

4. The Spirit of the Resurrection

The Scriptures open with the declaration that the universe has an absolute and definite “beginning.”¹ As such, all things are wholly dependent upon the Creator: “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). Creation lives from, to, and through the Creator, and it is his “spirit,” or “breath” (Heb. *rûah*), that animates creation.² Moreover, the Spirit, or “breath,” of God is the substance of the word of God, which in turn becomes the creative power of God. So the psalmist describes creation, “By the *word* of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the *breath* [Heb. *rûah*] of his mouth all their host. . . . For he *spoke*, and it came to be; he *commanded*, and it stood firm (Ps. 33:6–9; cf. Heb. 11:3).

In this way, the Spirit of God is intimately related to the word of God, which proceeds from the mouth of God. Thus God’s Spirit is synonymous with the general term for “breath” (Heb. *nešāmâ*), as Elihu says, “The Spirit [Heb. *rûah*] of God has made me, and the breath [Heb. *nešāmâ*] of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). This understanding undergirds the creation account when God “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath [Heb. *nešāmâ*] of life” (Gen. 2:7). The Spirit/breath/word of God is the practical agent of life and creation.³

Not only does the Spirit of God animate creation, but it also *sustains creation*. So Elihu says, “If it were [God’s] intention and he withdrew his spirit [Heb. *rûah*] and breath [Heb. *nešāmâ*], all mankind would perish together and man would

¹ Contrary to the rising trend of *creatio ex material* (cf. H. Gunkel, S. R. Driver, G. von Rad, C. Westermann, V. P. Hamilton, B. K. Waltke, and J. H. Walton), a view commonly held in ancient Near East cosmogonies. See the traditional view (*creatio ex nihilo*) defended in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1998), 12–15; and K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 137–44.

² See J. Barton Payne, “2131a רִּיחַ (*rûah*),” *TWOT*, 836–37.

³ Thus John’s equating of Jesus with the Word would have been understood (cf. John 1:1ff.), as Jürgen Moltmann summarizes, “As Christians understand it, creation is a trinitarian process: God the Father creates through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. So all things are created ‘by God,’ are formed ‘through God’ and exist ‘in God’” (*The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, trans. M. Kohl [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997], 115).

return to the dust” (Job 34:14–15, NIV). Likewise, Psalm 104 describes the giving and taking of life by the Spirit: “When you take away their breath [Heb. *rûah*], they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit [Heb. *rûah*], they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” (vv. 29–30, NIV).

Such a *spiritual renewal* is therefore the basis of the eschatological understanding of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21:5). As God created the heavens and the earth by his Spirit through his word, so also will he renew and recreate them in the age to come.⁴ As a result, those who have “shared in the Holy Spirit” (Heb. 6:4) in this age have a palpable knowledge of “the powers of the age to come” (v. 5). As such, all the workings of the Spirit in this age—miracles, signs, wonders, gifts, etc.—are understood in the context of protological creation and eschatological consummation (see figure 4.1).⁵ In other words, the Spirit of God testifies to the work of God—past, present, and future. Thus the Holy Spirit is understood in an historical manner within an apocalyptic framework.

⁴ Though distorted by a natural/supernatural lens, Geerhardus Vos well articulates, “On the one hand the Spirit is the resurrection-source, on the other He appears as the substratum of the resurrection-life, the element, as it were, in which, as in its circumambient atmosphere the life of the coming aeon shall be lived. He produces the event and in continuance underlies the state which is the result of it. He is Creator and Sustainer at once, the *Creator Spiritus* and the Sustainer of the supernatural state of the future life in one” (*The Pauline Eschatology* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930], 163). See also Vos’s earlier article, “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit,” in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1912) 209–59.

⁵ So Wolfhart Pannenberg: “The Spirit is at work already in creation as God’s mighty breath, the origin of all movement and all life, and only against this background of his activity as the Creator of all life can we rightly understand on the one hand his work in the ecstasies of human conscious life, and on the other hand his role in the bringing forth of the new life of the resurrection of the dead” (*Systematic Theology*, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 3 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 1).

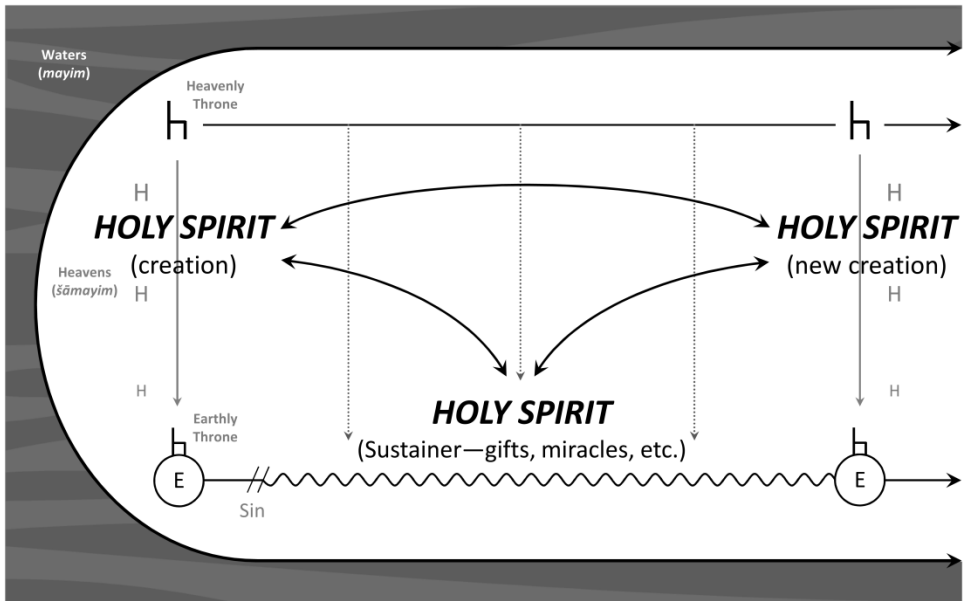


Figure 4.1 – The Apocalyptic Framework of the Activity of God's Spirit

As the Spirit of God gave life to Adam in the beginning, so also will the Spirit of God give life to his righteous descendants in the end. Paul speaks explicitly of this agency of the Spirit in the resurrection in relation to the resurrection of Jesus: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies *through his Spirit* who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11). Therefore, on the day of the Lord the word will once again be spoken, and “the dead will hear the *voice* of the Son of God. . . . All who are in the tombs will hear his *voice* and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:25–29).

In this way, the Scriptures understand the Spirit of God as “the Spirit of the resurrection,” as Jürgen Moltmann describes:

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and is as such *the Spirit of the resurrection of the dead*. The Spirit of the Father and the Son is the divine quickening power of the new creation of all things, the power empowering the rebirth of everything that lives. . . . The Spirit does not draw the soul away from the body, nor does it make the soul hasten towards heaven, leaving this

earth behind. It places the whole earthly and bodily person in the daybreak colours of the new earth.⁶

THE FIRSTBORN OF THE RESURRECTION

Jesus was understood by the early church to be “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18; cf. Rev. 1:5). As God raised Jesus from the dead by his Spirit, so then will he also raise all from the dead by his Spirit. And as believers in his resurrection, God promises that we will “be *conformed* to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the *firstborn* among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29). By this Paul means, “We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will *transform* our lowly body to be like his glorious body, *by the power* that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Phil. 3:20–21). For “he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead *by the power* of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 1:4, NLT). As younger sons (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5), we will be raised from the dead by the same Spirit that raised Christ, the firstborn, from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus by the Spirit was also understood by the apostles as a “firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20,23) of the final resurrection “harvest” (Matt. 13:39; Mark 4:29). Just as worshipers in the Old Testament brought firstfruits of their flocks and fields as an offering to the Lord (cf. Deut. 18:4; 26:2; Neh. 10:35–37), so Jesus was offered and raised as a firstfruits unto the Lord in advance of the final harvest.⁷ As Paul outlines, “Christ has been raised from the dead, the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the *firstfruits*, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor. 15:20–23).

⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 94–95; italics in the original; cf. also pp. 9, 88, 94, 152f., 189, 192, and 270.

⁷ Likewise the gift of the Spirit to the believer in this age is understood as a “firstfruits” (Rom. 8:23) of the final gift of the Spirit in the resurrection. However, instead of man giving a firstfruits to God, it is God giving a firstfruits to man: “In Rom. 8:23 the relationship of giver and recipient is reversed and ἀπαρχή is the first-fruits of God to man (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5). The gift of the *pneuma* is only provisional. It is only the beginning which will ultimately be followed by νίθησις, by the gift of the σῶμα πνευματικόν” (Gerhard Delling, “ἀπαρχή,” *TDNT*, 1:486).

This emphasis on Christ's individual resurrection in anticipation of the future general resurrection reinforces the simple apocalyptic framework.⁸ Because Christ has been raised from the dead, we have an *assurance* of the general resurrection, and thus our faith is not "futile" (1 Cor. 15:17).⁹ The day of the Lord will actually come, and the dead will actually be raised. Hence the relevance of Christ's resurrection bears daily upon the struggle and grind of mortality, which slowly breaks down the human psyche with its ruthless accusation that things will forever go on as they are.¹⁰

Because Jesus alone was "made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18, NIV), he is understood to hold *unique divine approval*. So Paul reasoned with the Athenians that God "has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising

⁸ Note that Paul explains the resurrection in this way as a *polemic against realized eschatology*. In 1 Cor. 15:12, he asks, "How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" These believers had not become Epicureans, for Paul's reference in v. 32 is simply a mocking of the functional similarity of their conclusions with that of the world. Rather, "Some Corinthians, influenced by an 'over-realized eschatology,' believed that they had already experienced resurrection (cf. 2 Tim. 2:16–18). They understood Jesus' being raised as exaltation to heaven, not as bodily resurrection, and concluded that they were exalted with Jesus through the sacraments (cf. Rom. 6:4). These Corinthians would be the theological forerunners of the second-century gnostics who appear to adapt and rebut Pauline statements" (David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 699).

⁹ As Moltmann poetically writes,

With the rebirth of Christ from death to eternal life we also expect the rebirth of the whole cosmos. Nothing that God has created is lost. Everything returns in transfigured form. So we expect that the Spirit of the new creation of all things will vanquish human violence and cosmic chaos. More than that: we expect that the power of time and the power of death will be vanquished, too. Finally, we expect eternal consolation when "the tears are wiped away" from our eyes. We expect eternal joy in the dance of fellowship with all created being and with the triune God. (*Source of Life*, 123)

¹⁰ So Rudolf Bultmann foundered, "*The mythical eschatology* is untenable for the simple reason that the parousia of Christ never took place as the New Testament expected. History did not come to an end, and, as every schoolboy knows, it will continue to run its course" ("New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. H. W. Bartsch [London: SPCK, 1953], 5).

Translating "sane person" for "schoolboy," Jürgen Moltmann counters, "Today the notion that world history will continue to run its course is nothing more than wishful thinking. 'Every sane person' is aware of the nuclear, ecological and economic catastrophes that threaten the modern world. The apocalyptic eschatology which Bultmann considered 'mythical' is more realistic than his faith in the inexorable onward course of world history. The belief that things will 'always go on' and that no end is in sight—at least not for us—is one of the fairytales of 'the modern world,' the fairytale of its endlessness and its lack of an alternative. That is secularized millenarianism" (*The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. M. Kohl [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004], 135).

him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). All other sons of Adam are proven to be unrighteous, because they returned to the dust and *stayed there*. This one was raised from the dead so as to demonstrate that he alone is righteous. Accordingly only the “Righteous One” (Isa. 24:16; 53:11; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14) deserves to judge the unrighteous.¹¹ So Paul concludes that Jesus is “the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Col. 1:18)—that is, “the ruler of kings on earth” (Rev. 1:5).

Thus the bodily resurrection of Jesus pervades apostolic witness (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33–35; 17:3,31; 23:6; 24:21; 25:19; 26:8,23).¹² It held prominence in the early church as well, for the resurrection of Jesus *proved* the apocalyptic nature of the Scriptures.¹³ All differing opinions concerning the future (e.g., Pharisaic, Sadducean, Essene, etc.) were silenced in light of Jesus’ resurrection and future coming.¹⁴ The early church galvanized its understanding of the Scriptures around the resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ Here it becomes exceedingly clear that mortality is the result of divine condemnation. If mortality is the result of the devil or of human error, or if it is just inherent to creation, then the logic of divine approval in the overcoming of mortality by resurrection breaks down.

¹² Though lacking a cruciform balance, Joel B. Green summarizes, “The resurrection of Jesus by God is the central affirmation of the Christian message in the Acts of the Apostles” (“‘Witnesses of His Resurrection’: Resurrection, Salvation, Discipleship, and Mission,” in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 227). See also Kevin L. Anderson, “*But God Raised Him from the Dead*”: *The Theology of Jesus’ Resurrection in Luke-Acts* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006).

¹³ For a survey of the doctrine of the resurrection in the early church, see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), 480–552.

¹⁴ N. T. Wright describes,

The early Christians hold firmly to a two-step belief about the future: first, death and whatever lies immediately beyond; second, a new bodily existence in a newly remade world. . . .

Within early Christianity there is virtually no spectrum of belief about life beyond death. . . . Whereas the early Christians were drawn from many strands of Judaism and from widely differing backgrounds within paganism, and hence from circles that must have held very different beliefs about life beyond death, they all modified that belief to focus on one point on the spectrum. Christianity looks, to this extent, like a variety of Pharisaic Judaism. There is no trace of Sadducean view or of that of Philo. . . .

We have plenty of evidence of debates about all sorts of things, and the virtual unanimity on resurrection stands out. Only in the late second century, a good 150 years after the time of Jesus, do we find people using the word *resurrection* to mean something quite different from what is meant in Judaism and early Christianity, namely, a spiritual experience in the present leading to a disembodied hope in the future. For almost all of the first two centuries, resurrection in the traditional sense holds not just center stage but

The hope of the Old Testament became “a *living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). The hope of the resurrection had been confirmed, for a son of Adam had actually come out of the grave. Consequently, “We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed” (2 Peter 1:19). We know Jesus *will* come again, and we *will* “attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:11).¹⁵ Therefore, we “press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14, AT).¹⁶

THE DEPOSIT OF THE RESURRECTION

As Jesus was a firstfruits of the resurrection to come, so also God has given us “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23)—the Spirit who will raise us from the dead on the day of Christ Jesus. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is described as a “deposit” (Gk. *arrabōn*) guaranteeing our future resurrection (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14; cf. 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14). In this way Pentecost (Acts 2) was understood as “a payment that obligates the contracting party to make further payments”—that is, “the first installment” of the resurrection to come.¹⁷ So, too, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are meant to be an “assurance of salvation,” so to

the whole stage. (*Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* [New York: HarperOne, 2008], 41–42)

¹⁵ Though frightfully inaugural, Sidney Greidanus articulates well the confidence generated by such events:

The way of redemptive-historical progression sees every Old Testament text and its addressees in the context of God’s dynamic history, which progresses steadily and reaches its climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and ultimately in the new creation. The whole Old Testament throbs with a strong eschatological beat. Every passage in some way or in some degree voices or echoes the message: “God is acting! God is coming! God is faithful to his covenant promises! His mercy indeed endures forever! God will not cast off His chosen people! God is preparing salvation.” From our position later in redemptive history, we should not only hear this eschatological beat but also recognize its fulfillment in the First and Second Coming of Jesus. (*Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 237)

¹⁶ “Called me heavenward” (NIV), “calling us up to heaven” (NLT), and “the heavenly call” (NRSV) are all Platonic distortions of the simple translation of *avō*, meaning “above, up, high.” The only use of *ouranos* in the book of Philippians is found in 3:20, which simply references the residence of our Lord and our resurrected body, which we will receive at Jesus’ coming (v. 21). It is clear that Paul has in mind attaining the resurrection of the dead (v. 11). Thus the “upward call” (NASB, ESV, NKJV, NET) is fair, but “high calling” (KJV) is preferred.

¹⁷ See “ἄρραβών,” BDAG, 134.

speaking. Paul thus describes the confirmation of the apostolic witness: “The testimony concerning Christ was *confirmed in you*, so that you are not lacking in *any gift*, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also *confirm you* to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:6–8, NASB).

The Holy Spirit is meant to confirm the gospel, strengthening believers in their faith unto salvation on the day of the Lord. Therefore the initial Jewish Christians knew the Gentiles would inherit the resurrection, apart from circumcision, because “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us” (Acts 15:8, NIV; cf. Acts 10:45; 11:17). Conversely, the lack of the Holy Spirit assures future condemnation, since “anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom. 8:9). Unbelievers inevitably become “scoffers, following their own passions” (Jude 18), because they are “worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit” (v. 19, NASB). Conversely, the Spirit directs the minds of believers toward the return of Jesus (cf. John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:19–21; 1 John 2:25–27) and helps them fulfill Paul’s exhortation: “Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. . . . When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:1,4, NIV).

In this way we are “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the *guarantee* of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it” (Eph. 1:14). For God has “set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, *guaranteeing* what is to come” (2 Cor. 1:22, NIV). Paul summarizes the relationship between our present body, the Holy Spirit, and our resurrected body:

For we know that if the tent that is our *earthly home* is destroyed, we have a *building from God*, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . For while we are still in *this tent*, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be *further clothed*, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us *the Spirit as a guarantee*. (2 Cor. 5:1,4–5)

In this “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44)—that is, “the new body, animated by the Spirit of God”¹⁸—we will be “like angels . . . being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36, NASB). This spiritual body is in no way referring to a heavenly destiny, but rather a heavenly origin and heavenly quality.¹⁹ As the Messiah will rule upon the earth in heavenly glory (cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:10; Matt. 19:28; 25:31), so also will we receive bodies that radiate heavenly glory, as “star differs from star in glory” (1 Cor. 15:41).

As the agent of both creation and the resurrection, everything the Holy Spirit does inherently testifies to both the original perfection of creation and the eschatological glory of creation (see figure 4.1). Consequently, all activity of the Spirit is by nature a “sign” (Gk. *sēmeion*) pointing to the age to come, which will be a restoration of original glory.²⁰ As such, the author of Hebrews describes the gifts of the Spirit as “the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5), which are designed to testify to the salvation and divine subjection of the world to come (Heb. 2:3–5). Hence Jesus commissions his disciples:

Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized *will be saved*, but whoever does not believe *will be condemned*. And *these signs* will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not

¹⁸ C. K. Barrett describes, “*Spiritual* does not describe a higher aspect of man’s life; the noun spirit (πνεῦμα) on which it is based refers to the Spirit of God, and the *spiritual body* is the new body, animated by the Spirit of God, with which the same man will be clothed and equipped in the age to come, which he reaches (supposing him to die before the *parusia*) by way of resurrection” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [London: Continuum, 1968], 372–73).

¹⁹ As Wright explains,

Heaven is the place where *God’s purposes for the future are stored up*. It isn’t where they are meant to stay so that one would need to go to heaven to enjoy them; it is where they are kept safe against the day when they will become a reality on earth. If I say to a friend, “I’ve kept some beer in the fridge for you,” that doesn’t mean that he has to climb into the fridge in order to drink the beer. God’s future inheritance, the incorruptible new world and the new bodies that are to inhabit that world, are already kept safe, waiting for us, not so that we can go to heaven and put them on there but so that they can be brought to birth in this world or rather in the new heavens and new earth. (*Surprised by Hope*, 151–52)

²⁰ See “σημεῖον,” BDAG, 920–21.

hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:15–18)²¹

As the disciples went out and preached, “the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by *accompanying signs*” (Mark 16:20). The gospel message—concerning the day of the Lord, the salvation of the righteous, and the condemnation of the wicked—was thus accredited by signs and wonders.²² So Peter, quoting Joel as the prophet spoke for God, summarizes the outpouring of the Spirit: “I will show *wonders* in the heavens above and *signs* on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before *the day of the Lord* comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be *saved*.” (Act 2:19–21). In this way, the Spirit of God prepares the earth for the coming of the day of God and confirms the message of salvation (see v. 38).

The list given in Mark’s “Great Commission” (16:17–18) is typical of the primary signs given by God in this age to testify to the age to come. Exorcisms always accompany the proclamation of the coming kingdom (cf. Matt. 10:7–8; Luke 9:1–2), because Satan and all demons will be driven off the earth in the age to come (cf. Isa. 24:22; Rev. 20:2). So the demonized men of the Gadarenes cried out, “What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?” (Matt. 8:29, NIV). The demons begged not to be thrown “into the abyss” (Luke 8:31), where they would then be “kept until the judgment” (2 Peter 2:4).

²¹ Though modern textual scholarship is virtually unanimous in its verdict that the so-called longer ending of Mark (16:9–20) is spurious, I am quoting it here as a representative conflation of apostolic themes found in the Gospels and Acts (see a comparison of these themes in Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC [Dallas: Word, 2001], 546).

²² Likewise, the Messiah was expected to come with signs demonstrating the approval of God and the certainty of prophesied future events (cf. Matt. 12:38; 1 Cor. 1:22). Thus the crowds questioned, “When the Christ appears, will he do more *signs* than this man has done?” (John 7:31). Jesus had plainly answered such a question previously: “The works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me” (John 5:36). And when John the Baptist sent disciples to inquire if Jesus was “the Expected One” (Matt. 11:3, NASB), Jesus responded with the common signs of the resurrection: “the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them” (Matt. 11:5; cf. Isa. 35:4ff.; 61:1ff.). As such, Peter declared to his fellow Israelites, “Jesus of Nazareth was a man *accredited by God* to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22, NIV).

Healings also accompany the proclamation of the gospel (cf. Matt. 4:23; 10:7–8), because sickness and death will be overcome in the resurrection. Therefore the healing of the crippled beggar in Jesus' name (Acts 3:7) was a simple demonstration of the apostolic message: "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). Likewise, the raising of Lazarus (John 11:44) inherently reinforced the message of "the resurrection on the last day" (v. 24), causing many Jews to believe in Jesus as the Christ (v. 45). So also the healing of the paralytic reinforced the reality of the day of judgment and the Son of Man's "authority on earth to forgive sins" (Luke 5:24). But to the Jewish populations who did not repent at the performance of miracles, Jesus said, "It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you" (Matt. 11:24).

Akin to healings and exorcisms, many other signs also testify to the age to come. The transfiguration of Jesus' body in appearance "like the sun" (Matt. 17:2) testified to the glory of the resurrection, when the saints will inherit bodies that "shine like the brightness of the heavens" (Dan. 12:3, NIV; cf. Matt. 13:43; 1 Cor. 15:41). Jesus' calming of the storm (Matt. 8:23–27 and parallels) and walking on the lake resulted in the confession, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33), for it was assumed that the Messiah would tame the wildness of the earth in the age to come (cf. Isa. 11:6–9; 55:12–13; 66:25). Jesus' feeding of the five thousand led the people to respond, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14), for he would feed and care for the poor of the earth (cf. Ps. 72:4; Isa. 11:4; Jer. 22:16). The changing of water into aged wine "revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him" (John 2:11, NIV), because on Mount Zion in the age to come "the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined" (Isa. 25:6). All of the biblical miracles function in the same historical manner as signs, pointing to the eschatological consummation based upon the protological creation (see figure 4.1).²³

²³ In his monumental treatment of the age to come, George N. H. Peters summarizes,

The miracles then are *assurances* vouchsafed that the kingdom will come as it is predicted. The miracles of Jesus are so varied and significant in the light of the kingdom that it can be readily perceived *how* they give us the needed confidence in its several requirements and aspects. The resurrection of dead ones is connected with the kingdom; that the keys of death hang at Christ's girdle is shown in the miracles of the raising of the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son, and of Lazarus, when just dead, carried out to burial, and already in the corrupting embrace of the tomb. Sickness and death are

Because God's Spirit sustains what he made, the Spirit is also referred to as the "Helper" (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; cf. 1 John 2:1). The Holy Spirit helps the saints in their attainment of eternal life, for it is by the gifts of the Spirit that Jesus "will sustain you to the end" (1 Cor. 1:8). The Spirit likewise protects the saints, as Peter encourages in regard to the hope of "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are *shielded by*

banished from the inheritors of the kingdom; the numerous miracles of healing various sicknesses and of restoring the dying, establish the power existing that can perform it. The utmost perfection of body is to be enjoyed in the kingdom; this is foreshadowed by the removal of blindness, lameness, deafness, and dumbness. Hunger, thirst, famine, etc., give place to plenty in the kingdom; the miracles of feeding thousands attest to the predicted power that will accomplish it. The natural world is to be completely under the Messiah's control in that kingdom; the miracles of the draught of fishes, the tempest stilled, the ship at its destination, the walking on the sea, the fish bringing the tribute money, the barren fig-tree destroyed, and the much-ridiculed one of water changed into wine, indicate that He who sets up this kingdom has indeed power over nature. The spiritual, unseen, invisible world is to be, as foretold, in contact and communication with this kingdom; and this Jesus verifies by the miracles of the transfiguration, the demoniac cured, the legion of devils cast out, passing unseen through the multitude, and by those of His own death, resurrection and ascension. Indeed there is scarcely a feature of this kingdom foretold which is to be formed by the special work of the Divine, that is not also confirmed to us by some glimpses of the Power that shall bring them forth. The kingdom—the end—is designed to remove the curse from man and nature, and to impart the most extraordinary blessings to renewed man and nature, but all this is to be done through One who, it is said, shall exert supernatural power to perform it. It is therefore reasonable to expect that *as part* of the developing of the plan itself, that when He first comes, through whom man and nature are to be regenerated, a manifestation of power—more abundant and superior to everything preceding—over man and nature should be exhibited, *to confirm our faith in Him and in His kingdom*. This is done, and an appeal is made to it. We are confident that the best, most logical defence of the miracles of Christ and of the Bible is in the line here stated, viz., regarding them *as indicative and corroborative of God's promises relating to the future destiny of the Church and world*. The miracles are thus found to be *essential*, to answer a divine purpose, to supply a requisite evidence; and hence in the Scriptures they are called "signs" (σημεῖα) of something else intended; signs that the Word shall be fulfilled in the exertion of power. (*The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ*, vol. 1 [New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884], 89–90; italics in the original)

Of course, the concept of "power over nature" is not a biblical one; and this perversion of the first verse of the Bible is the foundation for Peters's concept of "theocracy": "The Word begins with the supernatural (the presence of God) and the natural in harmony. It shows how an antagonism was produced, causing the withdrawal of the supernatural from the sight of man. . . . Now the kingdom being designed to restore and manifest the original concord once existing between the natural and supernatural, the Bible closes with that kingdom *in such accordance*" (p. 80). It is not a "theocratic kingdom" that will conquer nature and manifest divine sovereignty, but rather it is simply a "messianic kingdom" that will punish rebellion and restore what humanity has broken (see further discussion in chap. 6).

God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:4–5, NIV). Thus we are "kept" and "guarded" (John 17:12) from the evil one in this age, for "he who was born of God protects him" (1 John 5:18). Jesus is *with us* to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20), and the Holy Spirit *intercedes for us* while we hope for future glory (Rom. 8:25–27). Hence the exhortation and benediction of Jude 20–25:

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and *praying in the Holy Spirit*, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. . . . Now to him who is able to *keep you* from stumbling and to *present you* blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

All the gifts of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7–11) are thus designed as a deposit "for the edification of the church" (1 Cor. 14:12, NASB). The "utterance of wisdom" and the "utterance of knowledge" (1 Cor. 12:8) point to the time when we will no longer walk in fallen ways of foolishness and folly, nor will we fumble around in the darkness of depraved reason and understanding (cf. Ps. 14:1–3; 94:8–11; Isa. 11:1–4; 32:1–6).

The gifts of "faith," "healing," and "the working of miracles" (1 Cor. 12:9–10) point to the *boldness and courage* we will have when we see God face to face, no longer consumed by the fear, insecurity, and despair wrought upon our souls by mortality and a body of death. Consequently, the apostolic church prayed, "Grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all *boldness*, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:29–30). And after praying, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with *boldness*" (v. 31). So Paul concludes, "Since we have such a hope, we are *very bold*" (2 Cor. 3:12).

"Prophecy" and the "distinguishing of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10, NASB) point to the day when God will judge everything, both in the heavens and on the earth, and there will be a *distinction* between the righteous and the wicked (cf. Mal. 3:18; Matt. 13:30; Rev. 21:6–8). No longer will there be wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15; cf. Acts 20:29), and no longer will demons disguise themselves as angels of light (2 Cor. 11:14; cf. Gal. 1:8).

Likewise, the speaking of “various kinds of tongues” and “the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:10) points to the time when the pride of humankind and the confounding of languages will be no more (cf. Acts 2:4; Isa. 2:3; Rev. 21:24–27).²⁴ Ironically, the gift of tongues has become a source of pride and contention in modern times, largely due to the lack of an eschatological orientation and a protological anchor.

As there will be no more need for hope and encouragement of faith in the age to come (cf. Rom. 8:24–26), so the gifts of the Holy Spirit will “cease” and “pass away” (1 Cor. 13:8), for they will find consummation in the resurrection — “when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away” (v. 10).²⁵ They are temporal helps to keep faith and hope strong to the end (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8; Jude 20–21). We have not been left “as orphans” (John 14:18). Christ loves us, and he will come for us. Moreover, we are not left alone in this age (Matt. 28:20), for God manifests his love to us by his Spirit (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Therefore, “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. . . . And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts *through the Holy Spirit* who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:2,5).

THE UNSEEN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

²⁴ Few things have caused more division and difficulty upon the earth than the Tower of Babel. Those who have lived their entire lives in a monolingual culture are often unable to appreciate this reality, and therefore an authentic connection between Genesis 11 and Acts 2 is lacking. This disconnect is often reinforced by a naturalistic bias that negates the historicity of Babel. The lack of any real evidence for the evolution of language, however, argues strongly for its reality. As Philip E. Ross observes, “It was Charles Darwin who first linked the evolution of languages to biology. In *The Descent of Man* (1871), he wrote, ‘the formation of different languages and of distinct species, and the proofs that both have been developed through a gradual process, are curiously parallel.’ But linguists cringe at the idea that evolution might transform simple languages into complex ones. Today it is believed that no language is, in any basic way, ‘prior’ to any other, living or dead. Language alters even as we speak it, but it neither improves nor degenerates” (“Hard Words,” *Scientific American* 264 [April 1991]: 144; quoted in Walt Brown, *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*, 8th ed. [Phoenix: Center for Scientific Creation, 2008], 58).

²⁵ First Corinthians 13:8–12 is not speaking of the completion of the New Testament canon, as cessationists claim. It is referring to the day of the Lord and the age to come, which is the theme to which Paul refers both before and after this passage. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be earnestly desired (12:31; 14:1) for the common good and strengthening of the church (12:7; 14:3,26). See Jon M. Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-biblical Miracles*, rev. ed. (Tulsa: Word & Spirit, 2011), esp. 107–67.

The gift of the Spirit is therefore understood as a visible confirmation of the future reality of the day of the Lord and the resurrection. The Spirit is given to confirm our divine adoption and inheritance (Rom. 8:16–17), mitigating “the sufferings of this present time” (v. 18) and causing us to “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (v. 23). However, we do not *presently see* the hope of the resurrection, as Paul concludes, “Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (vv. 24–25).²⁶

Unlike Christoplatonism, which generally interprets “seen” and “unseen” in metaphysical terms (material vs. immaterial), the Scriptures primarily refer to “seen” and “unseen” in historical terms (this age vs. the age to come). Such an approach is based upon the day of the Lord and the “appearing” of God (cf. Ps. 21:9; 102:16; Zech. 9:14; Mal. 3:2), when humanity will “see” him in his glory (cf. Ps. 97:6; Isa. 33:17; 52:8). Such language is assumed in the New Testament and applied to Jesus’ own “appearing” (Col. 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:14; Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 2:28). Thus, “when he *appears* we shall be like him, because we shall *see* him as he is” (1 John 3:2), for “he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will *see* him” (Rev. 1:7; cf. Matt. 5:8).

In the New Testament, the dichotomy of that which is seen in this age versus that which is unseen in the age to come is the framework within which faith and hope are exercised (see figure 4.2). As the writer of Hebrews defines, “Now *faith* is being sure of what we *hope for* and certain of what we *do not see*” (Heb. 11:1, NIV).²⁷ In this age we see sin, suffering, and trials; but we hope for what we do

²⁶ The language of “waiting” in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; James 5:7f.; 2 Peter 3:12ff.; Jude 21) is also inherently apocalyptic, drawn from the prophetic writings in the context of the day of the Lord (cf. Isa. 25:9; 26:8; 30:18; 40:31; 49:23; 64:4; Lam. 3:25f.; Hos. 12:6; Mic. 7:7; Zeph. 3:8; Ps. 25:3ff.; 27:14; 31:24; 37:7ff.; 40:1; 62:1ff.; etc.). Concerning the wickedness of this age, therefore, believers are repeatedly exhorted to patience, endurance, and perseverance, trusting that God will soon execute his righteous judgments at the return of Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:2–4; Col. 1:11–12; 2 Thess. 1:4–7; Heb. 10:35–37; James 1:12; Rev. 2:2–7; 13:7–10).

²⁷ A cursory reading of Hebrews 11 shows such faith and hope to be historical rather than metaphysical, looking *forward* to the age to come rather than upward to immateriality. Thus Noah’s faith condemned the world because he responded in holy fear “when warned about things *not yet seen*” (v. 7, NIV). Abraham too “was *looking forward* to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (v. 10). Likewise, Moses “considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was *looking ahead* to the reward” (v. 26, NRSV). “Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a *better resurrection*” (v. 35, NRSV). In this way, faith is pictured as “the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1), since it involves a simple linear movement from point A (creation) to point B (consummation).

not see—that is, righteousness, peace, and joy—in the age to come. So Paul describes, “Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is *seen*, but on what is *unseen*. For what is seen is *temporary*, but what is unseen is *eternal*” (2 Cor. 4:17–18, NIV).

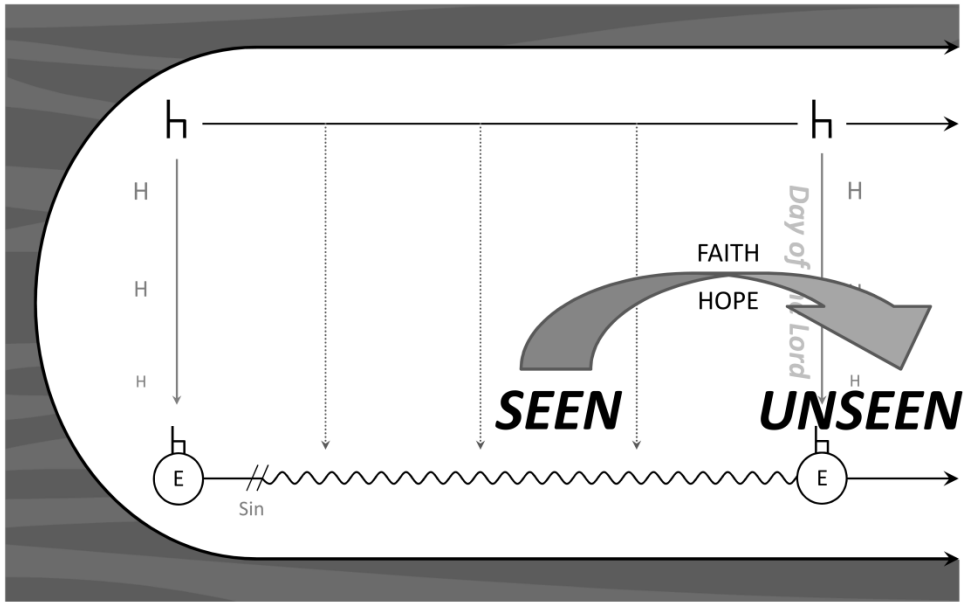


Figure 4.2 – The Apocalyptic Framework of Seen vs. Unseen

Such faith is foundational to the apostolic witness. In light of our coming resurrected body (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1–5) and “the judgment seat of Christ” (v. 10), Paul exhorts us to “walk by faith, not by sight” (v. 7). By faith we “see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:25), though by sight “our outer self is wasting away” (2 Cor. 4:16). In this way, we are being “guarded *through faith* for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). Fueled by the gift of the Spirit, our faith in the unseen hope of the resurrection drives us onward to the day of Christ Jesus.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE RESURRECTION

As the Spirit of God is both the agent and sustainer of creation, so also the Spirit of God is the inspirer of the Word of God, which sets out the hope of the new creation. The Scriptures develop a number of themes that function

sympiotically within this divine testimony. Particularly, the language of life, salvation, blessing, and glory build together unto their consummation on the day of the Lord.

The Life of the Resurrection

Within an apocalyptic framework, the Scriptures develop a *theology of life*, actuated by the Spirit of God. It was the spoken word of God that created “every living thing” (Gen. 1:28), and it was “the breath of life” that made Adam “a living creature” (Gen. 2:7). Moreover, it was the “tree of life” (Gen. 2:9) that promised perpetual regeneration, for the deprivation of this tree meant death as evidenced in the divine declaration regarding Adam’s expulsion from the garden: “lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and *live forever*” (Gen. 3:22).²⁸

This vision of living forever is recapitulated in the end with the “book of life” (Rev. 20:15; 21:27), the “water of life” (Rev. 21:6; 22:1), and the restored “tree of life” (Rev. 22:2,14,19), which is granted “for the *healing* of the nations” (Rev. 22:2). Moreover, the curse of futility and death upon the earth (cf. Gen. 3:16–19; Rom. 8:20) is lifted—“No longer will there be any curse” (Rev. 22:3, NIV)—and the saints will live and “reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:5). Thus the Scriptures present a holistic vision of “everlasting life” (Dan. 12:2), established protologically and projected eschatologically.²⁹

A theology of life develops throughout the Old Testament. Though in this age the dead are universally condemned to Sheol/Hades (cf. Ps. 89:48; Eccl. 9:10),

²⁸ Here the naturalistic bias is seen in full glory, as the lack of commentary on וחי לעולם (“and live forever”) is appalling. Of the major modern commentaries, few even reference the phrase, and those who do view it as an interpolation derived from Babylonian sources (cf. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, CC [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 272–73).

²⁹ As Alister E. McGrath puts it,

The whole of human history is thus enfolded in the subtle interplay of sorrow over a lost paradise, and the hope of its final restoration. . . .

Deep within the human soul there nestles a sense that something is wrong with the world as we know it. The world we know is somehow not quite what it ought to be. It seems to cry out for restoration or renewal. . . . The history of human culture demonstrates a “repeated attempt to re-establish the paradisaical situation lost at the dawn of time” (Eliade). This is often expressed in terms of the interplay of two eras—the paradise that was lost in the early mists of time, and to which we shall one day be restored. (*A Brief History of Heaven* [London: Blackwell, 2003], 40–41)

God holds power over both death and Sheol — “The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up” (1 Sam. 2:6; cf. Rev. 1:18).³⁰ This is evident not only in the lives of Enoch and Elijah (cf. Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11), but also in the deaths of Korah and his followers, who “went down alive into Sheol” (Num. 16:33; cf. Ps. 55:15; Prov. 1:12). Moreover, death and Sheol “lie open before the LORD” (Prov. 15:11; cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2). Hence it is the Lord alone who grants deliverance from Sheol, as David anticipates, “You will not abandon my soul to Sheol” (Ps. 16:10; cf. Ps. 89:48), and rehearses, “You have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit” (Ps. 30:3; cf. Ps. 86:12–13).

Consequently it is the Lord alone “who redeems your life from the pit” (Ps. 103:4), as God questions, “Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?” (Hos. 13:14). Indeed, God alone can ransom a person’s soul, “that he should *live on forever* and never see the pit” (Ps. 49:9). So the psalmist declares, “God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me” (v. 15). In this way, the righteous will be raised up and delivered from the realm of the dead and restored to the earth — that is, “the land of the living” (Job 28:13; Ps. 27:13; Isa. 53:8; Ezek. 26:20). “For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I will walk before the LORD *in the land of the living*” (Ps. 116:8–9; cf. Ps. 56:13).

³⁰ The phrase “gathered to his people” (Gen. 25:8,17; 35:29; 49:33; Num. 20:24,26; Deut. 32:50), or “go to your fathers” (Gen. 15:15; cf. Gen. 47:30; Judg. 2:10), refers to the dead in Sheol, as seen in the channeled testimony of Samuel: “Tomorrow you and your sons shall be *with me*” (1 Sam. 28:19). See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 168.

So Jewish theologian Nahum M. Sarna comments,

It is not the same as burial in an ancestral grave, because it is employed of Abraham, Aaron, and Moses, none of whom was buried with his forefathers. It is also not identical with interment in general because the report of burial follows this phrase, and the difference between the two is especially blatant in the case of Jacob, who was interred quite a while after being “gathered to his kin.” It would seem, therefore, that the existence of this idiom, as of the corresponding figure “to lie down with one’s fathers,” testifies to a belief that, despite his mortality and perishability, man possesses an immortal element that survives the loss of life. Death is looked upon as a transition to an afterlife where one is united with one’s ancestors. This interpretation contradicts the widespread, but apparently erroneous, view that such a notion is unknown in Israel until later times. (*Genesis*, JPSTC [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 174)

This deliverance from Sheol is the theological framework within which the language of resurrection is developed.³¹ So Revelation concludes, “Death and Hades *gave up the dead* who were in them, and they were judged” (20:13). Similarly Isaiah prophesies, “Your dead shall live; their bodies *shall rise*. . . . The earth will give birth to the dead” (Isa. 26:19). And Daniel summarizes, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth *shall awake*, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).³² In this way, the Bible’s theology of life develops simply around the Lord delivering the dead from Sheol by raising them up (i.e. resurrection) to *live forever* on a restored Edenic earth.³³

The New Testament thus strives toward the singular goal of “eternal life” (Matt. 19:16,29; 25:46; Mark 10:17,30; Luke 10:25; 18:18,30; John 3:15–16,36; 4:14,36; 5:24,39; 6:27,40,47,54,68; 10:28; 12:25,50; 17:2–3; Acts 13:46,48; Rom. 2:7; 5:21; 6:22–23; Gal. 6:8; 1 Tim. 1:16; 6:12; Titus 1:2; 3:7; 1 John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11,13,20; Jude 21). The sheer number of references to this phrase is indicative of its prominence in the consciousness of the apostolic church, as Paul declared: “*One thing I do*: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for *the prize* of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13–14). Of course, this prize is eternal life—that is, “the resurrection from the dead” (v. 11), when Jesus “will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (v. 21).

As other terminology was shortened (e.g., “the judgment” for “the day of judgment”), so also eternal life was spoken of simply as “life” — “It is better for

³¹ So R. A. Muller, “The OT provides the context of belief from which the idea of resurrection comes and according to which it must be understood. The roots of the concept are there, both positively and negatively, although the terminological apparatus is not” (“Resurrection,” *ISBE*, 4:145). Contrary to the common liberal sentiment that the OT holds no theology of resurrection, see G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “Resurrection,” *ABD*, 5:680–91; and Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

³² Likewise, a theology of resurrection develops in the intertestamental literature; see esp. 2 Maccabees 7, 14; 4 Ezra 7; 1 Enoch 22, 46, 51, 62, 67, 90, 92; *Testament of Benjamin* 10; *Apocalypse of Baruch* 49ff.; and *Sibylline Oracles* 4:176–92.

³³ The national resurrection of Israel (cf. Ezek. 37:1–14; Hos. 6:1–3) naturally presumes upon the knowledge of individual resurrection, for where else would meaning be derived? So the individual precedes the national, and the two are therefore bound together: “Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land” (Ezek. 37:12–14).

you to enter *life* crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire" (Mark 9:43). Likewise, "The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to *life*, and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7:14). So everyone would have understood Jesus' declaration, "I am the bread of *life*" (John 6:35), for "whoever believes has eternal *life*" (v. 47). Similarly, "I am the light of the world" simply references "the light of *life*" (John 8:12). And "I am the resurrection and the *life*" (John 11:25) is in the context of "the resurrection on the last day" (v. 24).

As such, we believe Jesus is "the Author of *life*" (Acts 3:15), since God "has granted the Son also to have *life* in himself" (John 5:26). Accordingly, "we will also *live* with him" (Rom. 6:8; 2 Tim. 2:11). For by believing we "have *life* in his name" (John 20:31). It is "the *life* of God" (Eph. 4:18)—that is, "the *life* to come" (1 Tim. 4:8), which is "the gracious gift of *life*" (1 Peter 3:7, NRSV). It is "the promise of *life*" (2 Tim. 1:1) and "the word of *life*" (Phil. 2:16), to which we hold fast, knowing we will "reign in *life*" (Rom. 5:17). Indeed, it will be "*life* from the dead" (Rom. 11:15)—that is, "*life* and immortality" (2 Tim. 1:10), because mortality itself will be "swallowed up by *life*" (2 Cor. 5:4; cf. 1 Cor. 15:54). Hence we have been equipped with "all things that pertain to *life*" (2 Peter 1:3) that we may "take hold of the eternal *life*" (1 Tim. 6:12). All of this represents the common *language of life* in the early church that pointed to the anticipated day of the Lord and the coming of Christ Jesus.

Therefore, in no way did the early church believe the resurrection and eternal life had already begun. Those who say that "the resurrection has already happened" (2 Tim. 2:18) actually *destroy* people's faith, for "who hopes for what he already has?" (Rom. 8:24, NIV). This is a gnostic reinterpretation of the gift of the Holy Spirit that tries to extrapolate the individual experience to redemptive history as a whole, thus overturning the fundamental nature of "this age" versus "the age to come" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Thess. 2:2). We still live in "the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4), groaning with "this body of death" (Rom. 7:24), enduring the tyranny of "wicked and evil men" (2 Thess. 3:2). However, "though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16, NASB).

Though signs, wonders, and physical healings were common signs of the resurrection, no one mistook them for the resurrection itself. Though paralytics were healed (Luke 5:25; Acts 3:7) and dead men were raised (John 11:44; Acts 20:9–12), they were still "destined to die once, and after that to face judgment"

(Heb. 9:27, NIV). And although debate rages in the academy concerning the spiritual realization of other eschatological concepts in the New Testament (kingdom, Messiah, etc.), one generally accepted point is that the resurrection remains completely apocalyptic.³⁴ So life and death in this age simply point to the life of the resurrection and the second death of Gehenna in the age to come, which are the final consequence of the protological life and death of creation and the fall (see figure 4.3).

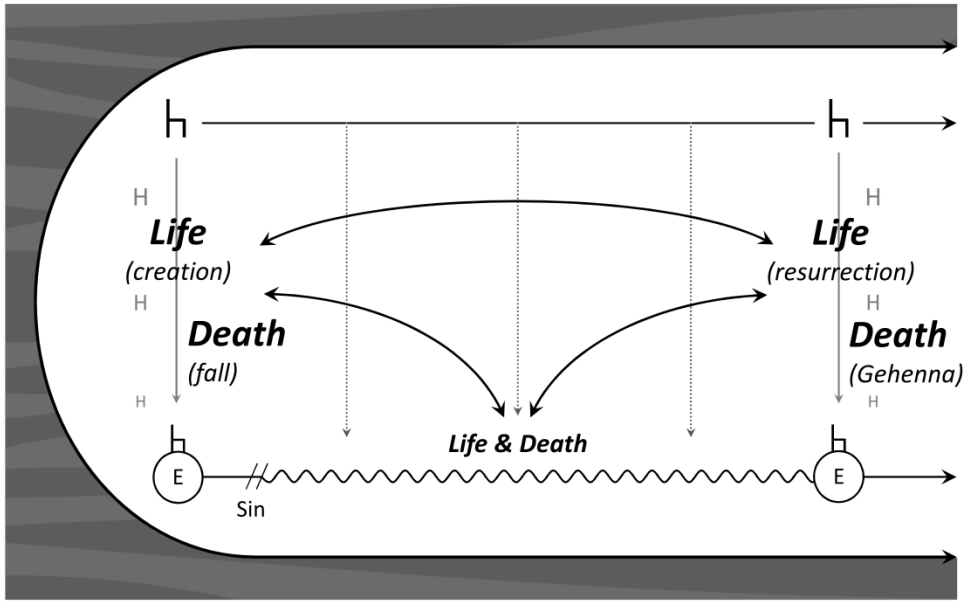


Figure 4.3 – The Apocalyptic Framework of Life and Death

Within such an apocalyptic framework, the sting of death is overcome (1 Cor. 15:55–57). This life is readily forsaken, so that we might “attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead” (Luke 20:35; cf. Phil. 3:11). We are able to embrace suffering, persecution, and martyrdom, loving not our lives unto death (Rev. 12:11). Without such an approach to life and death, one simply cannot be a disciple of Jesus. “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25; cf. Matt. 10:39). This is what

³⁴ “Thus far he [Jesus] is exactly on the map of first-century Jewish belief. Unlike his redefining of kingdom and messiahship, on the question of resurrection he seems to have little or nothing new to say” (Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 38). If only Wright continued his “disciplined historical imagination” (p. 50), the idea of redefining the kingdom and messiahship would “blow away” along with so much historical criticism.

Jesus meant when he said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23–24). Those who walk such a narrow path will receive “the Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2), which guarantees eternal life—“provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (v. 17).

The Salvation of the Resurrection

Divine salvation is also interpreted apocalyptically in the Scriptures. The terminology of “salvation” carries the basic connotation of “freedom from limitation.”³⁵ In contrast to “being restricted,” salvation in a general sense “connotes freedom from distress.”³⁶ Though finding temporal applications (cf. Ex. 14:13; Judg. 3:9; 1 Chron. 14:11; etc.), salvation is ultimately understood in relation to the restrictive nature of sin and death. Our *condition of mortality* was instituted by God because of the sin of Adam and Eve: “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). Death and all of its derivatives are the result of divine condemnation of human sin (cf. Rom. 5:12–18; 1 Cor. 15:21–22). In the end, God is responsible for mortality’s introduction, and he is also responsible for its removal: “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [i.e., mortality] has passed away. . . . *I am* making everything new!” (Rev. 21:4–5, NIV).

In this way, “creation was subjected to *futility*” (Rom. 8:20), by divine design, in order to curb and humiliate the pride of humanity. The limitations of mortality are understood to be a type of *captivity* (see Rom. 7:23), an enslavement from which only God can deliver. So humans are by nature “prisoners of sin” (Gal. 3:22, NLT) and “slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:16,20, NIV; cf. John 8:34). All are “dead in sins” (Eph. 2:5, KJV), and thus “under sin” (Rom. 3:9; 7:14), for “God has *consigned all to disobedience*, that he may have mercy on all” (Rom. 11:32).

Human pride inherently rebels against such an institution. The corporate consciousness of humanity cries out continually, “We are bound by nothing! We have no limits! We are *free*!” Unfortunately, this very proclamation embodies the sin which binds us for condemnation on the last day. Rather than throwing

³⁵ B. A. Milne, “Salvation,” *NBD*, 1047.

³⁶ J. E. Hartley, “929 נִשְׁׁׁׁ (yāšā),” *TWOT*, 414.

ourselves in the dust and crying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13),³⁷ we harden our calloused hearts to the reality of both our own depravity and the coming wrath of God. To put it another way, those who do not believe they are in need of liberation will not be saved.

Because sin and death are humanity’s greatest captivity, salvation is inherently a resurrection concept. Hence Paul summarizes, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be *set free* from its bondage to corruption and obtain the *freedom* of the glory of the children of God. . . . We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were *saved*” (Rom. 8:20–24).

Note that the Spirit is given as an assurance of our future liberation. And it is the Spirit who helps us and intercedes for us according to that for which we hope—that is, our salvation and resurrection. So Paul continues, “But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit *helps us* in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself *intercedes for us* with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:25–27).

The intercession of the Holy Spirit is in the context of the “futility” and “bondage” of mortality in this life (vv. 20–21). Moreover, it is mortality’s “weakness” (Gk. *astheneia*, v. 26)—that is, the “experience of limitation” and “state of debilitating illness”³⁸—which the Spirit mitigates while we are in the womb of this age awaiting our birth in the resurrection.³⁹ Therefore Paul concludes, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together

³⁷ The self-identification of “sinner” in the NT draws from a wealth of usage in the OT, particularly in the Psalms (cf. Gen. 13:13; Num. 27:3; 32:14; Deut. 29:18; 1 Kings 1:21; 2 Chron. 19:2; Ps. 1:1,5; 3:8; 7:10; 9:17f.; 11:2,6; 28:3; 32:10; 34:21–22; 36:12; 37:10,12,14,16f.,20f.,32,34,40; 39:1–2; 50:16; 55:3; 58:4,11; 68:2; 71:4; 73:3,12; 75:8,10; 82:2,4; 84:10; 90:8; 91:8; 94:3,13; 97:10; 101:8; 104:35; 106:18; 109:2,6; 112:10; 119:53,61,95,110,119,155; 125:3; 129:3–4; 139:19; 140:5,9; 141:5,10; 145:20; 146:9; 147:6; Prov. 11:31; 12:13; 23:17; 24:19; Amos 9:8,10; Isa. 1:4,28,31; 13:9; 14:5; 65:20; Ezek. 33:8,19; Dan. 12:10).

³⁸ “ἀσθένεια,” BDAG, 142.

³⁹ Note the same analogy in the apocryphal book 4 Ezra, given in response to Ezra’s question concerning the end of the age: “In Hades the chambers of the souls are like the womb. For just as a woman who is in labor makes haste to escape the pangs of birth, so also do these places hasten to give back those things that were committed to them from the beginning. Then the things that you desire to see will be disclosed to you” (2 Esdras 4:41–43, NRSV).

for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:28–29).

In this way, the activity of the Spirit in this age is designed to help us in the weakness of our mortality until the coming of the Messiah, when the Spirit will liberate us from the tyranny of a body of death (see Rom. 7:23–25).⁴⁰ Moreover, God is working out our struggles with mortality in this age for the good of our resurrection (Rom. 8:28), when we will be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29) “in a resurrection like his” (Rom. 6:5).

Thus we experience the mechanics of faith, so to speak. The captivity of mortality in this age is designed to drive us to depend upon God, who is the only one able to deliver and save us unto immortality. So God works small deliverances throughout our lives to make us believe in the big deliverance to come, and conversely he allows (and sometimes orchestrates—e.g., Deut. 4:27; Dan. 11:33; Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7) small captivities in our lives to make us come to terms with our big captivity to sin and death.⁴¹ This causes us to cry out to him by the groaning of the Spirit within us, and he works it all out for our good in the age to come. Consequently, temporal captivity and deliverance (i.e., salvation) point to their protological introduction and eschatological conclusion (see figure 4.4).

⁴⁰ The deliverance of our souls from bodies of death is the assumed meaning behind “the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9)—i.e., “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith *for a salvation* ready to be revealed in the last time” (vv. 4–5).

⁴¹ Note Paul’s simple logic, “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. *He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again*” (2 Cor. 1:8–10).

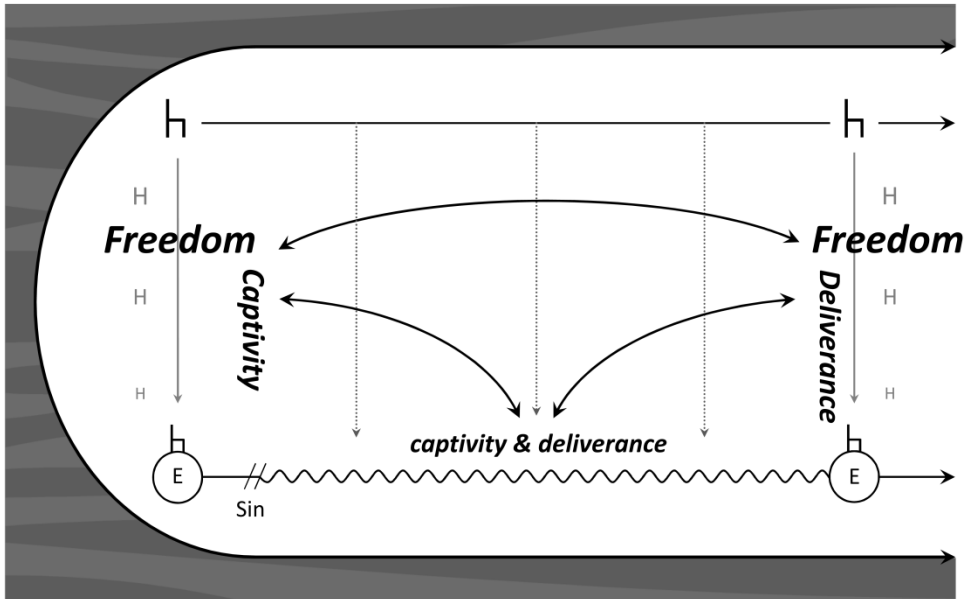


Figure 4.4 – The Apocalyptic Framework of Divine Salvation

Within such an apocalyptic framework, the New Testament assumes salvation to involve a new heavens and new earth, with a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, inaugurated at the day of the Lord.⁴² So an overview of redemptive history can be simply stated: “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring *salvation* to those who are waiting for him” (Heb. 9:28, NIV). It is “a *salvation* ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5), which is reserved for “those who are to inherit *salvation*” (Heb. 1:14). As the first to rise from the dead, Christ Jesus is “the pioneer of their *salvation*” (Heb. 2:10, NRSV); and being perfected in his own resurrection, “he became the source of eternal *salvation* to all who obey him” (Heb. 5:9).

The righteous will “obtain the *salvation* that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10; cf. 1 Thess. 5:9), for “there is *salvation* in no one else” (Acts 4:12)—faith in Christ crucified is “the way to be *saved*” (Acts 16:17, NIV). “For

⁴² See the building testimony of salvation in the Psalms (3:7f.; 7:10; 9:14ff.; 14:7; 18:46–50; 20:5f.; 21:5–9; 24:5; 28:8f.; 37:39; 40:10f.; 50:23; 51:12; 53:6; 65:2–5; 67:2; 68:19ff.; 69:29; 72:13; 76:9; 79:9f.; 85:7ff.; 91:16; 96:2; 98:1ff.; 116:13; 118:14–26; 132:16; 140:7; 145:19; 146:3; 149:4) and Prophets (Isa. 12:2f.; 25:9; 26:1; 33:6; 45:17; 46:13; 49:6ff.; 51:5–8; 52:7–10; 56:1; 59:11–18; 60:18; 61:10; 62:1,11; 63:5; Jer. 3:23; Lam. 3:26; Jonah 2:9; Mic. 7:7; Hab. 3:13; Zech. 9:9; 12:7), which culminates in the apostolic witness.

God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be *saved* through Him" (John 3:17, NASB). Indeed, "since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be *saved* from God's wrath through him!" (Rom. 5:9, NIV). This is "the word of truth, the gospel of your *salvation*" (Eph. 1:13). However, only "the one who endures to the end will be *saved*" (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are *saved*" (Heb. 10:39, NIV). In this we greatly rejoice, "for *salvation* is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:11–12).⁴³

The Blessing of the Resurrection

The Scriptures also frame divine blessing within an apocalyptic framework. By the word of the Lord, everything with the breath of life was blessed by the Creator in the beginning: "And God *blessed* them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply . . .'" (Gen. 1:22). This same divine blessing is reiterated in the new heavens and new earth in the end: "*Blessed* are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life" (Rev. 22:14).

Conversely, divine cursing is declared in the beginning (Gen. 3:14,17) so as to frustrate creation (Rom. 8:20)⁴⁴ and bring about repentance (cf. Ps. 73:3–17; Hos. 5:14–15; Rev. 9:20–21; etc.). This divine cursing culminates in the end with the

⁴³ The present and past tense usage of salvation in the NT (cf. Acts 2:47; Rom. 8:24; 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15; Eph. 2:5,8; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 2:11; 3:5) simply assumes the clause "from the wrath to come," as evidenced by the surrounding context in each usage (see also the discussion on verbal aspect in the appendix). Commenting on the aorist tense in Rom. 8:24, Douglas Moo says, "It is somewhat unusual for Paul to use the *σώζω* word group of a past experience (although see Eph. 2:5,8; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5), but there is nothing inconsistent in his doing so. While final salvation from God's wrath will not take place until the last day (see 5:9,10), deliverance in principle from that wrath *has* already taken place when we were justified by faith" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 521, n. 71).

⁴⁴ So we read in the apocryphal book 4 Ezra:

I made the world for their sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged. And so the entrances of this world were made narrow and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few and evil, full of dangers and involved in great hardships. But the entrances of the greater world are broad and safe, and yield the fruit of immortality. Therefore unless the living pass through the difficult and futile experiences, they can never receive those things that have been reserved for them. Now therefore why are you disturbed, seeing that you are to perish? Why are you moved, seeing that you are mortal? Why have you not considered in your mind what is to come, rather than what is now present? (2 Esdras 7:11–16, NRSV)

judgment of the wicked—“Depart from me, you *cursed*, into the eternal fire” (Matt. 25:41)—while the blessing of God culminates in the resurrection, “Come, you who are *blessed* by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). Thus, “No longer will there be anything *accursed*” (Rev. 22:3), for “the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4, NIV).

In relation to divine sovereignty, blessing and cursing is roughly equivalent to divine favor and disfavor within a governmental context.⁴⁵ Therefore God is favorable to Adam and Eve and delegates governance of the earth by blessing (Gen. 1:26–28). The righteous will likewise be blessed in the age to come when God delegates to them the kingdom (see Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:29–30) on the new earth, “and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:5).

It is within this broad framework that we are to understand *temporal* divine blessing and cursing. Those who love and obey God are favored and blessed—“Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8; cf. Ex. 33:12; Ps. 84:11; Luke 1:30). Those who hate and rebel against God are disfavored and cursed—“On Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. . . . Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground” (Gen. 4:5,11, NIV; cf. Lev. 20; Prov. 12:2; Rev. 2:20–23). So redemptive history plays out according to divine favor and disfavor: “The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. . . . Let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever” (Ps. 145:20–21). Indeed, “Those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off” (Ps. 37:22, NKJV).⁴⁶ And so temporal blessing and cursing point to their protological introduction and their eschatological conclusion (see figure 4.5).

⁴⁵ See John N. Oswalt, “285 בָּרַךְ (*bārak*),” *TWOT*, 132–33.

⁴⁶ On blessing and cursing in the Psalms in light of the coming Messiah and the day of the Lord, see 1:1ff.; 2:12; 21:6; 37:10–22; 45:2ff.; 67:7; 72:17; 84:5; 112:1ff.; 115:12–18; 118:26; 132:15ff.; 133:3; 144:15; 146:5. For an eschatological introduction to the Psalter, see esp. David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1997). See also the classic article by Geerhardus Vos, “Eschatology of the Psalter,” *The Princeton Theological Review* 18 (1920): 1–43 (later published as an appendix in *Pauline Eschatology*, 321–65).

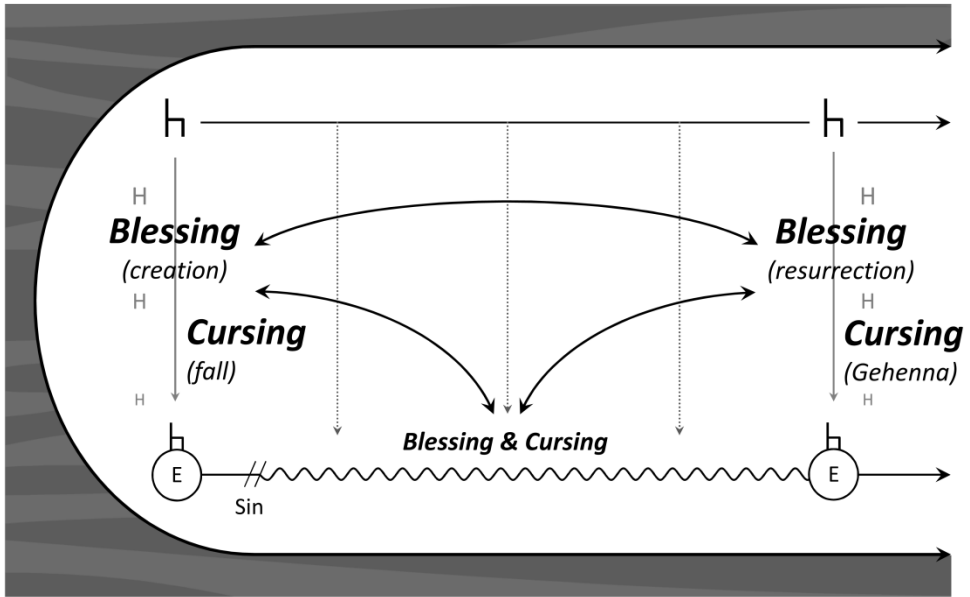


Figure 4.5 – The Apocalyptic Framework of Divine Blessing and Cursing

As such, the blessings and curses of the covenants (Gen. 12:2–3; Deut. 27–28; 2 Sam. 7:11–16) are understood within an apocalyptic context. For example, those who bless Abraham and his descendants will find favor with God; those who curse him will be cursed by God; and in him “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Though holding a temporal application (see Josh. 21:43–45; 23:14), such words are understood in their ultimate context of deliverance from Sheol, which develops around the day of the Lord and the resurrection.⁴⁷

Thus Peter relates the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant to the restoration of all things: “[Christ] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. . . . And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be *blessed*.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to *bless* you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.” (Acts 3:21,25–26, NIV) The Abrahamic covenant is related to the blessing of God throughout redemptive history—*first*

⁴⁷ Likewise, the Deuteronomic blessings (see Deut. 30:1–20) are understood in light of their ultimate fulfillment in the resurrection (see Rom. 10:5–13), and the Deuteronomic curses are understood in relation to eschatological fulfillment (cf. Deut. 21:23 with Gal. 3:13; Deut. 24:7 with 1 Cor. 5:13; Deut. 27:26 with Gal. 3:10; and Deut. 29:4 with Rom. 11:8).

by turning Israel from wickedness (Acts 3:26), and *second* by restoring all things (v. 21). This blessing is what it means to be “heirs of the prophets and of the covenant” (v. 25).

Similarly, Paul took for granted that Abraham received “the promise that he would be heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13, NIV). As such, God renamed Abram according to his destiny (Gen. 17:5–8), because he is “the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were” (Rom. 4:17, NIV).⁴⁸ So God’s “blessing” (vv. 6,9) was understood in the context of “the day of wrath” (Rom. 2:5), “eternal life” (Rom. 5:21), “the glory that is to be revealed” (Rom. 8:18), etc. Within a biblical worldview, everything temporal ultimately relates to its eternal fulfillment, because there is an inherent continuity between the two.

So also the blessing of the Davidic covenant was understood in its ultimate context, wherein all the nations will find favor with God by submission to the Davidic king to come: “Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to *his blessings* in the last days” (Hos. 3:5, NIV). So Gabriel declared that Jesus would receive “the throne of his father David, . . . and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32–33), which was confirmed by angels proclaiming, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom *his favor* rests” (Luke 2:14, NIV).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ So Abraham is commanded to walk in a manner worthy of his calling, so to speak (cf. Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12)—the scriptural pattern of discipleship, as Paul elsewhere relates (cf. Rom. 13:12ff.; 1 Cor. 6:2ff.; Eph. 5:5ff.).

⁴⁹ The terrifying assumption is that “there is no peace for the wicked” (Isa. 48:22, NASB; 57:21; cf. Rev. 14:11), and hence the angelic host is prophesying the future destiny of the child to execute divine vengeance. “The proclamation of ‘glory (*doxa*) to God in the highest,’ and that of the eschatological ‘peace on earth’ are nothing but a summary of the future bliss that will be realized in and by the coming of the kingdom” (Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, trans. H. de Jongste [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962], 28).

Moreover, the context of the song assumes military imagery, as Verlyn D. Verbrugge has noted,

The song sung on the fields of Bethlehem is not being sung by a heavenly choir, complete with long robes, arranged in neat rows with sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses and singing a song of victory—or even a song of simple praise and “glory to God.” This *στρατιά* is rather an army of angels—a multitude of the heavenly army (we can infer from Matthew 26:53 that there may be as many as twelve legions)—and they are singing their song in full battle array, and the words that they sing are, in essence, a celestial version of “Hail to the Chief.” (“The Heavenly Army on the Fields of Bethlehem (Luke 2:13–14),” *CTJ* 43, no. 2 [November 2008]: 311)

In this way we are promised that the favor and blessing of God bestowed in the beginning will be restored in the end by means of the covenants.⁵⁰ The blessing of God is the precondition of the resurrection. Those who are favored by God will inherit eternal life, while those who are condemned by God will inherit eternal punishment. So James encourages perseverance, “*Blessed* is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life” (James 1:12). So also Jesus promises the faithful, “You will be *blessed*, . . . for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14, NRSV). Moreover, “*Blessed* are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). And concerning the martyrs, “*Blessed* are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. . . . For their deeds follow them!” (Rev. 14:13). Indeed, “*Blessed* are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9). “*Blessed* and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!” (Rev. 20:6).

This *language of blessing* is used throughout the New Testament in relation to “our *blessed* hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

The Glory of the Resurrection

Related to eternal life, salvation, and divine blessing in the Scriptures is divine glory. God himself is described as “the God of glory” (Ps. 29:3; Acts 7:2), “the king of glory” (Ps. 24:7,10), “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8; James 2:1), and “the Majestic Glory” (2 Peter 1:17). Indeed, “the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1; 106:20; John 11:4; Acts 7:55; Rom. 3:23; 2 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 21:23) is a pervasive concept throughout the Scriptures. But what is the context of divine glory? Why does it appear? How and when is it expressed?

Because God himself is glorious, so also is everything he does. Accordingly, creation—with humanity at its apex—was created in divine glory. So Psalm 8, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your

⁵⁰ Thus the Davidic and Abrahamic covenants are woven together in their eternal destiny, as Solomon prophesied, “Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. . . . In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. . . . May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. *All nations will be blessed through him*, and they will call him blessed. . . . Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen” (Ps. 72:1,7–8,17–19, NIV).

glory in the heavens above. . . . You have made man a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor” (vv. 1,5, AT).⁵¹ As creation was adorned in divine glory in the beginning, so also will it radiate the glory of God in the end.⁵² Thus the vision of Revelation:

And [the angel] carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the *glory* of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. . . .

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the *glory* of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their *glory* into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the *glory* and the honor of the nations. (21:10–11,23–26)

As humanity was crowned in glory and honor protologically, so will the righteous of the nations be laurelled in glory and honor eschatologically. Within such an apocalyptic framework, we understand that temporal revelations of divine glory (cf. Ex. 24:16; 33:22; Num. 14:10) inherently prophesy that “all the earth shall be filled with the *glory* of the LORD” (Num. 14:21). The filling of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and the temple (1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14) anticipate the day when the messianic temple will be filled with glory (Ezek. 43:2–7; Hag. 2:7–9; Mal. 3:1–2), and when “the *glory* of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it” (Isa. 40:5, NIV).⁵³

⁵¹ The heavens here parallel the earth, both of which reflect the glory of God. Thus the NET reads, “You reveal your majesty in the heavens above!” So Hans-Joachim Kraus, “Corresponding to ‘the world’ (אֶרֶץ), in which the glory of the name radiates, there are (in the parallelism) שָׁמַיִם, the heavens, on which the brightness of God is reflected. For the interpretation of these statements of choral verse, cf. Pss. 104:1f. and 19:1” (*A Continental Commentary: Psalms 1–59* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 181).

⁵² Note the quotations of Ps. 8 in eschatological context (1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:6–8). As creation was set in divine order under the feet of Adam in the beginning, so will it be restored under the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). As such, the new heavens and new earth will express the glory of God in fullness.

⁵³ Thus the assumption underlying the declaration of perpetuity by Solomon, “I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in *forever*” (1 Kings 8:13). And the divine response of perpetuity, “I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there *forever*” (1 Kings 9:3). Likewise the worshipers sang, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures *forever*” (2 Chron. 5:13).

The Psalms and Prophets build in anticipation of the glory of God and its eschatological fulfillment. As the psalmist declares, “The nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth your *glory*. For the LORD will build up Zion; he will appear in his *glory*” (Ps. 102:15–16, NRSV). Hence the Davidic prayer, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your *glory* be over all the earth!” (Ps. 57:11; cf. Ps. 108:5) Likewise, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his *glory*!” (Ps. 72:18–19). Similarly the royal Psalms (96–99) generally outline the form of the age to come. For example,

Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his *glory* among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples! . . .
Worship the LORD in the *splendor* of holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth! . . .
For he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness,
and the peoples in his faithfulness. (Ps. 96:2–3,9,13)

The vision of divine glory is particularized in the writings of the Prophets. The Messiah will be “given dominion and *glory* and a kingdom” (Dan. 7:14), “for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, *gloriously*” (Isa. 24:23, NIV). “In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and *glorious*” (Isa. 4:2), for “then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over its convocations a cloud and smoke by day and a bright flame of fire by night; indeed a canopy will accompany the LORD’s *glorious* presence” (v. 5, NET). The nations “shall see the *glory* of the LORD, the majesty of our God” (Isa. 35:2); and therefore “men will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his *glory*” (Isa. 59:19, NIV). “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be *glorious*” (Isa. 11:10, NIV). When the glory of God rises upon Jerusalem (Isa. 60:1–3), the nations will gather to see it (Isa. 59:19; 62:2; 66:18), and so “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the *glory* of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

Because the Lord dwells in heavenly glory (cf. Ps. 26:8; 63:2), the day of the Lord will involve the opening of the heavens and the descent of God in divine glory. Hence Isaiah's prayer, "Oh that you would *rend the heavens* and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence, . . . and that the nations might tremble at your presence!" (Isa. 64:1–2). Likewise David, "*Bow your heavens*, O LORD, and come down! Touch the mountains so that they smoke!" (Ps. 144:5; cf. Ps. 18:9) In this way the glory of God will be revealed, and the darkness of humanity will be exposed.⁵⁴

This scenario of divine glory became common to apocalyptic expectation during New Testament times.⁵⁵ So Jesus responds to the messianic declaration of Nathaniel (John 1:49), saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see *heaven opened*, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (v. 51). Angels are understood as divine administrators (cf. Ps. 91:11; 103:20–21; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 1:14), and as such they will mediate the glory of God in the age to come.⁵⁶ The opening of the heavens at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16), the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), and Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:56) would have been interpreted apocalyptically in anticipation of the day of the Lord.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ So the *language of light* is also associated with divine glory. For example, "Arise, shine, for *your light* has come, and *the glory* of the LORD has risen upon you" (Isa. 60:1). And in response to the vision of Isa. 2:2–4: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk *in the light* of the LORD" (v. 5). Thus the apostolic exhortation, "For you yourselves are fully aware that *the day of the Lord* will come like a thief in the night. . . . But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all *children of light*, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness" (1 Thess. 5:2–5; cf. Rom. 13:11–14; Eph. 5:5–10).

⁵⁵ As Klaus Koch summarizes,

The catchword *glory* is used wherever the final state of affairs is set apart from the present and whenever a final amalgamation of the earthly and heavenly spheres is prophesied. Glory is the portion of those who have been raised from the dead, who will thus become as the angels or the stars of heaven (Dan. 12.3; I Enoch 50.1; 51.4). Glory is then the mark not only of man, however, but also of conditions, the "state" in which they live, the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21.1ff.; II Bar. 32.4), or of the eschatological ruler (II Bar. 30.1) who is above them. (*The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, trans. M. Kohl [London: SCM Press, 1972], 32)

⁵⁶ Jesus' pronouncement to Nathaniel would also evoke Jacob's dream in which he saw angels ascending and descending on a stairway "reaching to the heavens" (Gen. 28:12, NET), thus confirming the promise of a messianic offspring in whom "shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (v. 14).

⁵⁷ See *Testament of Levi* 18:4–11:

This one will shine forth like the sun in the earth; *he shall take away all darkness from under heaven*, and there shall be peace in all the earth. The heavens shall greatly rejoice in his day and the earth shall be glad; the clouds will be filled with joy and the knowledge of

Thus Revelation 19:11: “Then I saw *heaven opened*, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.”

Though the heavens are closed in this age, so to speak, they will be opened in the age to come, and the darkness of sinful humanity will be overcome by the glory of God.⁵⁸ As with other aspects of divine sovereignty, historical revelations of divine glory point to their protological introduction and their eschatological conclusion (see figure 4.6). Consequently, the gift of the Spirit, and the glory therein (cf. 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 4:4–7), gives us a faint glimpse “in a mirror dimly” (1 Cor. 13:12) into the age to come. As it is in heaven, so it is in the Spirit; as it was in the beginning, so it will be in the end.⁵⁹

the Lord will be poured out on the earth like the water of the seas. And the angels of glory of the Lord’s presence will be made glad by him. *The heavens will be opened*, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. . . . In his priesthood sin shall cease and lawless men shall rest from their evil deeds, and righteous men shall find rest in him. *And he shall open the gates of paradise*; he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam, and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life. The spirit of holiness shall be upon them. (*OTP*, 1:794–95; italics added)

And Testament of Judah 24:1–6:

And a man shall arise from my posterity like the Sun of righteousness, walking with the sons of men in gentleness and righteousness, and in him will be found no sin. And *the heavens will be opened upon him* to pour out the spirit as a blessing of the Holy Father. . . . This is the Shoot of God Most High; this is the fountain for the life of all humanity. Then he will illumine the scepter of my kingdom, and from your root will arise the Shoot, and through it will arise the rod of righteousness for the nations, to judge and to save all that call on the Lord. (*OTP*, 1:801; italics added)

⁵⁸ Though concluding inaugurationally, Jürgen Moltmann comments,

Ever since the story of the Fall, the symbol of “the closed heaven” has been an emblem of the divine judgment and the exile into which human beings have been cast out. “The closed heaven” is a sign that God hides his face. “The darkened heaven” is ultimately a portent of the last, apocalyptic judgment. Against this background, “the opened heaven” means that the era of grace is beginning, that God is turning his face towards men and women in kindness, that the alienation from true life has been overcome, and that “the gateway” to the paradise of an achieved and harmonious life has now been opened. (*God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 170–71)

⁵⁹ Note the creation account in pseudepigraphic 2 *Enoch*, “I created a garden in Edem [*sic*], in the east, so that he might keep the agreement and preserve the commandment. And I created for him an open heaven, so that he might look upon the angels, singing the triumphal song. And the light which is never darkened was perpetually in paradise” (31:1–2; *OTP*, 1:152). Elsewhere, Eden is described as “open as far as the 3rd heaven” (42:3).

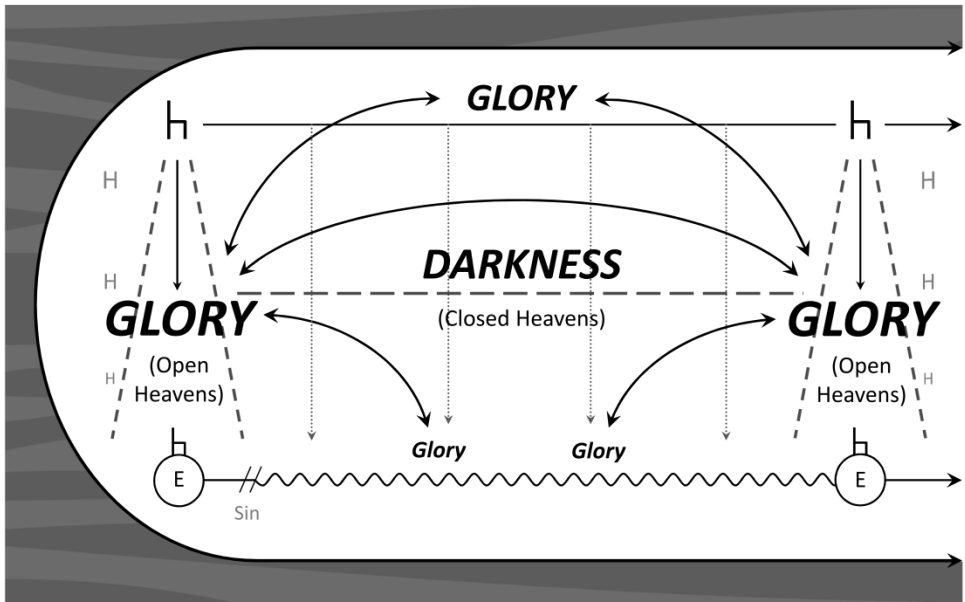


Figure 4.6 – The Apocalyptic Framework of Divine Glory

The thoroughly eschatological orientation of the New Testament is seen in its use of the *language of glory*. Most evident is Jesus' own description of the age to come: "When the Son of Man comes in his *glory*, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his *glorious* throne" (Matt. 25:31). Indeed, "The Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the *glory* of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done" (Matt. 16:27; cf. Luke 9:26). The nations "will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great *glory*" (Matt. 24:30). For "at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his *glory*, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones" (Matt. 19:28, NRSV).

Though all human beings have sinned and "fall short of the *glory* of God" (Rom. 3:23), those who are justified freely by faith in Christ's sacrifice on the cross will be presented blameless "before the presence of his *glory* with great joy" (Jude 24). They will "obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal *glory*" (2 Tim. 2:10), for they have been called "into his kingdom and *glory*" (1 Thess. 2:12, NIV)—that is, "to his eternal *glory* in Christ" (1 Peter 5:10). This glory is "the hope of His calling . . . the riches of the *glory* of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18, NASB), for Christ will come "on that day to be *glorified* in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed" (2 Thess. 1:10).

Though our present bodies are “sown in dishonor,” they will be “raised in *glory*” (1 Cor. 15:43), for Jesus “will transform our lowly body to be like his *glorious* body” (Phil. 3:21). “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in *glory*” (Col. 3:4).

Jesus’ disciples asked, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your *glory*” (Mark 10:37), but they didn’t understand that “the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his *glory*” (Luke 24:26, NRSV). Likewise, our “light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of *glory* beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17). If we “share Christ’s sufferings,” then we will also “rejoice and be glad when his *glory* is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13). “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of *glory*” (1 Peter 5:4). The present sufferings “are not worth comparing with the *glory* that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18)—“the freedom of the *glory* of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21).

All such references to divine glory as eschatological are contextually sound and provide an organic cohesion to the New Testament. Humanity was created in divine glory, and on the last day the heavens will open and the righteous will be raised to life by the Spirit, clothed with bodies of glory, and blessed anew by the Creator. Such glory is the singular prize which the righteous now seek (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22–25; Phil. 3:11–14): the blessing of eternal life in divine glory—that is, “our blessed hope, the appearing of the *glory* of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

THE CRUCIFORM-APOCALYPTIC TESTIMONY OF THE SPIRIT

Within such an apocalyptic framework, the Scriptures declare that Jesus of Nazareth was sent by God and crucified according to divine foreknowledge (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28). After being raised by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14), Jesus interpreted his own death in sacrificial terms (see chapters 7 and 8) for forty days (Acts 1:3) before being taken up. Paul details the progression of this divine impartation of knowledge (1 Cor. 15:3–8), insisting that an atonemental interpretation of the cross was passed on to him *directly* (Gal. 1:12)—that is, “I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was” (vv. 16–17, NIV). Thus Paul understands that the

sacrificial interpretation of the death of the Messiah “is not of human origin” (v. 11, NRSV).

Therefore, the idea that Jesus’ death was accounted by God as an atoning sacrifice in the stead of humanity’s sins is not something the apostles figured out. Rather, it came directly from Jesus, being received by the apostles.⁶⁰ Justification by faith in anticipation of the day of judgment is the *golden kernel* of apostolic revelation, so to speak—planted by Jesus for forty days and galvanized by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Since depraved humanity naturally puts “confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3) to right all that is wrong, the gift of the Holy Spirit was deemed necessary by God to confirm the cruciform revelation. Paul’s exhortation to the Galatians is typical of how the apostles understood Pentecost:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed *as crucified*. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you *receive the Spirit* by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to *attain your goal* by human effort? . . . Does God *give you his Spirit* and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? (Gal 3:1–5, NIV)

The Spirit was therefore understood as a unique gift from God given to confirm the testimony of Christ crucified in light of the day of the Lord (see figure 4.7). This pattern is seen throughout the book of Acts,⁶¹ and it defines the broad approach of the apostolic witness as a whole.⁶² Before Jesus was taken up, he commissioned his disciples as witnesses and promised that they would be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:48–49; Acts 1:8). This commissioning is then plainly recounted by Peter to Cornelius and his household: “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed

⁶⁰ Contrary to the common idea that Paul, in regard to a theology of atonement, was the founder of Christianity; see esp. William Wrede, *Paul*, trans. E. Lummis (London: Philip Green, 1907); and Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, trans. W. F. Stinespring (New York: Macmillan, 1943). See an introduction in David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

⁶¹ See 1:6–11; 2:17–40; 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32; 8:5–13; 10:34–46; 13:16–48; 15:7–11; 17:22–31; 20:18–35; 24:14–25; 26:4–23; 28:23–31.

⁶² The fact that the apostolic witness was readily received by so many Jews argues strongly for an unaltered Jewish apocalyptic background to the cruciform message (see Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 11:19; 13:43; 14:1; 17:4; 18:8; 19:10; 21:20; 24:24f.; 28:24).

by God *to be judge* of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives *forgiveness of sins* through his name” (Acts 10:42–43). The charismatic nature of the apostolic witness is subservient to its cruciform-apocalyptic message, for “while Peter was still *saying these things*, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (v. 44).

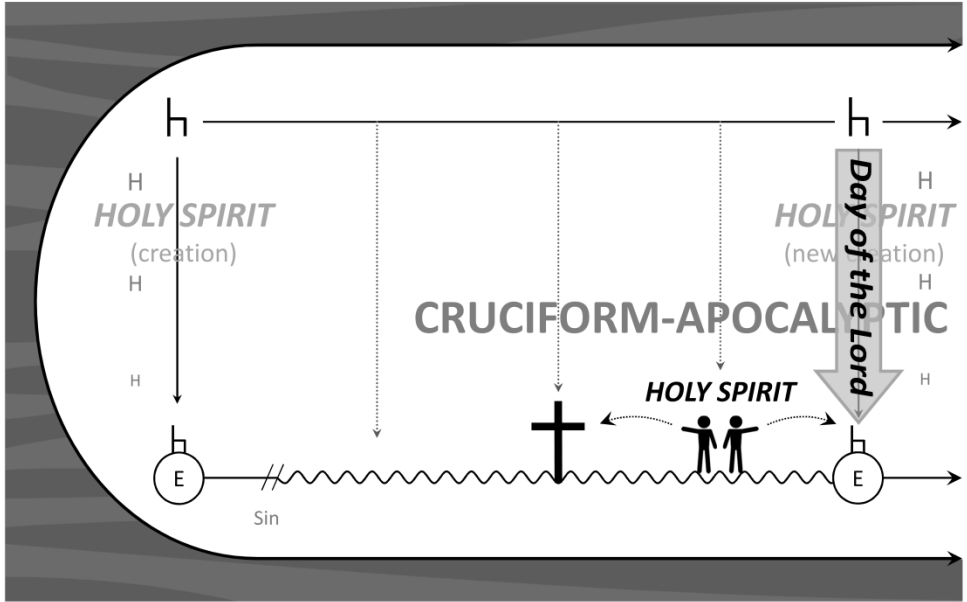


Figure 4.7 – The Cruciform-Apocalyptic Testimony of the Holy Spirit

Likewise Paul prays for the Corinthian church, “I give thanks to my God always for you . . . even as the testimony about Christ was *confirmed among you* — so that you are not lacking in *any gift*, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:4–8). Such a witness, derived from Jesus himself and fundamentally represented in the epistles of the New Testament, comprised “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42), to which the early church devoted itself.

The message of the cross in light of the day of the Lord is “the standard of teaching” (Rom. 6:17), or “the pattern of sound teaching” (2 Tim. 1:13, NIV), which the apostles sought to pass on to others as they had received it from the risen Christ. So Paul exhorts Timothy, “What you have *heard from me* in the presence of many witnesses *entrust to faithful men* who will be able to teach others

also" (2 Tim. 2:2).⁶³ Such a pattern was thus confirmed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, as Hebrews outlines: "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord [cf. Acts 1:3], was confirmed to us by those who heard him [cf. 1 Cor. 15:5–7]. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will [cf. Acts 2; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; Gal. 3:1–5; etc.]" (Heb. 2:3–4, NIV).

THE CHRISTOPLATONIC RESURRECTION

With the accommodation of Hellenistic philosophy, the fundamental Christian hope of the resurrection of the body by the Spirit of God was primarily replaced with the eternal existence of the soul in an immaterial heaven. Though the language of resurrection was incorporated, its reality was denied. As Moltmann summarizes,

In the degree to which Christianity cut itself off from its Hebrew roots and acquired Hellenistic and Roman form, it lost its eschatological hope and surrendered its apocalyptic alternative to "this world" of violence and death. It merged into late antiquity's gnostic religion of redemption. From Justin onwards, most of the Fathers revered Plato as a "Christian before Christ" and extolled his feeling for the divine transcendence and for the values of the spiritual world. God's eternity now took the place of God's future, heaven replaced the coming kingdom, the spirit that redeems the soul from the body supplanted the Spirit as "the well of life," the immortality of the soul displaced the resurrection of the body, and the yearning for another world became a substitute for changing this one.⁶⁴

Within this dominant form of Christoplatonism, all of the biblical language associated with the resurrection was reinterpreted along escapist lines.⁶⁵

⁶³ Paul here has in mind "the promise of life" (2 Tim. 1:1, NRSV), i.e., "life and immortality" (1:10), which we receive "not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace" (1:9)—a clear reference to the cross (cf. Rom. 4:5; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:9; Titus 3:5)—all of which is consummated "on that Day" (2 Tim. 1:18).

⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 89.

⁶⁵ To this day escapist Christoplatonism remains the dominant hope of the church, as Oscar Cullmann lamented,

If we were to ask an ordinary Christian today (whether well-read Protestant or Catholic, or not) what he conceived to be the New Testament teaching concerning the fate of man

“Salvation” became deliverance from materiality unto the liberating “glory” of immateriality. Eternal “life” became the true “blessing” of God that releases us from our bodies (in the Greek tradition of *sōma sēma*—i.e., “the body is a tomb”).⁶⁶ Therefore immateriality became “the kingdom of heaven,” which is our “inheritance,” “destiny,” “calling,” etc. All of this was understood in terms of a “spiritual” resurrection, as Origen argued with ironic condescension:

We now turn our attention to some of our own believers, who, either from feebleness of intellect or want of proper instruction, adopt a *very low and abject view of the resurrection of the body*. . . . And so also to those who shall deserve to obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, that germ of the body’s restoration, which we have before mentioned, by God’s command restores out of the earthly and animal body *a spiritual one, capable of inhabiting the heavens*.⁶⁷

The lack of a vibrant theology of the resurrection has had a crippling effect on the church throughout its history. Though immaterial heaven does hold out some hope for an existence without death, crying, or pain, it lacks an organic connection to *this life*. Because humanity was constitutionally designed for existence *on the earth*, any hope that does not involve an idyllic earthly existence is constitutionally impossible either to understand or to relate to.⁶⁸ As the

after death, with few exceptions we should get the answer: “The immortality of the soul.” Yet this widely-accepted idea is one of the greatest misunderstandings of Christianity. There is no point in attempting to hide this fact, or to veil it by reinterpreting the Christian faith. This is something that should be discussed quite candidly. The concept of death and resurrection is anchored in the Christ-event . . . and hence is incompatible with the Greek belief in immortality; because it is based in *Heilsgeschichte* [“salvation history”] it is offensive to modern thought. (*Immortality of the Soul or the Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* [London: Epworth Press, 1958], 15)

⁶⁶ “Greek thought, and in consequence many Hellenizing Jewish and Christian sages, regarded the body as a prison-house of the soul: *sōma sēma* ‘the body is a tomb.’ The aim of the sage was to achieve deliverance from all that is bodily and thus liberate the soul” (M. H. Cressey, “Dualism,” *NBD*, 284).

⁶⁷ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.10.3 (*ANF*, 4:294); italics added.

⁶⁸ Note Randy Alcorn’s forceful analogy,

We do not desire to eat gravel. Why? Because God did not design us to eat gravel. Trying to develop an appetite for a disembodied existence in a non-physical Heaven is like trying to develop an appetite for gravel. No matter how sincere we are, and no matter how hard we try, it’s not going to work. Nor should it. What God made us to desire, and therefore what we *do* desire if we admit it, is exactly what he promises to those who follow Jesus Christ: a resurrected life in a resurrected body, with the resurrected Christ on a resurrected Earth. (*Heaven*, [Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004], 7)

message of the cross and the age to come is often compared to food (cf. Matt. 24:45; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12), the heavenly-destiny gospel is a dry and withered hope that starves believers—gnawing on it as they may—leaving them malnourished and weak in an often debilitating struggle with sin, death, and mortality.

Conversely, the dominionistic Christoplatonic hope—which promises the kingdom *now*, the glory *now*, eternal life *now*, etc.—is something of a fermented and rotten theological food that makes people drunk for a season, but in the end it leaves them nauseated and *diseased*. Though propagated at a popular level in modern times as “health and wealth,”⁶⁹ this radical sickness has plagued the church throughout its history. Introduced through Gnosticism (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:2), it is a devilish doctrine that took root in Constantinian Christendom and continues strong to the present day.⁷⁰

Because of its perverted worldview, Christoplatonism has primarily produced these two perverted hopes throughout the history of the church. Moreover, its perverted view of creation leaves little room for a theology of the Spirit (technically termed, *pneumatology*). Thus the Spirit of God has generally been neglected in the history of theological reflection.⁷¹ Since the Spirit plays no significant role protologically or eschatologically,⁷² he is relegated to a subsidiary function in the attainment of escapist and/or dominionistic ends (see figure 4.8). Without the real historical events of creation and the day of the Lord as anchor

⁶⁹ See Gordon D. Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1985).

⁷⁰ Convincing people trapped in this delusion that they are *alienated* from Christ crucified is quite difficult. For a systematic approach, see David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010). Note the fascinating firsthand account of disillusioned dominionist Colonel V. Doner in *Christian Jihad: Neo-Fundamentalists and the Polarization of America* (Littleton, CO: Samizdat Creative, 2012).

⁷¹ So Jürgen Moltmann summarizes, “After the West committed itself to the *filioque* in the Nicene Creed by separating itself from the Eastern church in 1054, and after the persecution of the so-called Enthusiasts by both the Protestant and the Catholic churches at the time of the Reformation, the experience and theology of the Spirit of God ceased to play much of a part in our churches” (*The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. by M. Kohl [London: SCM Press, 1977], xv).

⁷² Moltmann makes a valiant attempt at incorporating the Spirit protologically (see *God in Creation*), though his view of “heaven and earth” (chap. 7) is still markedly Platonic.

points, the gift of the Holy Spirit gets commonly marginalized as a “second blessing,” or “second work of grace,” given only to the spiritually elite.⁷³

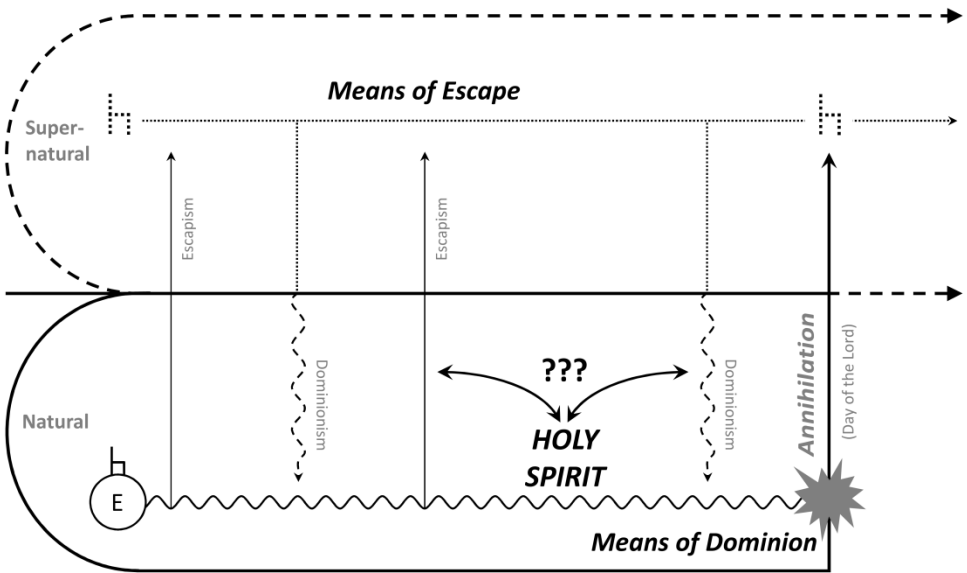


Figure 4.8 – Perversion of the Holy Spirit’s Function in Augustinian Christoplatonism

Within dispensationalism, generally speaking, the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the resurrection has been somewhat tenuous.⁷⁴ Being relegated mostly to the production of prophecy, the Spirit here also plays a secondary role in redemptive history. Thus dispensationalism has lacked a viable theology and practice of the Spirit, with some going so far as to embrace cessationism, the belief that God retracted the gift of the Spirit when the apostolic witness ended.⁷⁵

⁷³ As commonly seen in the traditions of early Methodism, nineteenth-century Holiness movements, early twentieth-century Pentecostalism, and modern charismatic movements. See John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766); Charles Finney, “Christian Perfection,” in *Lectures to Professing Christians* (1837), Andrew Murray, *The Two Covenants: And the Second Blessing* (1899); Dennis Bennett, *Nine O’clock in the Morning* (1970); etc. See an introduction in James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament on the Gift of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970).

⁷⁴ As reflected in Robert L. Saucy, “An Open But Cautious View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 97–155.

⁷⁵ For example, John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). Cessationism is generally found in Reformed circles; see B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1918); Anthony Hoekema, *What About Tongues Speaking?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966); and Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

Though an emphasis on the Holy Spirit has been revived in modern times, due in part to the advent of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements of the twentieth century,⁷⁶ the basic functions of the Holy Spirit in relation to creation and the resurrection are still largely overlooked and disconnected.⁷⁷ As inaugurationalism has worked through the ranks, however, many have embraced it as an essential framework for a theology of the Spirit.⁷⁸ Gordon Fee thus summarizes the inaugurational approach:

Through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus, our Lord, a gracious and loving God has effected eschatological salvation for his new covenant people, the church, who now, as they await Christ's coming, live the life of the future by the power of the Spirit. . . .

Salvation is "eschatological" in the sense that final salvation, which still awaits the believer, is already a present reality through Christ and the Spirit. It is "in Christ" in the sense that what originated in God was effected historically by the death and resurrection of Christ, and is appropriated experientially by God's people through the work of the Holy Spirit—who is also the key to Christian life "between the times," until the final consummation at Christ's *parousia*.⁷⁹

The Spirit is hence understood as *the evidence of realized eschatology*.⁸⁰ In this way the Spirit not only has a referent, which informs its meaning and purpose,

⁷⁶ See Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds., *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

⁷⁷ See William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971); and J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988–1992).

⁷⁸ C. H. Dodd worked out his realized eschatology concerning the Spirit and Paul's theology in *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936). Many have since mitigated and accommodated a realized eschatological approach to the Spirit; see esp. Neill Q. Hamilton, *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in Paul* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1975); Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994); and Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*.

⁷⁹ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 13.

⁸⁰ "The gift of the out-poured Spirit meant that the messianic age had already arrived. The Spirit is thus the central element in this altered perspective, the key to which is Paul's firm conviction that the Spirit was both the *certain evidence* that the future had dawned, and the *absolute guarantee* of its final consummation" (Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 806; italics in the original). And, "The Spirit is the evidence that the *eschatological promises of Paul's Jewish heritage have been fulfilled*" (Ibid., 808; italics in

but it also becomes its own end (see figure 4.9).⁸¹ More than simply “the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5), the outpouring of the Spirit embodies the age to come in itself.⁸²

Figure 4.9 – Perversion of the Holy Spirit’s Function in Inaugurational Christoplatonism

the original). The radical implications of this last statement will be discussed further in chapters 6 and 7.

The new foundation of the eschatology which takes its bearings from the future by way of the 'theology of hope,' does away with the Platonic time-eternity pattern. . . . The new approach now develops eschatology as the horizon of expectation for the historical experience of the divine Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not simply the subjective side of God's revelation of himself, and faith is not merely the echo of the Word of God in the human heart. The Holy Spirit is much more than that. It is the power that raises the dead, the power of the new creation of all things; and faith is the beginning of the rebirth of human beings to new life. (*Spirit of Life*, 7)

⁸³ John 10:10 is in the context of God's judgment upon the blind and wicked shepherding of the Pharisees (cf. 9:39–41), i.e., "a thief and a robber" (10:1), unto the assumed eschatological salvation of

the new creation, wherein the curse is overturned, then we foremost ought to campaign for the deposing of wicked kings, for environmental restoration, for gender equality, etc.⁸⁴ If the resurrection has already begun, then where is the impetus to take up our cross in this life (see Luke 9:23 and parallels)? Why should we be those who “endure pain while suffering unjustly” (1 Peter 2:19, NRSV)? Why should we rejoice in persecution (Matt. 5:12; Acts 5:41)? Why should we lay down our lives as Jesus did (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16)? What is the purpose of being the scum of the earth in this age, paraded around like those condemned to die in the arena (1 Cor. 4:9–13)? Why should we love our lives not unto death (Rev. 12:11)? Why should we “always carry around in our body the death of Jesus” (2 Cor. 4:10, NIV)? And why are we “always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake” (v. 11, NIV)? Why should we “share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings” (2 Cor. 1:5), being “united with him in a death like his” (Rom. 6:5), rejoicing “insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings” (1 Peter 4:13), “filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Col. 1:24), “becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10)? Why should we sell our possessions and give to the needy (Luke 12:33; Acts 2:45), joyfully accepting the confiscation of our property (Heb. 10:34)? Why should we soberly prepare our minds for grievous trials, setting our hope *fully* on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6–13)? If our inheritance has already begun, why then should we heed Paul’s *radical* exhortation to forsake living for this age in every way:

What I mean, brothers, is that *the time is short*. From now on those who have wives should live *as if* they had none; those who mourn, *as if* they did not;

the righteous—“If anyone enters by me, *he will be saved* and will go in and out and find pasture” (10:9).

⁸⁴ Therefore Moltmann was a vocal proponent of liberation, ecologist, and feminist theologies, criticizing the Pentecostal/charismatic movements for not applying the gift of the Spirit to social, political, and ecological concerns:

Some theologians have discovered a new love for the charismatic movements; but this can also be an escape, a flight from the politics and ecology of the Spirit in the world of today. What is behind this trend, which must undoubtedly be termed purely individualistic? One reason is certainly the continuing Platonization of Christianity. Even today this still puts its mark on what is termed “spirituality” in the church and religious groups. It takes the form of a kind of hostility to the body, a kind of remoteness from the world, and a preference for the inner experiences of the soul rather than the sensory experiences of sociality and nature. (*Spirit of Life*, 8)

The answer to the “continuing Platonization of Christianity” is not inaugurationalism, but rather cruciform-apocalypticism.

those who are happy, *as if* they were not; those who buy something, *as if* it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, *as if* not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. (1 Cor. 7:29–31, NIV)

All of this is the cruciform response to the apocalyptic day. If we do not embrace the cross in this age, then we are, in the sight of God, “illegitimate children” (Heb. 12:8), and we will be “disowned” before the Father on the last day (cf. Matt. 10:33).⁸⁵ However, if we follow in the steps of our Master in this life (1 Peter 2:21), then we will be fellow heirs with him in the life to come, “provided we *suffer with him* in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:17).

Inaugurationism is an insidious denial of the cross, a faithless disowning of Christ crucified. If Paul were alive today, I think he would respond to its dogmatic proclamation the same way he responded to the realized eschatology of his day: “I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we *disown* him, he will also disown us; if we are *faithless*, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself” (2 Tim. 2:10–13, NIV).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ So the NIV translates *arneomai*, i.e., “to disclaim association with a person or event” (“ἀρνέομαι,” BDAG, 132). The reference to “Father” favors this translation, and the context favors being found *in the likeness of God*, enduring persecution and martyrdom as he does (cf. Matt. 10:14–28), for “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (v. 24).

⁸⁶ Paul has in mind here sharing in the sufferings of Christ (2 Tim. 2:3), with perseverance like a good soldier (v. 4), a competent athlete (v. 5), and a hard-working farmer (v. 6). So too we are to “remember Jesus Christ” (v. 8), “for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal” (v. 9). Thus to deny him and become faithless is to deny his cross and his call to perseverant suffering in this age. The connection to Hymenaeus and Philetus (vv. 16–19) and their assumed forsaking of the cross and suffering by means of realized eschatology seems straightforward.