

Part A: Salvation, Part B: Judgment, Part C: The Ages to Come

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C-1: Fate of Judas

As several of Jesus’ parables pointed out - the parables of the two servants, the foolish virgins, the talents and the minas - there is the possibility of what Gabriel had pointed out long ago: many of those who have come to Christ, although citizens of the Kingdom, will, nevertheless, have to endure something called “*shame and everlasting disgrace*”. ([Daniel 12:2](#), NLT)

Likely, this is reserved for the worst offenders: the Judases and betrayers, the hypocritical persecutors of the true Christians, those who have fought unjust wars in the name of Christ, those who have led others astray, and so on. Not only will they be deprived of the honors and rewards given to those who “*shall awake to everlasting life*”, but they will have to undergo the painful and shattering realization of their errors - agony of spirit as suggested in the phrase “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Daniel 12:2, Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 24:51, Luke 13:28)

Perhaps the apostle Peter’s example can shed some light on what this is like. Peter went through a period of remorse after denying his association with Christ. He was condemned by his own conscience because of his cowardice and betrayal. Nevertheless, Peter was still under God’s care. Prior to this Jesus had said, “*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.*” (Luke 22:31-32)

As Hebrew 12 points out, chastening, when needed, may come from God’s hand; it is not the Devil’s prerogative only. And although chastening is not pleasant for the moment, it does bring forth the “*peaceable fruit of*

righteousness". This is what it means to be a son of the Father. We are all wayward children at some time or other, and because of His concern for us, God gives us the benefit of whatever (tailor-made) chastening we may need.

While in the throes of it, however, one can easily lose sight of the ultimate goal and start saying with Job, ***"Why then did you even let me be born? Why didn't you let me die at birth? Then I would have been spared this miserable existence."*** (Job 10:18-19, TLB) This statement was prompted by the fact that Job didn't understand what was going on behind the scenes in the spirit realm, nor was he able to see the end result and great reward for continuing to trust in God.

In a sense we are all like Job. Come the end of our earthly life we lose everything (temporarily at least). And this serves as a a time of re-orientation, a necessary preparation stage at the entrance gate to Heaven. Those who are ready will sail right through; others will have to be detained there for some time.

To enter the Kingdom is a great reward - even for those who betrayed the Lord or betrayed their conscience. And we've all done this to a small or big degree in our lives. So in some way we can relate to someone like Judas. And his example acts as a warning to those who turn so far away from the Light they have received that they proceed to tear down the Kingdom. For there can be serious consequences. So grave will be the remorse that Jesus remarked, ***"Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."*** (Matthew 26:24)

This is a difficult concept to grasp if one is used to thinking of Heaven as a domain without any of those nasty things like remorse, heartache, and so on. However, Heaven is the domain where God's help and presence are readily and easily available - much more so than they are on earth. And if that's the case, then His Light and mercy will shine more brightly to expose and help souls to shed the dark areas of their lives. Although this is a wonderful, cleansing process to undergo, it also is not without the pain of remorse. But as promised in Revelation 21:4 and 7:17, ***"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."***

We all mess up at some time or other during our lives. And we have to “pay the price” as it were. But God, in His mercy, is faithful to come through at such times, as expressed in the following prophetic message:

(Message from Jesus:) If you feel you’ve turned your back on Me and that I couldn’t possibly understand the pain and the burdens of your heart, this message is for you... If you feel you have failed Me time and again, draw close to Me and let My peace encompass you. If you feel inadequate and too sinful to be worthy of My love, I want you to remember that I love you and gave My life for you! If you feel overwhelmed, as if you’re drowning in an ocean of woes, I love you and am with you. ([“Love for All Eternity”](#) - Anchor Post, August 2023)

That message was meant for any of us (all of us really) who feel like failures at some time or another in this present lifetime. But the same message could apply also to those who, in the Afterlife, wind up in that unhappy state known as “*shame and disgrace*”.

Those who have come to Christ at some point in life but later turn back, regardless of what they have done, remain citizens of the Kingdom. In the Afterlife, though, there will be no escape from having to face up to the sad realization of error. However, Instead of waking up to some state of “*shame and everlasting disgrace*”, how much better, in our earthly lives, to follow the apostle Peter’s advice to remain vigilant in spirit:

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2Peter 1:10-11)

The implication here is that believers can arrive in poor shape upon their “*entrance into the eternal kingdom*”. Conversely, what about those who practice these virtues to the best of their ability but have not heard Christ’s message in a way that they could properly understand or receive? Would they not be deserving of a place in the Kingdom?

In Romans 2 Paul makes a strong case along this line about the people who didn’t happen to know what the Jewish people knew about the law

and the ways of God.

“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.” (Romans 2:14-15)

Then Paul goes on to say,

“And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?... For there is no partiality with God.” (Romans 2:27,11)

Paul is making the case here that some of the Jews who knew the law and were hypocritical were “lower on the scale”, so to speak, than those Gentiles who, even though ignorant of the law, were obeying it from their “hearts”. ***“For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.” (Romans 2:13)***

There almost seems to be an intersection here between the realms of believers and unbelievers. That is, there’s not much difference between the person who comes to the Lord but falls away and the person who never came to the Lord but tried to live a decent life.

Lapsed believers, who entered the Kingdom at some point during their earthly lifetimes, must shed the wrong attitudes that led them astray before they may continue their journey further into the Kingdom. The unbeliever also has things to learn; first and foremost is the issue of accepting the authority of Christ. This probably won’t be very difficult once earthly traditions and customs and culture have been stripped away at the time of death. The only ones who will find it difficult to “*come to the Light*” would be those who are “*practicing evil*” and don’t want that their “*deeds should be exposed.*” (John 3:20)

So, instead of trying to divide the Afterlife into an either-or state of Heaven and Hell - those who’ve accepted Christ versus those who haven’t - why not expand our concept of God’s Kingdom to include a Purgatorial realm where souls don’t have to stay “lost”? They can be “found” while

dwelling in a part of the Kingdom where they can learn to overcome the bad habits and negative attitudes that may have had too much place in their former lives. Such a domain could easily include those who were ignorant of God's truth in Christ but were not terribly evil; and it would include also those Christians who turned against God during their earthly lives.

This does not mean to say that the domain of Hell does not exist. It is there, a place where those souls, who are committed to the Darkness, can experience the kind of treatment they need (and deserve): separation from God's presence and the not-so-pleasant company of demonic beings. Not a prospect anyone would look forward to. It is, we would imagine, a drastic fate for anyone; but also, it is a treatment which, eventually, might bring them back to the Light. (This subject is covered more thoroughly in Posts [C-4](#), [C-5](#), [C-6](#).)

From all of this, we may conclude that one can't always make a huge distinction between believers and non-believers. That is, God sees many "non-believers" as "pre-Christians". And for many Christians the same admonishment would apply that Paul once gave to his Jews (who were *"relying on God's law"* and would *"boast"* about their *"special relationship with Him"*). (Romans 2:17, NLT)

If believers are being hypocritical (while boasting of their *"special relationship"* to God), while many who don't know Christ are trying to live godly lives, should not these latter receive a place of honor in the Kingdom, even though not officially saved at the time of their passing into the Realm Beyond? And would not this fulfill what Jesus meant when He said, *"Many who are first will be last, and the last first"*? (Matthew 19:30)

It is an undeniable truth that, within the general category of those who come to the Lord, there exist many who do not walk *"worthy of the calling"*. (Ephesians 4:1) (In fact, none of us can claim to have a perfect score in the "worthiness" department.) But some have lived lives that were a poor testimony, causing too many to stumble into unbelief and discouragement.

This should come as no surprise. From the passage in Romans 2 above, we learn of Paul's issue with hypocritical Jewish teachers, some of whom

may have been members of the Early Church, of whom he said, *“The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”* (Romans 2:24)

Peter also spoke of *“false teachers... who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them... because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”* (2Peter 2:1-2) If the Lord had *“bought them”*, then they must have come to the Lord at some point in their lives; they became part of the family of God and so would not be *“cast out”*. But as in many a family, often there is a wayward son or daughter who causes the family no end of trouble and grief.

When a man who accepts the Christian doctrine lives unworthily of it, it is much clearer to say he is a bad Christian than to say he is not a Christian. (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

In Jesus' own “family” of disciples, He had His “Judas”, who committed the grave sin of betraying the Master. It was a foolish mistake, and he repented of it later.

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ (Matthew 27:3-4)

Now certainly, Judas had come to Christ; he was one of His disciples. This then would have been enough to grant him entrance into the Kingdom. But at what level? *“Shame and everlasting disgrace”* would seem his likely destination.

But Jesus did make this unusual statement about Judas: *“none of them is lost except the son of perdition (or “destruction”).”* (John 17:12) And it almost sounds as if Judas was destined for the *Lake of Fire*. Or was the Lord simply looking ahead to the tragedy that would overwhelm Judas - the guilt, shame, and suicide. He certainly became *“lost”* as a disciple, and he *“lost”* what could have been his place of honor in the Kingdom of God.

This farewell conversation (John 13-17) with the disciples includes the exhortation from chapter 15, where Jesus speaks of the branches that

don't abide in the Him (the vine) and fail to bear fruit, how His Father will have to take them away, and they end up getting burned in the fire. (15:2,6) The conversation continues into John 17 where Jesus singles out Judas as being *"lost"* and a *"son of perdition"*. (17:12)

Judas was an example of the dire sayings at the opening of John 15. He was one of those branches who who didn't *"abide in the vine"*. Nevertheless, the promise of John 6:37 holds true - *"the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out"*. Yet Jesus said, referring to Judas, *"It would have been good for that man if he had not been born"*. (Matthew 26:24) That is, he would have to endure the fires of chastisement, even in Heaven.

We might compare this with another statement where Jesus, explaining about conditions of persecution in the very *End of the Age*, said, *"He who endures to the end shall be saved."* (Matthew 24:13) He was not talking here about the gift of general salvation, which does not require any pre-condition of a lifetime of faithfulness. But rather, the subject is about a time when many will be tempted to compromise, even *"betray one another"* and, like Judas, defect over to the side of the enemies of God. (Matthew 24:10)

So what does He mean here? What is it that those *"who endure"* will be *"saved"* from? Well, here is where it will help to realize that within the Kingdom of God there exists this state of *"shame and everlasting disgrace"*, which the faithful will not have to endure. The implication is there too that, for those who do end up there, conditions in that domain will be tough. (More on this later.)

Jesus once spoke to Peter in terms similar to what He said about Judas: *"He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"* (Matthew 16:23) Jesus was not calling Peter a devil, but he was addressing the evil spirit who was influencing him.

Like Peter, Judas had become a *"son of perdition"* temporarily because he was allowing himself to be influenced by the Devil - and so much so that he committed the grievous crime of betraying the Son of God. Nevertheless, it was a temporary aberration, as evidenced by his remorse

afterwards. In a sense it was no different from Peter's blunder: trying to stop Jesus from following God's plan via the path of sacrifice and death; or later, when he denied having any association with Jesus.

The difference between Judas and Peter, however, was that Peter, despite his anguish over his failure - *"Peter went out and wept bitterly"* (Luke 22:62) - he didn't abandon his hope and trust but persisted; he kept on believing in God's powerful saving grace and mercy.

And here, it seems, is the major difference: Peter had given his heart and life to the Lord. Whereas Judas was content to go through the motions without committing himself. He probably had spiritual gifts, the ones that were given to the disciples to aid them in their mission trips. ([Luke 10:1-20](#))

But even non-believers can possess these. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, makes it clear that it was the Giver of the gifts, and not the gifts themselves, that His followers should seek after: *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?... cast out devils?... done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:21-23, KJV)

Who knows if Judas, instead of committing suicide, had had more faith in God's saving mercy and been willing to humbly and courageously face the consequences - the shame that his actions brought him - then he might have continued, found forgiveness, and had a fruitful life in God's service and final reward at the end?

Some translations say that Judas *"changed his mind"* (instead of *"was remorseful"*). Both are probably right. Judas was much like king Saul, who also was afflicted by an evil spirit. His jealousy over the future king David prompted him to spend years trying to find and kill him. When David confronted Saul about his behavior, Saul felt remorse for a time. Saul's lack of humble faith, however, led him back into the same vengeful pattern as before.

Both Saul and Judas were like a *"double-minded man"* whom James says is *"unstable in all his ways"* - unstable because of his *"doubting"*

God's "*wisdom*" or for not seeking it in the first place. (James 1:5-7) The lives of both Saul and Judas ended the same - by committing suicide.

If nothing else, Saul's life was a dandy bad example of what not to do. Yet David continued to call him the "*Lord's anointed*", for Saul had been chosen by God at the beginning of his reign. (1Samuel 24:10) For this reason it's hard to imagine that Saul would have been sent to Hell at his death. But to endure "*shame and everlasting disgrace*" within the Kingdom of God would seem the appropriate sentence for him. And we could probably say the same for Judas Iscariot as well.

And perhaps also, we could say the same thing for Christians in the End Time who receive the *Mark of the Beast*. According to Revelation 14:10, those who worship the Beast (the Antichrist) "*shall be tormented with fire and brimstone*" - that is, enter the *Lake of Fire*. That could include an awful lot of people. However, there is probably an in-between category - those who don't like the Antichrist and don't worship him in their hearts but end up taking the mark, for the sake of survival or for other reasons.

True enough, it is a compromise and a poor testimony. Nevertheless, the Lord "*looks at the heart*" and not the "*outward appearance*". (1Samuel 16:7) So it seems reasonable to suppose that many people in this in-between category (whether Christians or non-Christians) would not be sent to the *Lake of Fire*, although they would have to endure correction in the Afterlife in a "*Death and Hades*" purgatory, or in a similar "*shame and everlasting disgrace*" situation.

Indeed, the Scriptures seem to lay down two conditions: number one - "*if anyone worships the beast and his image*"; and number two - "*receives his mark*" (Revelation 14:9) Worshiping the Beast would be the main reason for someone to get sent to the *Lake of Fire*. Receiving the mark is the secondary reason, the outward action which may or may not correspond to the state of a person's heart.

Christians, in their heart, cannot worship the Antichrist; however, as we know from [Matthew 24:24](#), the influence of "*false Christs and false prophets*" in the End Time is so strong that it will be difficult, even for the elect, not to be deceived by them. This implies that there will be a lot of decent people, and probably even Christians, who will be overwhelmed by

the Antichrist and the False Prophet into compromising and receiving the “*mark*” - even though in their hearts they do not “*worship*” the Antichrist. (For more information on this point, see [Appendix 1.](#))

The elite of the “*elect*” are the super-overcomers who manage to resist the temptation to give in to the new world leaders and their system. They are “*faithful unto death*”, and although they “*have little strength*”, yet they have kept God’s Word and “*not denied*” His name. ([Revelation 2:10, 3:8](#)) They are the ones “*who had not worshiped the beast or his image, AND had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.*” (Revelation 20:4) By refusing the “*mark*”, their inward belief matches with their outward actions. (For more information on this point about the “*elect*”, see [Appendix 2.](#))

It was mentioned earlier that certain elements in the Christian world are guilty of fomenting wars, promoting intolerance, persecuting less established religious groups. These are they who use God’s name for their own ends, of whom Christ warned,

The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service... And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. (John 16:2-3, 15:21)

If in some cases, such persons had once come to Christ, then they certainly have gone far, far astray. So what happens to them? Knowing that such glaring hypocrisy can exist, even among believers, we can understand why the provision of “*shame and everlasting disgrace*” is mentioned by Gabriel; it is the fate awaiting some of the “*sons of your people*” who are badly in need of correction. (Daniel 12:2)

“*And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming.*” (1John 2:28, ESV) In John 3:20-21 we learn that those who are “*practising evil*” cannot or will “*not come to the Light*”. In a similar way, those who did “*come to the Light*” but failed to “*abide in Him*” during their lifetimes will “*shrink in shame*” when Christ appears.

They are still in Heaven, of course, not Hell, (the *Lake of Fire*), but will find that, instead of the honor they could have had, they are faced with

having in their hands a shameful testimony of a life lived in rebellion to the Light they had once embraced. Although it won't be easy, nevertheless, if they did enter the Kingdom at some point in their lives, they will be honored for that and for whatever good they have done, and they will not be denied God's mercy and loving-kindness. ([Psalm 89:30-34](#))

As mentioned earlier, Jesus made this startling observation in His Sermon on the Mount, :

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'
(Matthew 7:21-23)

From this we might figure that these people whom Jesus talks about never came to Him at all. And what He says to them would be true, *"I never knew you."* They would be like the *"sons of Sceva"* in Acts 19 who tried to make lucrative use of Christ's name to prosper themselves in their exorcism trade. Such *"works"* are nothing but an empty show, a going-through-the-motions exercise to impress audiences or elicit funds; such imposters and con artists would hardly be worthy to enter the Kingdom.

To them, the *"depart from Me"* phrase would mean *"go to Hell"*. Among these are many who *"think that they offer God service"* by killing the true followers of Christ *"because they have not known the Father nor Me."*
(John 16:2-3)

But there may be some who did come to the Lord at some point in their lives, but later their relationship became distant, and they strayed off into the kind of showy pretense that Jesus was giving examples of. It would seem that some of these will *"depart"*, not into Hell, but into what we could call Hell in Heaven: *"shame and everlasting disgrace"* - exile into the outer fringes of the Kingdom.

Many of these may have thought they deserved to be *"first"* in the Kingdom - *"have we not done many wonders in Your name?"* - but wake

up at the end of their lives to the rude shock of finding themselves bumped down into the *“last”* category. In such cases, the *“depart from Me”* phrase means *“go to shame and everlasting disgrace”* - meaning they are still in the Kingdom but locked out of its full blessings and privileges and left with the stinging remembrance of how their lives disappointed the Lord and others who could have benefitted had they been more faithful and obedient to God’s call.

As mentioned before, the same basic rules apply to believers and unbelievers. And if believers disobey God’s rule of love (*“practice lawlessness”*), then it should be no surprise if they wind up experiencing similar things to what unbelievers do who also *“practice lawlessness”*. Citizens of the Kingdom they may be, and no doubt happy to have landed in that wonderful heavenly environment. However, their experiences may for a time bear remarkable similarity to the experiences of unbelievers who’ve led corrupted lives... since they’ve landed so close to that boundary separating Heaven and Hell.

As far as human souls are concerned, any movement across that boundary would go in only one direction - from the kingdom of Hell to the Kingdom of Heaven. For the demons, of course, it’s just the opposite. But for us Christ’s guarantee remains in force, even after death: *“the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”* (John 6:37) But in the case of those who build with *“wood, hay, straw”*, they will be *“saved, yet so as through fire.”* (1Corinthians 3:15)

And some unbelievers (the *“last”*) who receive Christ in the Afterlife may well end up *“first”* ahead of believers who did not *“walk worthy of the calling”*. (Ephesians 4:1)

Heaven is by no means a classless society, and whoever happens to land in the basement category will, of course, be glad to be in Heaven but will have to live with the memory of how they shamed the Gospel of Christ during their earthly lifetimes. The Scriptures do speak of God being *“ashamed”* of some of His people: *“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed.”* (Mark 8:38) And *“not ashamed”* of others, such as those who *“obtained a good testimony”* during their earthly lives: *“God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them”*.

(Hebrews 11:2,16,39)

Regarding those whom Christ was not happy with, even some who, it seemed, had done great works for God, the apostle Paul expressed it well when he wrote that without love our works will mean nothing. No amount of spiritual gifts, understanding of mysteries, faith to move mountains, sacrificial actions will suffice if they are not accompanied with the right motive - of loving God and others. ([1Corinthians 13:1-3](#))

Whoever has come to Christ will have their name *“written in the Book of Life”*. Yet some are bound to end up like Judas Iscariot. Because of their waywardness, they can even turn into enemies of Christ and His true children and will have to reap the consequences. Yet they are forgiven; the path to restoration may be a rocky one, but they are forgiven.

Continue to [C-2: Rewards, Rehabilitation, or Both?](#)

Appendix 1: What is the Distinction between Worshiping the Beast and Receiving the Mark?

To understand what may seem utterly paradoxical - Christians, worshipers of Christ who receive the mark of the Beast - following are some thoughts on this:

When a person gets saved (born again), it is the usual custom for them to get baptized. The water-baptism serves as the outward evidence of a person's inward belief and conversion; it also facilitates a person's membership amongst groups of other believers. The Devil's counterfeit version is similar in some ways: the Mark serves as the outward evidence of a person's inward “conversion” to the Antichrist and also facilitates his or her entry into the buying and selling system of the Antichrist and False Prophet.

Now we recognize too that some people get saved yet never get baptized; water baptism is not an absolute essential in the salvation process. In addition, it is not hard to imagine that some people who are not *“born again”* might get themselves baptized for the sake of some gain or advantage. A pastor is supposed to vet baptism candidates to make sure they are actually born again and understand what it means. But it

wouldn't be hard to imagine that some pretenders will slip by undetected, and so baptism is not always a foolproof method or evidence of a person's conversion.

Nevertheless, some denominations assert that a person cannot be saved without getting water-baptized, a doctrine that elevates water-baptism to the level of a fool-proof way of knowing a person is genuinely saved. And we often think of the Mark in similar terms, that it is a fool-proof indication of a person's worship of the Beast.

Like the custom of baptism, the "*mark*" is only the outward evidence of a person's inward "conversion" (to worship of the Antichrist *Beast*), which also permits entrance and participation in the buying and selling system created by the *False Prophet*. And just as some deceptive people may try to get themselves baptized without actually committing themselves to Christ, so some Christians may compromise and take the mark, for similar reasons - for the sake of gain or advantage, even though, in their hearts, they don't worship the Antichrist. The "*mark*", like water baptism, is not a totally fool-proof way to determine if someone is a genuine worshiper (of the *Beast*).

Pretend worshipers of Christ who get baptized can still end up in *Hades* or the *Lake of Fire*, and pretend worshipers of the *Beast* who take the mark can still end up having their names "*written in the Book of Life*". Albeit, they will not be able to escape some kind of "*shame and everlasting disgrace*" chastening when they enter the Kingdom. But they will be spared from the *Lake of Fire* - even if they have made the shameful compromise of receiving the *Mark of the Beast*. "*No one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.*" (John 10:29)

Several passages in the *Revelation Book* make the point that there are two factors in the worship service of the *Beast*. (13:11-18, 14:9, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4) There is the mark AND there is the factor of worship - two conditions; and this could be taken to mean that, to get sent to the Lake of Fire, it is more than just the outward act of receiving the mark, but also it is an inward matter of the heart - that of being devoted and committed to the Beast.

Two Scriptures do mention only the "worship" factor for the followers

of the *Beast*, stating that they “will worship him [the *Beast*], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb.” (Revelation 13:8, 17:8) In other words, any true worshiper of the *Beast*, even some who never took the *Mark*, will not be written in the *Book of Life* and will end up in the *Lake of Fire*.

And this parallels how it is with the worshipers of Christ: if they have come to the Lord at some point in their lives, then they are written in the *Book of Life*, regardless of whether or not they ever got water-baptized. They will be spared from the *Lake of Fire* - even if they have made the shameful compromise of receiving the *Mark of the Beast*. “*No one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.*” (John 10:28, 29)

In Revelation 13:11-18 it is fairly clear that the “*worship*” factor is of primary importance, while the “*mark*” seems to have lesser importance as far as worship is concerned; in that passage the *Mark* is more clearly linked with economic survival than with any religious aspect, and it is difficult to guess in that passage that the *Mark* is supposed to be part of the False Prophet’s worship service of the Antichrist.

The *Mark* is described mainly as a way of coercing people into joining the camp of the Antichrist and False Prophet. This could be compared to what happened in communist Russia: many people were coerced out of fear of persecution and deprivation, so they feigned allegiance to the communist state, even though in their hearts they did not agree with it.

Likewise, at the *End of the Age*, a lot of folks, not just wayward Christians, could fall into this category of those who take the *Mark* but are not worshipers of the *Beast*. They may actually hate the *Beast*, even though they will have taken the *Mark*. So they would fall into a different category from those who, in addition to taking the outward sign of worship (the *Mark*), also worship the *Beast* in their hearts.

Presumably, this in-between category of folks would have opportunity to make things right while in the realm of *Death and Hades*; and before the arrival of the *Great White Throne Judgment*, their names will have been cleared and written in the *Book of Life*. This will spare them from the *Lake of Fire* and grant them full entrance into the Heavenly Realm.

(*Hades*, by the way, should be taken to mean the unseen realm of the dead, a sort of neutral realm, where souls can live active lives, make better decisions, and prepare themselves for life as genuine citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.)

And for Christians who take the Mark, even though they will not go to the *Lake of Fire*, they will, because of their compromise, probably land in that purgatorial realm known as “*shame and everlasting disgrace*”. (Daniel 12:2) They will be “*saved, yet so as through fire*” at the “*Judgment Seat of Christ*”, as the apostle Paul put it. (1Corinthians 3:15, 2Corinthians 5:10)

They are in the Kingdom, but as Hebrews 12 explains, will have to “*endure chastening*”. “*For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives... for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*” (Hebrews 12:6-7) By coming to Christ, they have become “*sons*”, but in His love the Father does have to chasten His wayward sons and daughters before they can be restored, trusted, and brought into greater realms of blessing, privilege, and responsibility.

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Appendix 2: The “*elect*” - a general and specific term

There are several terms in the Bible that seem to have both a general and a specific meaning: *Sheol* or *Hades* can be understood generally as the Afterlife domain for the dead; in its more specific usage, these terms point to a region of misery in the Afterlife for the souls of evildoers. The term *Jews* in the New Testament can refer generally to the Jewish people, or specifically, to the Jewish elders who fought against Christ’s teachings. “*You who fear the Lord*” was a term used in the New Testament to refer, generally, to the Gentiles and all peoples who had and would come to worship the true God. In the Old Testament the term referred, specifically, to faithful Israelites.

The “*he who overcomes*” phrase in the Revelation Book refers, in a general sense, to those “*who believe that Jesus is the Son of God*”. (1John 5:5) More specifically, however, this phrase points to those who are faithful unto death and receive the crown of life. The same may also be

said for the term “*elect*”. One translation of [Matthew 24:24](#) seems to emphasize this distinction, mentioning that even the “*very elect*” would have a hard time avoiding the deceptions of “*false Christs and false prophets*” (KJV) - which leaves open the possibility that some of the “*elect*” will fall into the traps and snares of those days and end up receiving the *Mark*.

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