement which can be read to mean that they will actually be angels, albeit of a special kind. Another example is Matt. 19:16-21, in which Jesus answers a rich person's question about what he must do to have eternal life, and adds that, if he does these things, he will have treasure (i.e., a reward) in heaven. Still another example is Luke 16:19-31, the story of Lazarus and the rich man, in which Jesus describes Lazarus enjoying an afterlife reward in a place 'afar off' from hell (Luke 16:23) called Abraham's bosom that appears to be located in heaven. Other New Testament figures, such as Paul, describe their ideas about rewards in even more supernatural terms. In 1 Cor. 15:50-54, for example, Paul states that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God', and that, at the last trump, both the living and the resurrected dead will be changed into incorruptible and immortal beings. In 1 Thes. 4:13-17, Paul goes further and states that, at the coming of the Lord, the resurrected dead and the living shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and ever be with him. Unfortunately, rewards of these kinds are not only unlike those described in the Old Testament, they are also unlike the earthly rewards discussed in Part 1 above. As a result, it seems clear that the idea that the rewards people will receive at the Judgment are rewards they will enjoy in heaven, and not on the earth, is an idea that lacks Scriptural credibility.

(F) Part 1. Still another subject that was often discussed among Jews who lived about the same time as Jesus involved questions about the punishments that God will impose on people at or as a result of the Judgment, e.g., the forms these punishments will take, the place(s) where people will experience them, how long they will last, etc. In the earliest written parts of the Old Testament, the generally accepted view was that God will punish evil people with short and cursed lives on the earth (Deut. 28:15-29ff), but that all men, good and evil, will die and end up in Sheol, i.e., in the abode or world of the dead. In parts of the Old Testament that were written later, after Jews experienced defeat and oppression at the hands of hostile neighbors, harsher ideas about punishments associated with a Judgment or a resurrection appeared. Even these ideas, however, visualized God using things like swords, fire, natural forces, etc. to punish people by killing, destroying, burning, devouring, or consuming them. Some parts of the Old Testament go further, and describe the bodies of the wicked dead being treated with contempt, e.g., by leaving them on the ground like dung (Jer. 9:22), or as carcasses for scavenging birds and beasts (Jer. 16:4). One such idea that emerged by the time of Jesus was that, when God came to earth and slew His enemies, their carcasses would be dumped and left in the unholy place near Jerusalem, called the valley of the son of Hinnom, or Ge-Hinnom (Gehenna in Greek), where trash, human waste, dead bodies, etc. were disposed of in fires that burned day and night. (See in this connection Is. 66:15-24, v. 24 of which Jesus quotes, with some changes in wording, three times in Mark 9:43-48.) In spite of ideas of this kind, the books that would later be included in the canon of the Jewish Bible continued to maintain traditional Jewish ideas about death in general, and death or destruction inflicted as divine punishment. Until the time that this canon was closed, however, these books competed with other books, usually written in Greek, which contained Greek influenced ideas about things like the immortality of the soul, the immediate post-mortem judgment of individuals, and an afterlife in a place under the earth like the place the Greeks called Hades, but without its ruling divinity, the Greek god Hades.

F) Part 2. In the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus about the punishments God will impose on wicked people at the Judgment have problems that parallel those discussed earlier in connection with his teachings about the rewards God will give good people at that time. One of these is that, in some cases, his teachings seem to be based on the idea that the wicked will be punished with

destruction or, in other words, with death. See, for example, Matt. 7:13, in which Jesus says, "...broad is the way that leadeth to destruction." In other cases, such as Matt. 13:40-43 and 13:49-50, his teachings seem harsher, and describe the wicked being cast into a furnace of fire. Mark 9:43-48 goes even further, and three times describes him teaching that the wicked will be cast into hell or hell fire, a fire that is not quenched, where their worm dieth not, a teaching about carcasses in Gehenna that he quotes (with some changes in wording) from Is. 66:24. See also the torment by flame he mentions in Luke 16:22-24, and the everlasting punishment he speaks about in v. 46 of Matt. 25:31-46. The teachings of Jesus about very harsh fates like these, however, do not seem compatible with the less harsh fates, such as the resurrection of damnation that John portrays him describing in John 5:29, or with the fate of simply perishing that John portrays him describing in John 3:15-16. Such harsh punishments also find little support in the writings of later New Testament authors, who say little or nothing about hell or punishment by fire and, instead, describe sinners being punished with death (Rom. 6:23) or with 'damnation', a vague and indefinite term that conveys the idea of condemnation without revealing what this condemnation entails (Rom. 13:2). Among these different punishments, however, only those that involve death or destruction, especially by fire, are similar enough to those described in the Old Testament, or in later written parts of the New Testament, that they seem to be compatible with the teachings of the Bible as a whole. As a result, it seems reasonable to conclude that the idea of hell as a place of afterlife punishment by fire that continues without end forever is an idea that lacks Scriptural credibility.

Concluding Summaries:

In view of the foregoing, the credibility or truth of the things that the New Testament describes Jesus teaching about the Day of Judgment, the resurrection, and rewards and punishments that people will experience in heaven and hell may be summarized as follows.

The Day of Judgment: The teachings of Jesus about a Judgment at which people will be judged and rewarded or punished according to their works have deep roots in the KJV Old Testament and, consequently, pass the test of Scriptural credibility. In addition, because rewards and punishments of some kind seem to be inherent in the idea of a Judgment, the teachings of Jesus about their association with this Judgment also pass the test of not being ideas of a kind that early Christian writers would have been likely to fabricate. As a result, it is reasonable for a person to conclude that the teachings of Jesus about these subjects are credible.

Resurrection: The teachings of Jesus about a resurrection of the dead arguably support the idea of a physical resurrection, although his ideas on the subject include more supernatural elements than those visualized by the Old Testament. This is because these teachings include the idea that resurrected people will have bodies like those of angels. See Matt. 22:20, Mark 12:25, and Luke 20:36. They also include the idea that, in 'the regeneration' or 'the world to come', people will have everlasting life. See Matt. 19:28-30, Mark 10:29-31, and Luke 18:29-30. Unless a person thinks that a body of this kind is too supernatural to be compatible with existence in the physical realm, however, it is reasonable for him to think that these teachings are similar enough to those of the Old Testament that they pass the test of Scriptural credibility. On the other hand, these teachings may reasonably be regarded as ideas of a kind that early Christian writers would have been likely to fabricate. As a result, the author considers the overall credibility of these teachings to be a matter about which reasonable people may disagree.

Heaven: The teachings of Jesus about afterlife rewards which people will experience in a place above the earth called heaven are problematic. One reason is that this idea finds little real support in the Old Testament, which emphasizes rewards that God's people will enjoy during life on earth. Another is that New Testament descriptions of the teachings of Jesus about rewards are of two seemingly different types. A first type includes rewards of a mundane kind and an everlasting life that his followers will enjoy on earth after 'the regeneration' (Matt. 19:28), or 'in the world to come'

(Mark 10:30). A second type includes rewards of a more supernatural kind and an everlasting life that his followers will enjoy in heaven. Of these, rewards of a mundane earthly kind have Scriptural credibility, while rewards of a supernatural heavenly kind do not. In addition, the parts of both types of rewards that include everlasting life involve an idea that early Christian writers would have been highly motivated to fabricate. Since the idea of a supernatural kind of reward and everlasting life in heaven fails both tests, it is reasonable for a person to reject the idea that there is a heaven of this kind.

Hell: The teachings of Jesus about afterlife punishments by fire which people will suffer in a place below the surface of the earth called hell are problematic. One reason is that this idea finds little real support in the Old Testament, which repeatedly describes God punishing His enemies WITH death, rather than AFTER death. Another is that while both the KJV Old testament and the KJV New Testament use the English word 'hell' numerous times, the two Testaments use these words to describe different things, and to translate different words in their original languages. In the Old Testament 'hell' is used to translate the Hebrew word 'Sheol', and to refer to the abode or world of the dead, or things closely associated with it, e.g., the grave, corruption, etc. In the New Testament 'hell' is used translate both of the Greek words 'Hades' and 'Gehenna' (Hebrew Ge-Hinnom), and to refer to the place of departed souls, or the place of burning worm-infested carcasses that Jesus refers to when he quotes Is. 66:24 in Mark 9:44, 46 and 48. Since neither Hades nor Gehenna has characteristics similar to those of Sheol, however, neither supports the idea that hell is a later but still Scripturally credible version of the idea of Sheol. In addition, ideas about hell as a place of fiery torment (Luke 16:23) are ideas of a kind early Christian writers would have been highly motivated to fabricate. As a result, it is reasonable for a person to reject the idea that there is a hell of this kind.

Final Thoughts: Proposed Takeaways

The author will close his discussion of the End Time Teachings of Jesus by summarizing what a person who believes in God, and in the ultimate triumph of divine justice, might find it plausible to believe about them, if he were to reject those End Time teachings that the Discussions of Issues 7 through 9 suggest are unsound or not Scripturally credible. Before doing this, however, he wishes to make clear that such beliefs comprise one set of opinions among many other possible sets of opinions, and nothing more. That said, the author submits that one good way for a person to deal with the difficulties presented by the New Testament's account of the teachings of Jesus about the End Time is to stop thinking about these teachings as specific predictions about things that were supposed to have happened during the lifetimes of people who died many centuries ago, and start thinking about them as general ideas about the kinds of things that every person may face when his own, personal 'End Time' comes. To illustrate how a person might do this, the author offers the following examples of these general ideas that are framed using words and concepts similar to those he uses in the Concluding Summaries above.

The Day of Judgment. Given the above-described teachings of Jesus about a Day of Judgment, it seems reasonable for a person to ask why this Day should include the gathering of large numbers of people, in one place and at one time. See, for example, the gatherings of the elect described in Olivet discourses of Matthew (Matt. 24:3 through 25:46), and Mark (Mark 13:3-37), but not in the Olivet discourse of Luke (Luke 21:5-37). One problem with such a gathering is that it would have been a logistical nightmare in the time of Jesus, and would be a much larger logistical nightmare today, given the much larger number of people who are alive today. Another problem is that such large numbers of people would effectively preclude the judging of people as individuals. It therefore seems reasonable to re-conceptualize this idea as the judgment of each person individually at the time of his death, an idea that scholars often describe as an 'immediate post-mortem judgment'. Interestingly, this is an idea which was widely known and accepted by many people who lived both before and after the time of Jesus, and which makes as much common sense now as it did then.

The Resurrection. Given the above-described teachings of Jesus about a resurrection, it seems reasonable for a person to ask if it makes any sense to adopt any specific ideas about it. As explained earlier, there have long been disagreements about this subject. For example, 'Will a resurrection be physical and corporeal, or will it be spiritual and non-corporeal?' Also, 'Will a resurrection involve bodies with ages like those of the bodies with which they died, or with bodies that are all of the same age?' Will all people be resurrected, or will many or only a few people be resurrected? It therefore seems to make sense for a person to believe that it is not important for him to know their answers now, and to be content with the idea that everyone concerned will know their answers when the time comes. On the other hand, the author sees nothing wrong with a person speculating about what these answers might be, as long as he regards them as matters of opinion. The author, for example, speculates that only very good or very bad people will be resurrected and judged. This is because many, if not most, people lead lives that are such mixtures of good and bad thoughts and actions that trying to make black and white judgments about them does not seem to be worth the effort. Interestingly, this idea leads to results not very different from those visualized by the ancient Greeks and Romans, namely, that most of the souls that inhabit the underworld experience neither rewards nor punishments, and that the latter are given to or imposed on only on the best and worst of men.

Heaven and hell. Given the above-described difficulties with the teachings of Jesus about the final fates or destinations of the dead, it seems reasonable for a person to ask if it makes sense to even try to answer any of the questions that the KJV Bible raises about a heaven and a hell. Do either or both of these places exist as real places, or as states of mind or being? If they exist as places, are these places located where the Bible says they are? Are the rewards and punishments associated with a heaven and hell like those described in the Bible? Does everyone go to either heaven or hell, and what determines where a person goes? Rather than trying to find the right answers to specific questions like these, the author thinks it makes more sense for a person to do his best to live a good life, and place his trust in God's wisdom, justice and mercy. Aside from that, it should be enough for a person to reserve judgment on these questions, and content himself with the general idea that God will give to each person He judges the reward or punishment he deserves, and to continue them for as much or as little time as necessary to serve the ends of justice. And if the uncertainties inherent in taking this position make a person more cautious about the kind of life he lives, that may well make for a better world than relying on theories about being saved, in spite of having lived a bad life, by the atoning sacrifices of others.

Everlasting Punishment. Before closing, the author wishes to weigh in on one last question about afterlife punishment that has vexed Christian theologians for a very long time, namely, the question of whether everlasting punishment (aka eternal punishment) refers to a punishment that continues, without end, for all eternity. In the third century, the theologian Origen argued that all persons will eventually be reconciled with God and thereby eliminate the need for such punishments, an idea commonly known as 'Universalism'. In the fifth century, on the other hand, the theologian Augustine argued that the punishment of evil persons must continue without end for all eternity because the rewards of good persons will continue without end for all eternity, an idea known as 'Eternalism'. While only God knows the true answer to this question, of course, the author here suggests an alternative outcome that is based on a careful study of the meaning of the Greek root word that the KJV Bible translates into the English words 'everlasting', 'eternal' and 'for ever' (forever in modern English). This Greek root word is 'aion', a word which means 'an age' or 'a long period of time'. This fact is important because it means that, although the English words 'everlasting', 'eternal' and 'for ever' have connotations that suggest endlessness, the Greek word forms from which they are translated do not. On the contrary, the Greek words from which they are translated have connotations that involve a period of time which is of indefinite length, but which is normally not considered to be infinitely long. This, in turn, suggests that the real question a person should ask is, "What term best describes the maximum duration of the age or period of time God might decree for

the punishment of human beings?" In the author's opinion the term that best describes this duration is 'the Age of Man', a term he uses to mean the age or period of time during which men and women existed as living beings somewhere in universe. This is because he regards this duration as the best way of providing all of the time necessary for justice to be done, but providing it within limits that prevent future ages from being burdened with the task of continuing rewards and punishments for actions taken by persons who lived and died during ages that came and went in the distant past.

Readers who want to know more about how the meanings of words like 'everlasting', 'eternal', and 'forever' are affected by the meanings of various forms of the Greek root word 'aion' are encouraged to look at the examples of the KJV Bible's use of the word 'aion' which are shown in the Fig. 1 of the document titled 'Senses of the Word *Everlasting*', and described in the associated text. For the readers convenience the author here includes an extra copy of Fig. 1.

Fig. 1

'Everlasting' or 'Eternal' = 'Aion' = an Age or Long Period of Time

Matt. 25:46: everlasting punishment = kolasin aionion

John 12:50: life everlasting = zoe aionios

2Thes. 1:9: everlasting destruction = olethron aionion

2Tim. 2:10: with eternal glory = meta doxes aioniou

'For Ever' (or 'Forever'?) = 'Into the Age'

Luke 1:55: to his seed for ever = to spermati autou eis ton aiona

Rom. 1:25: blessed for ever = eulogetos eis tous aionas

Gal. 1:5: To whom be glory for ever = O e doxa eis tous aionas

Greek words are adapted from 'The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament'
Color graphics courtesy of https://www.jesusandtheendtime.com/pdfs/senses_word_everlasting.pdf