

Will Only Faithful Believers Enter and Rule in the Millennium?

A Rebuttal of the Kingdom Teaching of
Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and Robert Wilkin

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Entering and Ruling in the Kingdom

The Bible teachers mentioned above believe in a literal Millennial Kingdom that will one day be established over planet earth. In fact, they espouse premillennialism and are dispensational in their teaching. I am grateful for their correct understanding and proclamation of these important truths. However, in more recent times there has been a confusing and errant teaching being propagated which concludes that not all believers (the non-overcomers) will be able to rule in the earthly kingdom or theocracy which Jesus Christ is going to establish over the earth. Only a chosen number of faithful believers will “inherit” the kingdom which means to be given the privilege, honor, and joy to rule with Christ on earth.

INHERITING THE KINGDOM

It is taught by these authors that God’s children might be a *resident* of the kingdom but not *rule* in the kingdom because of unfaithful living. They claim that inheriting the kingdom refers to an exclusive group of Christian who will be given the honor and authority to share in Christ’s rule during the Millennium. The less faithful Christians will be somewhere else in the Millennium, in a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and they will not enjoy the blessings of reigning with Christ. Yes, if it sounds like an error, it’s because it is error!



Others, like J. D. Faust, teach that a class of wicked but saved people are totally excluded from the kingdom. “At the judgment seat of Christ, unfaithful Christians will lose entrance into the millennial kingdom and will be banished for 1,000 years” (J.D. Faust, *The Rod: Will God Spare It?* Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing, 2005, p. 72). Faust's position is the most extreme. He actually teaches that many unfaithful believers (defined as wicked servants) will be

excluded from Christ's kingdom. In other words, they cannot enter the Millennium. In his book "The Rod-Will God Spare It? Faust teaches that saints will be tortured or punished for a thousand years in the fires of Hades. Unfaithful Christians will be temporarily banished to the underworld until after the Millennium. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in this place of outer darkness and judgment (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30).

In other words, the unfaithful Christian does not get into the Millennium but goes to the same place as the unbeliever and hypocrite until after the 1,000 years (p. 408). Faust admits that Christians will be severely punished but not eternally. Go figure! This kind of teaching is perplexing, puzzling, and offensive to the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 19:30) and the promise of no condemnation (John 3:18; Rom. 8:1).

Faust's view follows in line with the writings of Robert Govett, D.M. Panton and Edwin Wilson. Of course, it is a radical view for it alleges that God's children must essentially earn their way into the Millennium and that God's wrath will be meted out upon actual believers who are not faithful enough to enter the kingdom. Yes, this is bizarre! But Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin also promote peculiar and unconventional exegesis by concluding that all of God's saints will enter the Millennium but not all of them are given the privilege to reign with Christ.

Like Faust, they claim that the less faithful Church saints will be cast into a place of outer darkness (a place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth) to wait out the 1,000 years. They will not be tortured as Faust suggests but at the same time they cannot enjoy any part of the Millennium. Essentially, Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin conclude that the less faithful believers will be cast into a Protestant Purgatory for 1,000 years which is a place of perpetual darkness (Matt. 8:12; Matt. 22:13, 24:51). This teaching sounds more like a mix of Roman Catholicism and mythology. It certainly is not Bible! We will investigate this strange conclusion at another point in our study.

Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and Robert Wilkin teach that all Church Age saints will *enter* the kingdom but not *inherit* the kingdom which according to their theology and thinking means to rule with Christ (inherit the blessing associated with the Millennial Kingdom). In general, they teach that only a certain class of victorious believers will rule during the Millennium. They base their findings on various texts

found in the kingdom parables which deal with the establishment and events associated with the earthly kingdom.

They also substantiate their findings from some verses found in the epistles such as Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 which are explained as unfaithful *Christians* not “inheriting” the kingdom (enjoying the reigning privileges of the earthly kingdom). Again, it’s assumed that not inheriting the kingdom refers to a Christian’s failure to receive an inheritance that relates to reward and reigning privileges during the Millennium.

The authors also base their conclusions upon the promises given to the overcomers (Rev. 2:24-28; 3:21). It’s believed and taught that there are conditional prerequisites (living an overcoming or victorious life) that must be followed if one wants to reign with Christ during the Millennium. In other words, those who are non-overcomers in their Christian life will not rule with Christ when the Millennium it is established over the earth. The unfaithful Church saints will be banished in a place of “outer darkness” for 1,000 years, experiencing temporal judgment for their sins and carnal living and miss the blessings and privileges associated with millennial living.

Of course, the idea of punishment and banishment in the afterlife for believers speaks volumes against free grace, forgiveness, and no future judgment for those who are “in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Discipline and chastening is related to our present life (Heb. 12:6-8) – not our future life when we are in our glorified state (Rom. 8:30). We must remember that Jesus paid the price for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3). This means we won’t pay the price in the afterlife by receiving temporal punishment for our sins. Jesus won’t deny us entrance into the kingdom (Faust) or reigning with Christ (Hodges, Dillow, Wilkin).

Losing some reward at the Bema does not equate to losing the privilege of entering Heaven and enjoying our future inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4). In the same way, losing some reward will not result in Christ denying us entrance into the earthly kingdom or withholding reigning privileges.

This is because all of God’s saints are overcomers in Christ (1 John 5:5), joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17), and therefore will receive reward from Christ (1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 22:12) and then reign with Christ over the earth (Rev. 5:10). I hardly think any



Christian could be “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13) if he is not sure that he was faithful enough in this life and therefore will be punished by Christ at the Bema and later thrown into a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth! The blessed hope is the prospect of glorification, being with Christ, reward, and later reigning with Christ.

In the remainder of this study, I want to prove from Scripture that the teachings being propagated today which conclude that some Christians or saints will not reign in the earthly kingdom (Hodges, Dillow, Wilkins) or they will not enter the Millennium or 1,000 years (J. D. Faust) are a misrepresentation of the clearly revealed Biblical facts. As we will confirm, Jesus taught that the New Birth is the basis for entrance into the kingdom (John 3:5). Furthermore, the book of Revelation and epistles convey the truth that all believers will return with Christ and reign with Him over the earth (Rev. 5:10; Rev. 19:14; 20:6). No believing saint will be left out of the kingdom and all the saints will reign with Christ during the kingdom. Let’s get started unraveling the errors and revealing the truth of the reign of God’s saints during the Millennial Kingdom.

Overcomers and the Millennium

It is being propagated by some today, mainly within the Free Grace Movement, that only a special class of overcoming or victorious believers will enter the Millennium. These findings are based upon the letters written to the seven churches.



Revelation 2:25-26 states:

“But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power (authority) over the nations.”

Revelation 3:21 adds:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

Many assume that the conditional aspect of the promise to rule with Christ during the Millennium in Revelation 2:26 (“and keepeth my works unto the end”) actually means that some believers or saints who have not overcome or lived victoriously in this life (those who have been unfaithful servants) will not enter the Millennium or lose the privilege to rule with Christ for 1,000 years during the kingdom reign. This is an exegetical fallacy which clearly denies what the Bible teaches.

First, Jesus taught that all saints would enter the earthly theocracy based upon their New Birth.

John 3:5

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

The “kingdom of God” is not some kind of spiritual kingdom, but the promised earthly kingdom repeatedly spoken about in the gospel records and Church epistles (Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:43; Luke 9:27; 10:11; 13:29; 14:15; 22:18; John 3:3; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21). There is nothing mystical about the kingdom of God. It is a clear reference to the coming earthly Messianic Kingdom that the Jews were awaiting to be established over the earth.



All believers will enter the earthly kingdom reign with Christ because they are already “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). This means they are “heirs of the kingdom” (James 2:5) because of their union with Christ. It also means that we will share in the future blessings Christ has promised for His children by virtue of our identification with Christ and our positional blessings that flow from this grace position (2 Tim. 2:11-12). Our entrance into Heaven and the earthly kingdom (the Millennium) is not the result of our perseverance in good works or victory but because of our grace relationship with Christ.

Second, not only will Church Age saints enter the theocratic kingdom, but all the saints will reign with Christ during the Millennium. The revelation that Jesus Christ gave to John promised that all Church Age believers would participate in the millennial reign. All would have the opportunity to reign in some capacity.

Revelation 5:9-10 reveals this prophetic scene:
“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on (*over*) the earth.”



There is no mention here of only a special class of super-duper saints or victorious believers reigning with Christ. The Bible gives the promise that all Church Age saints will have some part in the reign of Jesus Christ over the earth. Those that Christ purchased with His blood were all believers and He made all of them to be kings (rulers) and priests (servants of God) who will one day reign over the earth and therefore serve Him. This means every blood-bought believer is given a grace position, privilege, and promise (made kings and priests) and they will one day rule and reign with Christ over the earth. One must wonder if Zane Hodges, Joseph Dillow, and Robert Wilkin have ever read this verse?

1 Corinthians 6:2 is another case in point:

“Do ye not know that the saints (*all the saints collectively*) shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”



This looks ahead to the Millennium and the time when all the “saints” (none are said to be excluded!) will be given ruling privileges during the kingdom reign. The future is ours by virtue of our position in Christ. Christ’s promise to judge and rule over the earth is given to all Church Age saints, even the Corinthians who exhibited carnality in their Christian lives (1 Cor. 3:1). Despite the failures and imperfections of all the saints Christ will find something in the lives of all Christians that is worthy of reward and give them opportunity to reign with Him throughout the Millennium.

1 Corinthians 4:5 prophetically anticipates this time of reward:

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

In the context of rewards, we are told that all the saints will be given praise by God which means that He will find something in the lives of all Christian for which they can be rewarded, and which will eventually result into reigning privileges during the Millennium. 2 Corinthians 3:8 also states, “and every man shall receive his own reward.” Anything that will be done for self-display or self-glory will fail to receive a reward but in the end all Christians will receive praise from God for the things they have accomplished for Him and His glory.

Tom Constable concludes:

“Evidently God will find something in every Christian’s life for which to praise him or her on that day of judgment.”

Harry Ironside also states:

“If you are in Christ, the Holy Spirit of God is dwelling in you, and in that coming day it will be made manifest that every Christian has accomplished something for God for which he can be rewarded.”

The reward that is given to all the saints will eventually turn into reigning privileges granted to all the saints. None of the saints will be left out of the kingdom and none will be left in a dark room somewhere where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth and miss out on reigning with Christ (Rev. 5:10) as Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin conclude.

Joseph Dillow writes:

“As in Rom. 8:17 reigning with Christ seems to be conditioned upon endurance. The converse, to deny Him, will result in His denying us when He rewards His church according to the things done in the body, “good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). The possibility of being “denied” does not refer to loss of salvation, because the apostle clarifies that, even when we are “faithless,” He will remain faithful to us. But it does mean that we may be “disqualified for the prize” (1 Cor. 9:27) and stand ashamed at His coming (1 Jn. 2:28) and be denied a place of coheirship in the final destiny of man”

(Dillow, J. C., 2011, The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man (pp. 87–88)."

The problem with this analysis and conclusion is that every Church Age saint will receive some reward and therefore be given the privilege to reign with Christ and not be excluded from this reign (Rev 5:10). Furthermore, our union with Christ makes us an "heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:7) and being a "joint-heir" with Christ (Rom. 8:17) gives the guaranteed grace promise of entering the kingdom and reigning with Christ during the Millennium. The "final destiny of man" as Dillow states is because of the work of grace.

Contrary to this trio of authors (Hodges, Dillow, Wilkin), the Bible NEVER separates entering the kingdom with reigning during the kingdom. All of God's saints will enter (inherit) the Millennial Kingdom based upon His saving grace and all Church Age saints will receive reward based upon the transforming work of grace occurring in their lives. Every person who opens a pack of Cracker Jacks receives a prize! The same will be true at the Bema Seat of Christ. Christ will reward all of His saints (Rev. 22:12), some more than others (2 John 8), but all will receive reward and therefore be privileged to reign with Christ during the kingdom, some in greater capacities than others (Matt. 25:21, 23; Rev. 2:26). But every overcomer by virtue of his position in Christ will have his name confessed before the Father (Rev. 3:5).



This means the denial that Dillow speaks of is not a denial of total reward and the disqualification to reign with Christ but in the kingdom contexts Christ's denial of an unbeliever, refusing to confess him as one of the Father's children (Matt. 10:32-33; 2 Tim. 2:12), and therefore denying him entrance into the Millennial Kingdom.

Matthew 7:21 -2 prophetically speaks of this:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (*the Millennial Kingdom – when Heaven rules over the earth – Matt. 6:10*); but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven (*the proof of one's salvation*). Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many

wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Jesus taught in Matthew 10:32-33:

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men (*the proof of one’s salvation*), him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven (*the promise of Christ*). But whosoever shall deny me before men (*permanent denial, to disown Christ*), him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (*the peril of unbelief*).

This is the denial that appears in the kingdom-related contexts (2 Tim. 2:12). Christ will refuse to confess the unsaved as His children before the Father’s presence. In fact, He will not only confess them before the Father but deny them from entering the earthly kingdom (Matt. 7:23). The kingdom contexts reveal how Christ will deny unbelievers entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 25:10) – not believers being denied ruling privileges during Christ’s reign.

This brings up the question. Who then are the overcomers in Revelation chapters 2-3?

1. Every Gospel believer has positionally overcome in Christ.

It was confirmed earlier by John that every saint has already overcome in Christ.

1 John 5:5

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

The positional view of the overcomers aligns with what John previously taught about overcoming Christians. Every believer is automatically an overcomer based upon his victorious *position* in Christ. Our grace identity with Christ makes us an overcomer and therefore recipients of His spiritual blessing both today and in the future (Eph. 1:3).



Tom Stegall is correct when stating:

"... All believers are consistently identified as already being overcomers, victors, or victorious (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:54-57; 1 John 2:13-14; 4:4| 5:4-5). This status as an overcomer is based on the believer's union with the overcoming One, Jesus Christ, not the believer's own works. The sole human condition for being an overcomer, according to 1 John 5:4-5, is to believe in Jesus Christ..."

Charles Ryrie similarly states:

"An overcomer is not someone who has some special power in the Christian life or someone who has learned some secret of victory. John himself defined an overcomer as a believer in Christ (1 John 5:4-5). Thus every Christian is an overcomer" (Revelation, pp. 22-23 under the discussion of Rev. 2:7). "To him that overcometh. Not a reference to an especially spiritual group among the believers, but to all true Christians (cf. 1 John 5:5)" (*Ryrie Study Bible, comment under Rev. 2:7*).

He adds elsewhere:

"No contingency is attached to the promise in these verses. Every believer, whether new or mature, has victory simply because he is a believer" (*Ryrie, Basic Theology, 154*).

Dr. Lehman Strauss concurs with the positional overcoming understanding of Revelation 2-3 and his comments are worthy of consideration. "The promises made to the overcomers are a part of the great salvation provided by God in grace for all those who have been redeemed through faith in Christ's blood. What I am saying is that all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are the overcomers in Revelation 2 and 3" (*Strauss, L. 1964. The Book of the Revelation: Outlined Studies First Edition, p. 108. Loizeaux Brothers*).

"Presently there is only one perfect Overcomer. He could say, "I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21). All other overcomers are such by virtue of their position in Him. Jesus said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). I am so glad that our Lord Jesus Christ has overcome the world because I know that I never could.

The Apostle John wrote, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that

overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' (1 John 5:4–5). The overcomer here is he who has been born again. The verb rendered "overcometh" is in the aorist tense, and this takes us back in point of time to when we first received Christ by faith and were born again, when we passed spiritually out of death into union with Christ.

"Faith in Christ did not merely make us God's children, but overcomers as well. The day we trusted Christ was a day of victory, the day we overcame the world. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Not merely certain ones among the believers, but all of them. From the very moment of our conversion we were overcomers. "This is the victory that overcometh the world"—even our fighting? No! "Even our faith." Since our blessed Lord overcame the world, must we fight the battle all over again? How foolish! Rather do we trust Him who by His death and resurrection has won the battle for us.

"John comments further on the subject of overcoming. 'Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world' (1 John 4:4). ... There is not the slightest hint in this verse that only some of God's born ones are overcomers. Contrariwise, they are all God's 'little children' who are indwelt by Him, the mighty Victor. Twice John says to the 'young men,' "Ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:13–14).

"Again, let me point out that the overcomer is not one who claims never to be overcome, but one who must overcome at last because he is Christ's. God sees His children as having overcome the wicked one; they are already 'sanctified in Christ Jesus' (1 Corinthians 1:2); in His plans they are already 'glorified' (Romans 8:30). 'We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us' (Romans 8:37)." (*Strauss, L. 1964. The Book of the Revelation: Outlined Studies. First Edition, pp. 109–110. Loizeaux Brothers*).

According to Strauss and most grace teachers, John reveals that all the saints are overcomers in Christ through belief and because of their position in the prefect Overcomer, Jesus Christ ("I have overcome the world" - John 16:33). Christ Jesus Himself is the ultimate Overcomer who has already gained the victory for His Church through His character and saving work. Therefore, every Gospel believer is considered a spiritual overcomer in Christ.

The overcomers in the book of Revelation is a positional concept. All Church Age saints are overcomers by virtue of their identity (union) with Christ. The overcomers are not a select group of special or elite Christians. They are not superior saints who are more spiritual than the rest of God's saints and who are more victorious over sin, Satan, and the world system. The word "overcomers" functions as a person's title and means that he can live in such a way that is fitting to his overcoming position.

Wilkin opposes the positional overcoming view by stating:

"Many pastor and theologian start with 1 John 5:4-5 and conclude it is saying that all born-again people are overcomers. Then they read that understand into the references to overcomers in the Book of Revelation. That is, however, poor exegesis."

"Exegesis for me but not for thee" seems to be Wilkin's chiding comment to anyone who might disagree with his interpretation of the overcomers. But is it really "poor exegesis" as Wilkin suggests to interpret the overcomers in the book of Revelation the same way John himself, who wrote Revelation, consistently used the term in his first epistle (1 John 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-5)? Actually, it's really poor exegesis on Wilkin's part to deny the inspired meaning of John's interpretation of the overcomers.

2. All overcomers will produce some fruit in their lives.

We also know that every Christian who is a victor or overcomer in Christ will bear some fruit and transformation in his life because of regeneration. This is because all believers possess the life and nature of God (John 15:1-4; 1 Jn. 3:9; Eph. 2:10;). Where there is no *fruit* there is no *root* or life (Matt. 7:19-20; 13:22; Jude 1:12). John seems to be consistent with what he previously taught about the overcomers in 1 John 5:5 in that we are overcomers because of our position in Christ.

He also taught in his epistles how all Christians will bear some fruit or transformation during their earthly lives (1 John 3:6-7, 9; 5:18) for which they will be rewarded (2 John 8). These findings lead us to the conclusion that every saint will enter the Millennium based upon their positional identity with Christ (Rev. 3:21; 5:10) but at the same time every saint will also be given reward and privilege

to rule with Christ in direct proportion to the transforming work and fruit that Christ was allowed to produce in their lives while living on earth (Rev. 2:26).

In essence, the PROMISE of entrance and ruling during the Millennium is based on the believer's position in Christ but the extent of REWARD and REIGNING privileges is based upon the degree of the believer's faithfulness. However, the fact that we will all reign with Christ or share in His earthly millennial throne (Rev.3:21) indicates that Christ will find something for every Church Age saint to do during the Millennial Kingdom. No one will be left out but at the same time some will be given greater privileges based upon their faithfulness to the Lord in living and service.

3. The overcoming promises serve as a source of encouragement for the saints.

Christ is summoning each church to be faithful to God in view of what lies ahead for all of God's redeemed saints. Their overcoming position and promises should motivate and give them incentive to carry on and hold fast (Rev. 2:25; 3:11).

Hebrews 12:28

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

4. The promises given to the overcomers are not based on perseverance in good works.

Think about this. If God will deem only spiritual Christian to be "overcomers," then how consistently must a Spirit-filled and victorious person be to qualify as an overcomer? Is it ninety, eighty, seven or sixty percent of their Christian lives?

It's obvious that none of the *promises* given to the overcomers (escaping the second death, entering the heavenly city, not having one's name removed from the book of life, etc.) are conditioned upon good works or perseverance of the saints. However, the degree of a Christian's *reward*, *ruling*, and *recognition* in the Millennium is conditioned upon his good works and faithfulness (Rev. 2:10, 26-27; 3:11). *The promises must remain separated from the rewards (Rev. 2:10; 3:11).* The promises to the overcomers are specifically based upon grace because of the

believer's union with Christ who is the Overcomer (1 John 5:5; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17-18). However, the exact number of rewards and capacity in which a believer rules with Christ are additional to the overcoming position and promises, and these will vary among the saints.

In light of these findings, we can conclude that all Christians are overcomers by virtue of their position in Christ and therefore will receive entrance into the Millennium based upon their identity with Christ and positional acceptance before God's throne. The identity of the overcomers in Revelation 2-3 is reflected in their union with Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:5) which grants them tremendous blessings in the future based upon their overcoming position in Christ (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

For instance, the overcomers in Revelation 2-3 are promised access to the tree of life in Heaven (Rev. 2:7), escape from the second death (Rev. 2:11), special intimacy with Christ in Heaven (Rev. 2:17), entering the Millennium (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21), their names will remain in the book of life (Rev. 3:5), and they will dwell forever in the heavenly city (Rev. 3:12). It is certain that this is not referring to a special class of believers but to all Church Age saints who by virtue of their position in Christ are already overcomers. All the saints are overcomers in Christ and for this reason they will experience all the future blessings promised to them by Christ.

Revelation 21:7 concludes:

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

The overcomer will enjoy the eternal state with Jesus Christ and this certainly is referring to all the saints, not a special group or saints.

Tom Stegall convincingly argues:

"Neither Christ Himself nor John as narrator ever mentions another category of Christians classified as 'he who does not overcome' or 'to him who does not overcome' or something similar. This calls into question the existence of non-overcoming Christians.

"Chapters 2-3 contain several examples of genuine believers within Christ's church who fail in many aspects of their daily relationship with the Lord (2:4-5, 14-16, 20-

24| 3:1-3, 15-19); yet these believers are conspicuously never identified as non—overcomers” (*Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness? Grace Gospel Press. Duluth Minnesota. 2015. p. 434*).

Again, this is because every child of God is an overcomer because of their grace relationship with Christ. This means none of the statements about the overcomers can be relegated to only those believers who are more faithful than others. If this were the case, then only some believers would enter Heaven, escape the second death, and keep their names in the book of life based upon their self-effort or legalistic works. It’s clear that the overcomers in Revelation 2-3 point to all of God’s Church Age saints. They are given all of the promises based upon their position in Christ. This includes the promise of entering the Millennium (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:7, 21).

5. The overcomers are contrasted with unbelievers.

The overcomers (Rev. 12:11; 15:2; 17:14) are set in contrast to the unsaved (Rev. 21:6-8, 27; 22:14-15) in the book of Revelation – not less faithful believers. They are not contrasted with carnal and disobedient Christians. When contrast is made in the book of Revelation it is always between the saved, who are overcomers (Rev. 12:11; 15:2; 17:14), and the lost – those who are cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 21:6-8, 27; 22:14-15). This is another confirmation that the overcomers are not a special elite group of Christians, but all believers who have overcome through faith in Christ, in contrast to those (unbelievers) who have not overcome by rejecting Christ as Savior.

So how should we understand Revelation 2:26? This verse teaches that good works or perseverance are additional to being an overcomer. In other words, every Church saint is an overcomer through belief in Christ (1 John 5:4-5) but there are rewards and reigning privileges given for practicing the position. What a person is (an overcomer) must also be practiced in order to receive reward and ruling capacities during the kingdom. Allow me to give you some running commentary on this verse so you can better understand what John is teaching.

Revelation 2:25-26

“And he that overcometh (the Church’s corporate positional victory through believing in Christ as revealed in 1 John 5:4-5 and similarly restated in Rev. 2:7, 11, 17), **and keepeth my works unto the end** (the individual practice of the overcoming

position – perseverance in Christian truth and living in varying degrees and ways which is separate from the actual position – an added proof of one’s salvation and promise of future reward and recognition), **to him will I give power over the nations**” (personal reigning privileges in the Millennium which all saints will have - Rev. 5:10 - howbeit in varying degrees, according to their service and living for Christ – 2 Pet. 1:11; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 12:28; Matt. 5:19; 18:4; 25:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:10).

With the use of the conjunction “and” J. Hampton Keathley concludes that this verse supposedly proves that only the obedient are overcomers. But this is not the case. The presence of “kai” (and) can signal the start of an entirely new distinct thought that is separate from the previous one as in Revelation 2:21 and other verses (Rev. 2:8,12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14). Here is the point. All Church Age saints have positionally overcome in Christ and are given grace promises based on this position (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). However, on an individual basis, John concludes that the one who is more dedicated and faithful will experience greater privilege to rule with Christ.

In one sense Revelation 2:26 is true of all Church saints since all will receive rewards and reigning privileges during the kingdom (Rev. 5:10). But here John focuses on the individual person who overcomes and his future ruling responsibilities. He moves from the group to the individual. In Revelation 2:26 the Lord begins with His familiar expression and address to the whole group (Church Age saints) as victorious overcomers in Christ (“And he that overcometh” – Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) and then narrows it down to the individual who excels in his service and living for Christ (“and keepeth my works unto the end” and “to him will I give power over the nations”). This looks back to the individual responsibility of Revelation 2:25: “But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.” What is important to see in this verse is that the believer’s *position* must be put into daily *practice* in relation to the many years he has existed on earth. He must live a life worthy of his calling (Eph. 4:1).

John seems to be stressing in Revelation 2:26 that the greater we walk in accordance with our overcoming position (“and keep my works unto the end”) the greater reward and blessing will be given to us. This would include more authority and extensive reigning privileges with Christ. Christ gives this individual promise as a form of encouragement to the faithful. If we “hold fast” (stick to the stuff!) there will be greater reward and privileges handed out to us. In this case the individual

will experience great ruling authority during the kingdom: “And he shall rule them with a rod of iron (*the millennial nations*) ... even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:27). The promise given to Christ from the Father (Ps. 2:8) will be passed on to the overcomer. In addition, he will also be given the promise of the “morning star” (Rev. 2:28) which appears after a long dark night and signals the hope of a new day.

Some identify this with the *pretribulation* Rapture of the Church before the dark night of the Tribulation Period commences on earth. However, the Rapture is not a reward for faithfulness; it is the blessed hope of all who are in Christ (1 Thess. 4:16). The prophecy about the star (Numb. 24:17) and imagery of the morning star appears before the dawn of a new and bright day on earth (the Millennial Kingdom) – not before a day of darkness and gloom on earth which is the apocalyptic imagery assigned to the Tribulation Period (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15). The morning star of hope is somehow linked to David’s lineage (Rev. 22:16) and seems to be a reference to the *premillennial* promise of the Davidic kingdom (Rev. 22:18) which becomes the new day or dawning dispensation over the earth (Rev. 3:7). The “star” is a symbol of royalty and kingliness (Matt. 2:2) and points to the time when we will co-rule with Christ as kings over the earth.

Again, although all Church saints will enter the Millennium and reign with Christ (Rev. 5:10) not all of them will reign in the same capacity and with the same privileges. The individual overcomer in Revelation 2:26 is given the promise of reigning with Christ to bring encouragement to his heart and is something that all the saints can anticipate. So incentive is given to faithfulness in view of the great reward and privileges that await the overcomers. Some will have greater ruling responsibilities during the kingdom than others.

Goerge Zeller who is an avid fisherman shared in an email:

“I hope to be given authority to reign over the city of Engedi where the fishing will be great at the formerly Dead Sea, but another believer may work at Engedi to merely be in charge of taking away the trash at the numerous parks.”

Revelation 3:4-5 is similar to Revelation 2:26. In this case, Christ moves from individuals to the corporate blessings of all overcomers in Christ. “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy (*a promissory note of encouragement to remain faithful*). He that overcometh (*positional victory through believing in Christ*)

as revealed in 1 John 5:4-5 and restated in Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26), the same shall be clothed in white raiment (the righteousness of Christ); and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (grace promises given to all the overcomers that have believed in Christ).

Of course, everyone understands that not all believers or saints live a life that is consistent with victory, transformation, and faithfulness to God throughout their entire life (1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 2 Tim. 4:10; John 12:42; Acts 5:1-11; Heb. 3:12; 4:10-11; 13:5-11; 2 Pet. 2:7; 3:17-18; James 5:19-20; 1 John 5:16). Some become more carnal, spiritually bogged down, and defeated than others. Although all Christians do bear fruit during their earthly lives (John 15:1-3; James 2:17) not all Christians equally overcome and persevere in victory, faithfulness, fruitfulness, and live a consistent spiritual life up to the end of their days on earth.

On the other hand, some saints live on a much higher spiritual plain and sail the heights of victory. They follow Christ faithfully and remain committed to the eternal things that matter most in life (Matt. 6:33) while others fail to possess a consistent pattern of victory throughout their lives in relation to their deeds, doctrines, and deportment of life. In other words, they do not maintain a strong level of commitment to Christ’s cause. The carnal Christian (1 Cor. 3:3) simply has not developed as far as other Christians in the area of sanctification (2 Pet. 1:8-9). Their growth is stunted, and they are not progressing in sanctification as other Christians (1 Thess. 4:3-4).

Although all saints will enter the Millennium and reign with Christ in some manner or fashion (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:6) based upon their overcoming position in Christ, it’s equally true that some saints are given the promise of ruling with Christ *to a greater extent and in a greater capacity* during the coming earthly Millennium. It’s important to understand that the qualification of Revelation 2:26 (“and keepeth my works unto the end”) is not given as the WAY of entrance into the Millennium but the CONFIRMATION of the saint’s *greater privilege* to reign during the earthly Millennium. In other words, the fact that some of the saints have possessed greater victory, faithfulness, and transformation of living reassures them of an *abundant* entrance consisting of reward and privileges in God’s kingdom.

2 Peter 1:10-11

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things (*put into practice Christian character and conduct – 2 Pet. 1:5-9*), ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The promise of ruling with Christ is also given to provide encouragement to the hearts of these overcoming (victorious) saints when reflecting upon their reward, recognition, and reigning privileges in the future. Living with more defeat than victory will not yield many spiritual dividends that are related to reward and reigning privileges with Christ during the Millennium. If we are going to be rewarded “according” to the way that we live for the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10), it is also true that we will reign with Christ according to the way we have lived for Him (Rev. 2:26; 2 Tim. 2:12; Matt. 25:21, 23). *It’s training time for reigning time!* How we live today will have a rippling effect and eternal impact upon our lives via reward and reigning privileges.



It should be understood that none of the promises given to the overcomers are based on their good works or human merit. If this were true, then we could, through human merit or achievement, gain access to Heaven, escape the second death, and keep our names in the book of life as the overcoming promises mention. However, I want to reiterate that *the promise of entrance and reigning during the Millennial Kingdom must remain separate from the promise of rewards*. Every believer is given the promise to enter the kingdom and reign with Christ (Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:4) but not every believer will receive the same reward and reigning privileges. The degree of a Christian’s reward, honor, and recognition in the Millennium is conditioned upon his good works and faithfulness (Rev. 2:10, 26-27; 3:11).

The context of the seven letters suggests that John is admonishing believers to overcome specific trials, tests, and temptations in their daily lives by their faithful obedience and commitment (Rev. 2:4-7, 10-11, 16-17, 24-28; 3:4-5, 10-12, 20-21). Only when believers practice what Christ tells them to do and repent of their wrongdoing (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19) can they in a practical way overcome, live

victorious, and look forward to extended reward, recognition, and greater reigning privileges in the Millennium.

So there are *positional* promises given to the overcomers of reigning with Christ but the *conditional* reward will be additional to the promises and determine the extent and roles each saint will have in ruling with Christ. There are corporate and positional promises given to all overcomers but there are also rewards and reigning privileges that will be individually experienced throughout eternity.

Reward and Reigning with Christ



The Bible teaches that all of God's saints will receive reward (1 Cor. 3:8; 4:5; Rev. 4:10; 19:8; 2 John 8). It also teaches that all Church Age saints will possess the future privilege to enter the Millennium because of their grace position in Christ. We have also concluded that all saints will be rewarded to reign with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom in direct proportion to their faithfulness in living for the Lord and serving Him while on earth (1

Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; Matt. 25:21, 23). It should be understood that the *loss of reward* (2 John 8; 1 Cor. 3:14-15; Rev. 3:11) which means *less reward* is nowhere equated with *a total loss of reigning privileges* during the Millennial Kingdom. This is because God has "made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). This is a promise!

Again, this means that all God saints will possess reward and reigning privileges. None of the Church saints will be banned from reigning with Christ. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" Apparently Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin do not know! All the saints will reign with Christ and be given different administrative and other ruling responsibilities during the kingdom. This is true because of their grace position in Christ and the work of grace in their lives (Phil. 1:6; 2:13; Titus 2:12) which results in transformed living and eternal reward for all the saints.

Yes, some will receive more rewards than others (2 John 8) but this does not negate the fact that all the saints will be rewarded for they will “cast their crowns before the throne” (Rev. 4:10) and therefore receive reigning privileges during the earthly kingdom (Rev. 3:21; 5:10). Let’s face it, all of us will likely lose some reward which we otherwise could have received or gained had we been more faithful, but this does not mean we will lose our reigning privileges during the Millennium. Like our rewards, our reigning privileges will be based upon the degree of our faithfulness in our living and service rendered unto the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10). And yes, everyone gets a prize or trophy when it comes to reward (1 Cor. 3:8; 4:5) but some will have bigger trophies and greater opportunities to reign with Christ than others.



Jesus taught in Revelation 22:12:

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man (*all the saints*) according as his work shall be.”

We will be *rewarded* accordingly (proportionately) and also *reign* in proportion to our faithful living and service. So when Christ states that a believer who “keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations” He is reminding individual Church Age saints that those who spiritually excel through greater sanctification, consecration to God and His cause (Rom. 12:2), those who remain committed to living a righteous and holy life (instead of carnality), those Christians who remain faithful to truth and godliness and possess more victories than defeats will be richly rewarded and given greater ruling privileges with Christ during the earthly Millennium. Christ will figure it all out and reward us accordingly.

In summary, all believers will enter the Millennium and reign with Christ (Rev. 5:10). They will enter the kingdom because of their overcoming position in Christ, but they will also reign in direct proportion to how they have lived out their lives on earth (Rev. 2:26-27). We will all reign with Christ but not reign equally.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) we will be rewarded according to how we have lived and served the Lord. In a similar manner, we will reign with Christ

according to the level of our reward and commitment to Him. Timothy was charged by Paul to remain faithful in view of the Rapture (“at his appearing”) and also in view of the “kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:1). As previously stated, the way we live and serve Christ today will have a rippling effect that will last for eternity through the reward and reigning privileges given to each Christian, who in varying degrees and ways suffer and live for Jesus Christ.

Paul declares in 2 Timothy 2:11-13:

“It is a faithful saying: For if (since, as the fact is – the condition of assumed reality) **we be dead with him, we shall also live with him** (positional truth – our victorious identity with Christ – Rom. 6:1-15; Col. 3:3): **If** (‘since’ as in the previous verse) **we suffer** (hypomeno - endure, persevere, resist, hold one’s ground), **we shall also reign with him** (participation in suffering and general sanctification, which is true of all Christians, and which results in future reigning with Christ): **if we deny him** (disown, renounce, repudiate Christ – the permanent denial of apostasy), **he also will deny us** (before the Father as His children and also deny us entrance into the kingdom): **If we believe not** (refuse to believe on Christ as Savior – Jn. 3:18; 5:40), **yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself”** (perjure Himself or lie against the truth for as God He must judge the unbeliever and remain faithful to His character of justice and righteous judgment).

These verses have been interpreted in various ways, but it seems clear that Paul is speaking of how a permanent denial and rejection of Jesus Christ by an unbeliever (“if we believe not”) will result in the words, “I never knew you” (Matt. 7:23). Christ will deny that we are His children before the Father because of unbelief and every unbeliever (John 3:18, 36) will be denied entrance into the earthly kingdom (Matt.25:10; Luke 13:28). However, the example of a believer who suffers and lives for Christ because of his victorious identification with Christ (“dead with him, we shall also live with him”) will enjoy ruling privileges and authority in the future Millennial Kingdom.

**matter of
fact**

Please note that the series of “if” clauses was likely part of an early hymn or creed. The first two lines have to do with loyalty to Christ, whereas the last two concern disloyalty to Christ. The way all four “if” clauses are constructed in the Greek indicates that the statements are assumed to be true for the sake of

argument. In other words, they are conditioned upon an assumed reality. Paul is teaching, “As a matter of fact” these things are true.

It should also be noted that the Greek verb “hypomenō” which is translated as “suffer” means endurance (remaining constant, perseverance, patience) and can relate to experiencing victory through suffering for Christ. Suffering hardship and persecution for Christ is one example of God’s sanctifying work and grace occurring in the lives of believers (Phil. 3:10) which will result in reigning privileges during God’s earthly kingdom. Their spiritual endurance and victory of passing through suffering and tribulation for Christ will yield great reigning privileges in the next life.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 -5 also confirms this:

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: *Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.”

To suffer (endure or persevere) certainly can relate to suffering for the cause of Christ. Peter and Paul understood how opposition to Christianity and suffering for Christ would be a natural part of the Christian life (1 Peter 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:12; Phil. 3:10). We should not think it strange when we suffer (1 Pet. 4:12). Christians cannot avoid some backlash from those who are against God and Christianity.

The Church on a *corporate* level (“since we suffer” is the assumed reality found in 2 Tim. 2:12 and Romans 8:17) experiences suffering and hatred from the world system which despises Christian ethics and God’s view on living.

Galatians 5:25 is another example of this:

“If we live (*since we live, an assumed truth*) in the Spirit (*positionally are made alive by means of the Spirit*), let us also walk in the Spirit” (*practically in our daily living*).

Paul assumes that believers are alive spiritually by means of the Spirit and therefore should walk by means of the Holy Spirit in their daily living. In the same way, Paul is *assuming* that suffering is the normal experience of all Christians on the basis of their identity (union) with Christ and because they are co-sharers with Christ (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12). Of course, endurance or perseverance (hypomenō) pertains to other areas of the Christian life.

2 Timothy 2:12 would also relate to enduring over sin and Satan and living in overall victory in our Christian experience which will also result in the opportunity to reign during the kingdom. The Church *corporately* (all of the saints) suffer from the active attacks of Satan (Eph. 6:12). We learn this from the book of Job (Job 1-2). The Bible also says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (James 1:12). The word "edureth" is the same word translated "suffer" in 2 Timothy 2:12.

The good news is that as joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17), the Church from a *corporate perspective* does share in His suffering now and will share in His kingdom reign later.

William MacDonald comments:

"When He returns to take the scepter of universal government, we will share with Him the title deeds to all the Father's wealth" (MacDonald, W. 1995. *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. A. Farstad, Ed.; p. 1711. Thomas Nelson).

There is a correlation between being dead with Christ ("death with *him*") and being alive with Christ ("we shall also live with *him*") which means the one presupposes the other (2 Tim. 2:11). You cannot have one without the other or else our union with Christ would not be complete (Col. 2:10). The same is true for the next pithy statement which makes a correlation between suffering ("if we suffer") and reigning ("we shall also reign with *him*").

Just as all Christians have died and live in union with Christ (a victorious and overcoming position) so all believers have suffered and will reign with Christ. The one assumes the other as being true. We are dead and alive because of our union with Christ, and we all suffer and therefore will one day reign with Christ. All are dead, all are alive, all suffer, all reign, and all will one day be glorified as Romans 8:17 teaches. These are not *conditional* statements, but *grace* statements based upon God's promises. Suffering ends in glorification (Rom. 8:30) and reigning with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12) which is something all of God's Church saints experience within this life and the next. This is because we are "joint-heirs" with Christ.

William MacDonald also sees the corporate nature of the Church suffering for Christ.

He again writes:

“When Paul adds, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together, he is not making heroic suffering a condition for salvation. Neither is he describing some elite inner circle of overcomers who have endured great afflictions. Rather, he sees all Christians as being co-sufferers and all Christians as glorified with Christ. The if is equivalent to ‘since.’ Of course, there are some who suffer more than others in the cause of Christ, and this will result in differing degrees of reward and glory. But all who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior are seen here as incurring the hostility of the world, with all its shame and reproach” (*MacDonald, W. 1995. Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments. A. Farstad, Ed.; p. 1711. Thomas Nelson*).

Romans 8:17 once again declares:

“And if (*since, as the fact is*) children (*born ones*), then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be (*if indeed, since, as the fact is*) that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

The teaching of Scripture is not difficult. Paul speaks of a co-heirship with Christ that results in co-suffering and ends with co-glorification. All of God’s saints in the Church are children by New Birth. By virtue of the New Birth all of us are “joint-heirs” with Christ in this life and the next. In this life it means that everyone in the Church *corporately* shares in suffering for Christ (“since that we suffer with him”) in the same way we will also be glorified in the next life (“glorified together”).

So suffering is not the experience of an elite group of Christians but is part of what it means to be a Christian. No believer is exempt from some suffering and experiencing a certain number of hardships related to being a Christian. It goes with the territory. It is something that is natural and expected for being identified with Christ (2 Tim. 3:12).

Zane Hodges wrongly concludes:

“Romans 8:17 thus confronts us with a double heirship. One of these is for all believers. The other is for believers who suffer in fellowship with Christ” (*A Free Grace Primer, Three Compiled Works of Zane Hodges, GES, 2011, p. 309*). He also concludes “that to be glorified with Christ involves co-reigning with Him” (p. 310).

The Grace Evangelical Society writers always want to divide the faithful from the unfaithful saints when it comes to reigning with Christ. But Paul does not do this in Romans 8:17 or 2 Timothy 2:12. He assumes through the Church's identity with Christ that all will in some measure suffer for Christ. Nor does Paul conclude that being "glorified together" pertains to the actual reign of Christ. The text in Romans 8:17 does not say this. Glorification refers to the aspect of our redemptive body and sinless nature. The very next verse tells us what Paul is thinking about.

Romans 8:18

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

The "glory" refers to the glorified body that each member of the Church will receive (not an elite group of overcomers) in preparation for the eternal state. The glory is revealed "in us" for we will be made perfectly holy and intrinsically transformed to reflect Christ's glory, His perfect holiness, righteousness, and impeccability. This is a redemptive glory – not a reigning glory (Rom. 8:23; Col. 1:27; 3:4; Heb. 2:10).

This is referring to the glorious freedom all saints will enjoy from sin, Satan, and physical decay because of their identity or union with Christ. The glory is forever, whereas the suffering is temporary and light (2 Cor. 4:17). First comes the glorification of the saints and then comes the "manifestation of the sons of God" (all the sons of God) at the Second Coming, when all Church Age saints return with Jesus Christ possessing glorified bodies (Rom. 19:11-14), and when they will be seen as trophies of God's grace (Rom. 8:19-21).

Both Romans 8:17 and 2 Timothy 2:11-12 teach that all Church saints are heirs and joint-heirs with Christ based upon their grace relationship with Christ. This means all saints by virtue of their union with Christ have died with Christ, live with Christ (2 Tim. 2:11), suffer with Christ, will be glorified with Christ, and ultimately, they will reign with Christ as the "sons of God" (Rom. 8:19). There is no special group of saints juxtaposed with less faithful saints in these verses. This is because Paul is teaching what Christians have and experience through being a co-heir with Christ.

To summarize, Paul confirms that by virtue of the Church's identity with Christ as a co-sharer that all of God's saints will suffer for Christ, even as all saints will be glorified and become like Christ, and how all saints as the "sons of God" will

someday reign with Christ. Jesus taught in John 16:33, "... In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (1 Jn. 3:13). So, the fact that the heirs of God share together in Christ's suffering means they also will be glorified together. The two are linked together in the plan and purpose of God. Suffering precedes glorification and both are the experience of all Christians.

James Stifler wrote:

"Suffering is the seed that ripens in fruit of glory."

Suffering is the path that leads to glory. It was true for Christ. Luke 24:26, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" This is also true of His followers (1 Pet. 4:12-13). Although we cannot standardize the experience of suffering for all believers since it comes in many variations of intensity and its duration is different with every Christian, yet Church Age saints who are in union with Christ are assured to experience it (John 16:33) and the result is ruling or reigning with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom.

This is what 2 Timothy 2:12 is teaching as well. The Church in a *corporate sense* shares her position in Christ. "For if (*since*) we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (our victorious union and identity with Christ – Rom. 6:1-15; Col. 3:3). Since we share the same position of victory in union with Christ's death and resurrection, this also means "we suffer" (*hypomenō* - endure, persevere) together as a corporate body with the glorious prospect that "we shall also reign with him" in the future. Our ruling will be in proportion to our endurance within the Christian life or how victorious we were in our times of suffering and hardship. Not everyone in the Church will be a martyr (Rev. 2:13) but all will suffer for Christ and be rewarded and reign with Christ.

It should also be noted that there are other character traits manifested in the lives of genuine believers that will one day result in ruling privileges in the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 5:3-12; Gal. 5:20- 25; Rev. 2:26).

Jesus taught in Matthew 5:5:

"Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Matthew 5:10:

“Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The general principle being taught in the kingdom reigning verses is that all saints will manifest the wonder of transforming grace in their lives, whether it pertains to passing through suffering victoriously or manifesting other spiritual birthmarks, which confirm or authenticate a person has been born again. The New Birth results in entrance into the kingdom (John 3:5) but spiritual endurance or perseverance (victorious Christian living) will result in reigning privileges during the earthly kingdom. Because of the union that all Church Age saints have with Christ they will in a practical way suffer and experience victory in their Christian lives at various times and in specific ways. The result is that there will be ruling privileges for all believers in the future kingdom.

The united messages of Jesus, Paul, and John are conveying the same thing. Every true believer (all the saints) will enter the earthly kingdom (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:6) and be rewarded and reign in direct proportion to their own suffering and service rendered unto Christ during their days on earth (Matt. 25:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:13; 2:26). Paul certainly is not teaching in 2 Timothy 2:12 that *Christians* can permanently deny Christ and be banned from entering or ruling in the Millennium. Nor is he teaching that they will be kept from enjoying the kingdom by being stuck in a dark room somewhere where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12) because they have not suffered enough or lived as faithfully for Christ during their Christian life on earth.

As in other texts (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11), the passage in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 makes a contrast between the saved (believers) and unsaved (nonbelievers) – those who are redeemed and those who will experience retribution. We see the same pattern in other kingdom contexts. Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin create a dichotomy between faithful and unfaithful Christians in the kingdom passages instead of a contrast between the saved and unsaved which is what Jesus and Paul taught in these kingdom settings. The idea that the saved are pitted against one another as faithful versus unfaithful in these prophetic Scriptures about inheriting or reigning in the kingdom cannot be substantiated and is not sound exegesis.

I understand this poem or hymn in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 to have two main parts, which should be divided as follows.

Part I: Reassurance for Saints: (2 Timothy 2:11-12a)

- If we died with him, we will also live with him (positional truth).
- If we suffer and endure, we will also reign with him (practical truth).

Part II: Warning for Unbelievers: (2 Timothy 2:12b-13)

- If we deny him, he will also deny us (before the Father).
- The one who “denies” Christ is the one who does not believe.
- If we fail to believe (“episteo” - Mark 16:16; Acts 28:24; Rom. 3:3), God is faithful to His word and must judge the unbeliever (John 3:36).

Both instances of the verb “deny” are in the future tense. People who claim to be Christians but really aren’t will eventually be exposed for disowning Christ and not believing on Christ as Savior. Jesus will then later (at the the Second Coming) deny ever knowing them (Matt. 7:23). Christians can deny Christ, but it will not be for long. Peter denied Him (Matt. 26:70) but later repented (26:75) and was restored by the Lord (John 21).

We must remember that PROFESSION DOES NOT EQUATE WITH POSSESSION of salvation. People can say that they “believe” but at the same time live in perpetual apostasy in relationship to Christ and ethical living (2 Pet. 2:1, 10-15). Sadly, there is a false teaching in evangelical circles which concludes that if a person says he has believed on Christ, then no person should ever question his salvation, regardless of how they live. In other words, they can live like the Devil the rest of their life, reject God, deny Christ, become an atheist or Satanist and still be saved, if they had at one time claimed to believe on Christ. It’s then concluded that this same person at the time of death enters Heaven and will one day enter the Millennium but be banned from reigning with Christ because of bad behavior.

The Bible is very clear on this. You cannot permanently deny Christ, the Lord God, the risen Christ, and without any reservation and conviction disown Christ, His truth, live in sin and open rebellion against God your entire life, rejecting God’s



word and ways, wanting nothing to do with Christ and Christianity, and expect to be saved from God's judgment at the time of death (Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 7:21-23). Life begets life. Death begets death. Denial begets denial!

Hebrews 10:39

"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

It's true, if we deny Christ by our words and deeds, He will one day deny that we are His children before the Father ("if we deny him, he also will deny us" – 2 Tim. 2:12). If we fail to believe in Christ in this life ("If we believe not" – 2 Tim. 2:13), we can be sure Christ will not perjure Himself, change His eternal character, and fail to judge us in the next life for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). No person will get away with their rejection of Jesus Christ.

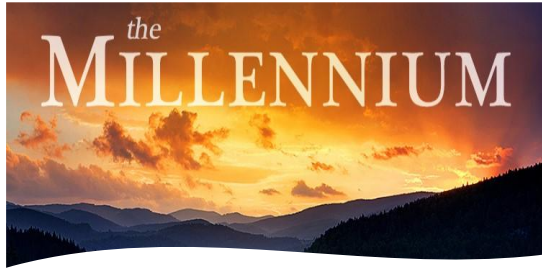
Edmond Hiebert summarizes the meaning of these verses:

"The central truth of these pithy statements is that faith in Christ identifies the believer with Him in everything while unbelief just as surely separates men from Him. ... As the unchanging Jehovah whose very nature is truth, He cannot be false to His own nature, nor to His word of promise to the faithful and His word of threatening to the faithless."

Unbelievers will be left out of the earthly kingdom (Matt. 13:30, 41-43), but Jesus does mention varying degrees of ruling privileges given to His saints during the earthly kingdom. Matthew 25 is referring to Israel's blessings and ruling privileges in the coming earthly kingdom. Following the Second Coming, those saints who were more faithful and committed in their service and living for Jesus Christ will be given greater ruling privileges and responsibilities.

The context is specifically addressing the time "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31). This is the Second Coming which immediately precedes the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom.

In the context of the kingdom reign, Jesus explains in Matthew 25:21: "His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things (*during the earthly theocracy*):



Ruler Over Many Things

(Matthew 25:21, 23)

enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (*the Millennial Kingdom*). He then repeats the same truth in Matthew 25:23: “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things (*during the earthly kingdom*): enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (*the Millennial Kingdom*).

It’s interesting that Jesus will give the saints ruling privileges even if they were “faithful over a few things” which would be true of all saints. All of God’s saints exhibit faithfulness in some measure.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:42:

“And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

Yes, even a cup of cold water will result in a reward which will translate into kingdom reigning. Let’s be honest. No believer blows it all the time! They do manifest faithfulness in various areas of their living and service which is contrary to the “wicked and slothful servant” (Matt. 25:26) who is a counterfeit saint in the parable that will be punished with God’s judgment at the Second Coming.

We know from many prophetic Scriptures that the entire saved Jewish remnant will enter the Millennium (Duet. 30:4-5; Isa. 11:12, 15-16; 51:11; 43:5-7; Isa. 27:13; 55:12; 60:8-10; Jer. 31:7-9; Ezek. 11:16-17; 20:41-42; 36:24-27) but not all of the Jews will have the same ruling privileges for this will be based upon the degree of their faithfulness and service rendered unto the Lord in this life. The same is true regarding Church Age saints. The faithfulness, service, and victory of the overcomers is not the way to enter the Millennial Kingdom (John 3:5) but the way to gain greater ruling privileges over the nations (Rev. 2:26).

As already mentioned, the promises related to the Church entering Heaven (Rev. 2:7, 17; 3:12), escaping the second death (Rev. 2:11), never having their names erased from the book of life (Rev. 3:5), having their names confessed before the

Father and angels (Rev. 3:5), and entering the Millennium (Rev. 2:24-28; 3:21) are all based upon the Church's overcoming grace position in Christ (1 John 5:5). At the same time, the degree of the Church's reward and reigning privileges will be based upon how victorious and faithful each saint has lived out his or her life on earth (Rev. 2:26). Again, we must separate the POSITION and PROMISE given to the overcomers (reigning with Christ) from their REWARDS and REIGNING privileges.

Our grace position and promise of ruling with Christ as an overcomer never changes because we are "heirs" and "joint-heirs" with Christ (Rom. 8:17) but our rewards and reigning privileges are earned and are additional to the position. Grace gets us into the kingdom and promises that we will reign with Christ. At the same time, grace also works within the hearts of God's saints (Phil. 1:6; 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 3:18) to transform (Eph. 2:10; Rom. 6:1-15) and reward them someday at the Rapture (Rev. 22:12) which will result in numerous and diverse ruling privileges during the Millennial Kingdom.

Here is the good news! Jesus paid the price for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3). This means we won't pay the price in the afterlife by receiving temporal punishment for our sins in what Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin identify as "outer darkness." Jesus won't deny us entrance into the kingdom (Faust) or reigning with Christ (Hodges, Dillow, Wilkin). Losing some reward at the Bema does not equate to losing the privilege to enter Heaven and enjoy its blessings. In the same way, losing some reward (2 John 8) will not result in Christ denying us entrance or reigning privileges in the earthly kingdom. This is because all of God's saints will receive reward (1 Cor. 3:8; 4:5; Rev. 22:12) and reign with Christ (Rev. 5:10).

Inheriting the Kingdom

There are various verses that speak of inheriting the earthly kingdom.

Matthew 25:34

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."



Galatians 5:21

“Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 15:50

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”

As mentioned in the introduction, Faust basically concludes that “inheriting” the kingdom means “earning” entrance into the kingdom through faithfulness and good works. Of course, this is an exegetical fallacy since we enter the earthly kingdom based upon the New Birth (John 3:5) and our overcoming position in Christ and union with Him (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; Rom. 8:17; Jam. 2:5).

Dillow distinguishes between the PARTAKERS and the NON-PARTAKERS in the millennial reign of Christ. But this interpretation is invalid. The Pauline concept of partaking or sharing is based on our union with Christ and the assurance of sharing everything with Christ. This means every believer will inherit the blessings of the Kingdom Age based solely on his righteous standing in Christ which is made possible only by the grace of God!

Romans 8:17 confirms:

“And if children (born ones), then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.”

What amazing grace! All that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son, and those who are children of God share equally with the Son all that belongs to the Father. This means the future is ours because of our grace relationship with Christ. In this context our future inheritance is “the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18, 30). Our glorification is assured because of our union with Christ and the same

is true regarding our entrance and reign during the Millennial Kingdom. We will share in Christ's reign as *co-ruler* with Christ because we are a *co-heir* with Christ.

William Newell correctly states the grace union with Christ and the assured blessings that flow forth from this union: "Heirship is from relationship. ... Now, if a man is really a child of God by begetting and birth, he becomes indissolubly God's heir! This is a fact of such overwhelming magnitude that our poor hearts hardly grasp it. It is said of no angel, cherub, or seraph, that he is an heir of God. Believer, if you will reflect, meditate deeply, on this, I am born of God; I am one of His heirs! earthly things will shrink to nothing. Now, J. D. Rockefeller, Jr., has inherited his father's wealth: why? Because he was his father's born son"

"And, we may humbly say, perhaps, that God could only do this by joining us in eternal union with His beloved Son, as the Last Adam, the Second Man; having released us from Adam the First and all his connections, at the cross, and having placed us in Christ Risen, in all the boundless and everlasting rights of His dear Son, whom He has "appointed heir of all things!" Ages after ages of ever-increasing blessing forever and forever and forever, lie in prospect for believers—for the joint-heirs!" (*Newell, W. R., Romans Verse-by-Verse (p. 220). Christian Classics Ethereal Library*).

Our grace relationship with Christ (union with Christ as "joint-heirs") promises that we are all partakers (compare Col. 1:12; Heb. 3:14). He has "made us kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10) which means we are all partakers (sharers) of the kingdom reign. Nobody is a non-partaker. The grace that saves is the grace that *transforms* (Titus 2:11-12), and the grace that transforms is the grace that *rewards* (1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 22:12), and the grace that rewards is the grace that *assures* we will reign as kings (Rev. 5:10).

Titus 3:7

"That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Grace is linked to being an "heir" who receives all the promises of God. To "be made heirs" is a grace position that stems from our justified position in Christ which assures all of God's saints they will share in the future blessings promised to them such as eternal life, and among other things, glorification and reigning with Christ.

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17).

Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin focus on “if so be that we suffer with him” as being a condition to experience our future blessing with Christ and connects this with 2 Timothy 2:12 (“If we suffer, we will reign with him”). But if this is what Paul meant in Romans 8:17 then our glorification (the redemption of our body) is conditioned upon how much we suffer and are faithful to Christ for the text goes on to say, “that we may be also glorified together.” The truth is that our glorification is based upon grace for “whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

Goerge Zeller adds more confirming evidence that our union with Christ (being a “joint-heir with Christ”) is a grace foundation that promises all Church saints will share Christ’s future reign. He states: “That we may also be glorified together.” This is the key to our question: WHO are to be glorified with Christ when He comes? In Chapter Five Paul says (and that of, and to, all the saints), ‘We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ And in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 we read, ‘When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed.’ And again (Col. 3:4): ‘When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also [evidently all the saints!] with Him be manifested in glory.’ Again (1 John 3:2): ‘Now are we [all the saints] children of God . . . We know that, if He shall be manifested, we [all the saints] shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is!’ (Romans, pages 316-317).

In other words, Zeller correctly argues that you can’t have it both ways – not reigning but glorified! He is correct. The point is that all believers will reign with Christ based upon their union with Christ and they will all be glorified.

What then is Paul teaching when he states, “If so be (*since, if indeed, as is the fact*) that we suffer with him” (Rom. 8:17) or “if we suffer” (2 Tim. 2:12). As previously confirmed, Paul is declaring the simple truth that all Christians in some measure, to some degree, incur the hostility of the world. The same is true that all Christians participate in the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be (*since, if indeed, as is the fact*) that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

All Christians do receive some hostility from the world even as all Christians have the Spirit of God indwelling them. Of course, there are some Christians who suffer more than others in the cause of Christ, and this will result in differing degrees of reward and glory. Paul’s point in Romans 8:17 is that suffering the hostility of the world is part of the Christian experience and proof of one’s salvation which confirms that a Christian will one day reign with Christ.

Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin teach that all the saints will enter the kingdom, but not all saints will share in the reign of the Millennium. They therefore divide the Body of Christ (the Church) during the Millennium. They equate the word “inherit” to ruling privileges which are only given to an elite group of overcoming Christians, the ones who have excelled above others. The non-overcomers will not be partakers of the millennial reign. It’s concluded that all the saints will be a citizen or resident of the kingdom, but they will not “inherit” the blessing of ruling during the kingdom. Dillow also concludes that “they will be in the kingdom but not at the wedding feast” (*Joseph C. Dillow, The Reign of the Servant Kings (Miami Springs, Florida: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992, p. 389).*



Of course, the kingdom parables portray all believers participating in the wedding feast which is a picture of entrance into the glorious blessings of the earthly kingdom (Matt. 22:1-14). Jesus taught that all are welcome to the banquet. “Go ye therefore into the highways, and

as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage” (Matt. 22:9). However, those who enter can only be believers for they are pictured as wearing the appropriate garment of God’s imputed righteousness – “the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10).

The unsaved cannot enter the banquet (the Millennium) because they are not wearing the wedding garment which portrays God’s perfect imputed righteousness

(Romans 4:5-6). Like the Pharisees this person lacks the robe of righteousness (Matt. 5:20) and therefore will be judged as an unbeliever who was not chosen to enter the Messianic Kingdom (Matt. 22:13). The obvious point is that all who enter the Millennium are believers who will feast at the banquet table. No believer is turned away from the table, banned from entering the kingdom, including reigning with Christ. Only unbelievers (non-believers) will be refused entrance into the wedding feast or Messianic Kingdom.

It's concluded by Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin that many believers won't be able to rule because of their lack of faithfulness and wicked living on earth. In fact, they won't even be able to run parking meters during the kingdom! But we have discovered that the Bible teaches all the saints will rule with Christ (Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 1 Cor. 6:2; 20:6) even though there will be different degrees of reward and reigning privileges during the thousand years (Rev. 2:26; Matt. 25:21, 23).

Daniel taught this same truth regarding the Old Testament saints who enter the earthly kingdom at the Second Coming. All of them will be raised, rewarded, and reign in relation to their faithful service and living.

Daniel 12:2-3

“And many (the saved Jewish saints) of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life (the resurrection of all the Old Testament saints to positions of honor in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom which occurs at the end of the Tribulation) and some (the unsaved Jewish people) to shame and everlasting contempt (the unsaved Jews will be resurrected at the Great White Throne Judgment after the 1,000 years - Revelation 20:5). And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (the shining associated with reward and blessing during the Kingdom Age and on into the eternal state).

Daniel reveals that all the Old Testament saints will be raised to enter the earthly kingdom and later on God's prophetic calendar the unsaved will be raised to enter the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Progressive revelation reveals the exact timing of these resurrections (Rev. 20:5). Here is the point. Daniel reveals that none of the resurrected saints will be left out of the kingdom and those who have directed people to righteous living will be given special rewards and privileges in the Millennium. The implication of the statement is that all those who are resurrected

enter the earthly Messianic Kingdom and all will be rewarded and reign with Christ in proportion to their faithfulness and service rendered unto God (Matt. 25:14-30).

Those who are “wise” and those who “turn many to righteousness” (Dan. 12:3) are descriptive of the varying amounts of reward that will be given to the Old Testament saints at the Second Coming (Matt. 10:41-42) and which will result in reigning privileges during the Millennium. Shining is associated with reward which will in some manner give people the unique capacity to radiate God’s glory. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 13:43). The shining associated with reward is descriptive of all those who enter the Millennium in contrast to the wicked and unsaved who are gathered out of the kingdom at its inception.

Matthew 13:41-43

“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

All the saints who enter the earthly kingdom are considered “righteous” in contrast to the wicked or lost who are “them which do iniquity.” This means that the saints will be rewarded and reign in relation to their righteous living and service rendered unto the Lord. This will be true of resurrected Old Testament saints and those believers who are alive at the Second Coming and enter the Millennial in their physical bodies.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:27:

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

At the Second Coming, Jesus said that “every man” will be rewarded “according to his works” which means all God’s saints will receive reward and reign with Christ in proportion to how they have served and lived (2 Cor. 5:10). Again, nobody will be left out of the kingdom, and every saint will be rewarded and reign in the Millennial Kingdom. Every man is rewarded! Every man will reign. Who will you believe? Jesus or Hodges? Jesus or Dillow? Jesus or Wilkin?

John envisions the same thing. All the Tribulation martyrs and saints that are killed during Daniel's 70th week of Daniel (Dan. 9:24) will be raised to enter the Millennium and rule with Christ. None of them will be left out of the kingdom and all of them will rule with Christ.

Revelation 20:4

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they (*all of them*) lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The Tribulation saints will be resurrected at the Second Coming so they can reign with Christ. Again, none will be left out of the kingdom, and none will miss out on reigning during the kingdom! The point is rather obvious. There are no Scriptures, when properly understood and interpreted, that teach a special group of overcoming saints will reign during the Millennium while less faithful saints are not given this privilege. Again, even the carnal Corinthians were given the prospect of ruling during the Kingdom Age as judges (1 Cor. 6:2). All the saints will reign with Christ during the Millennium.

As we have seen, the same is true regarding Church Age saints. All are promised through rapture or resurrection to rule with Christ in the Millennium.

Revelation 5:10 again states:

"And hast made us (*all Church Age saints*) unto our God kings and priests: and we (*all the saints*) shall reign on the earth."

In every Bible reference we find that all of God's saints enter the earthly kingdom, all saints will be rewarded for their righteous living, and all will rule with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom. Who will you believe? John the apostle or Hodges? John or Dillow? John or Wilkin?

It should be understood that we do not earn or merit entrance into the Millennial Kingdom any more than we earn entrance into Heaven (Eph. 2:8-9; John 14:6). To think that all believers will enter the Father's House (John 14:1-3) but not the Father's kingdom (Matt. 25:34) as Faust suggests is a theological contradiction and

absurdity since both are promised on the basis of grace and the New Birth (John 3:5; John 14:6). Jesus repeatedly said in the context of entrance into the kingdom: “Enter thou into the joy of the Lord” (Matt. 25:21, 23). Entering the kingdom is for all saints but there will be degrees of reward and reigning privileges within the Kingdom Age. Jesus revealed this truth during His earthly ministry as He spoke of the placements and privileges during the earthly kingdom.

Matthew 19:30

“But many that are first (those first in prominence and who are well known today) **shall be last** (last is recognition, reward, and ruling privileges during the kingdom); **and the last** (those who are not as well-known but who faithfully served the Lord) **shall be first”** (first in honor and reigning privileges during the Millennium).

Mark 10:31

“But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.”

Luke 13:30

“And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”

In the gospel records Jesus repeatedly taught that there will be some surprises regarding those who will be greatly rewarded and recognized during the Millennial Kingdom. The same will be true for Church Age saints. Those who were well-known and, in the spotlight, may not receive as much recognition and ruling privileges as others who were not well-known but who served and lived for God faithfully for many years. The believer’s payday will be filled with surprises. The rewarding of God’s people will be filled with surprising *revelations* and *reversals*! But it should be noted that Jesus taught that all the saints will enter the kingdom, and all will take part in this glorious reign, but some will have greater honor and privileges than others. Some will be first and others last, but all will take part.

Matthew 18:1 records the dispute of the disciples:

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

Matthew 18:4 gives Jesus’ perspective on the matter:

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Although all the saints will enter and reign during the Millennial Kingdom, not all the saints will reign possessing equal status and authority. Those who humble themselves as servants in this life and serve others will be given special ruling privileges and greatness in the world to come (the Millennium).



Now what does the word “inherit” mean? The word “inherit” does not mean we earn an entrance into the earthly kingdom but is the promised blessing that all of God’s saints (those who are saved) will enter the Millennium and therefore receive all the promised blessings of the Kingdom Age. When you are given an inheritance it’s not because you have earned it in any way but because someone decided to graciously give the inheritance to you out of the kindness of his own heart. When the Bible speaks of inheriting the Millennial Kingdom it speaks of the blessing of entering the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-6) and enjoying the future blessings “in the world to come” – the millennial age (Matt. 12:32; Heb. 2:5; 6:5).

Hodges asks:

“Many have assumed that to inherit the kingdom must be the same as entering it. But why should such an equation be made?”

It’s because you cannot receive the inheritance without entering the kingdom where the inheritance can be enjoyed and experienced! You must enter the kingdom to receive its blessings. So entering the kingdom is included in the meaning of inheriting the kingdom. You must enter it to enjoy and possess its benefits.

Hodges then states:

“It’s extremely careless not to give deeper thought to a significant concept like inheriting the kingdom of God” (*A Free Grace Primer*. p. 316).

He then makes the argument of how someone can live in a house but not inherit it which means some saints will live in the kingdom but not inherit the blessing of ruling with Christ. Of course, this argument defies the truth of Scripture (Rev. 5:10; 1 Cor. 6:2). Hodges is very gifted in his Biblical expositions and teachings. But sometimes brilliant men confuse things brilliantly! If a person does not enter the earthly kingdom, he cannot receive the enjoyment and privileges that were given

to him. So yes, inheriting the kingdom suggests one must enter it to possess the benefits of the kingdom's inheritance ("the saints possessed the kingdom" – Dan. 7:22).

George Zeller correctly observes:

"To inherit the kingdom means to possess the kingdom, to have a place and a part in the kingdom (cf. Rev. 20:6 'part'), to participate in its blessings and benefits. Those who do not inherit the kingdom are those who do not possess it, who have no part in it. They are excluded from the kingdom and its benefits."

As we have already confirmed, the word "inherit" cannot mean that only an elite group of super-duper saints will rule with Jesus Christ and the rest are not given any ruling privileges for the Bible repeatedly states that all the saints will take part in the Millennium and rule during the thousand years (Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:6; Matt. 13:41-43; 16:27; 25:21, 23; Dan. 12:2-3). All the saints will come marching into the kingdom and be able to participate in some measure in the millennial rule. Yes, some will have less reward and ruling privileges, but all will have their part in Christ's rule – from the first to the last (Mark 10:31) and from the greatest to the least.

Jesus taught in Matthew 5:19

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

George MacDonald comments on this verse:

"But whoever breaks one part of the law, and teaches other people to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. The wonder is that such people are permitted in the kingdom at all—but then, entrance *into* the kingdom is by faith in Christ. A person's position *in* the kingdom is determined by his obedience and faithfulness while on earth. The person who obeys the law of the kingdom—that person shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

James 2:5 gives this promise:

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

In other words, all of God's saints, including the poor, are "heirs of the kingdom" and therefore will enter and "inherit" the kingdom blessings, including ruling with Jesus Christ. It's not just an elite group of saints but all of God's children who are described as loving Him (1 Cor. 2:9; Rom. 8:28). They will be given entrance into the earthly theocracy and also rule with Christ. None will be left out of the kingdom, and all will in some measure participate in the reign of the Golden Age.

Jesus taught in Matthew 25:34:

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Here is another reference that speaks of all God's saints inheriting the kingdom who survive the Tribulation Period. This means the word "inherit" does not speak of a special class of saints ruling during the Millennium. In this Second Coming scene the "sheep" (representative of all God's saints – vv. 32, 34) are seen on the right but the "goats" (representative of all the unsaved) appear on the left.

Matthew 25:41

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand (*the goats*), Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Those on the right (God's sheep) will escape God's wrath and judgment at the Second Coming for they will "inherit the kingdom" which again speaks of all God's saints entering the kingdom and enjoying reward and reigning privileges.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:5:

"Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was teaching the character traits of Jewish believers who will one day enter the Millennial Kingdom when it is established over the earth. It's obvious that being "meek" (Matt. 5:5), "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), or being "persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matt. 5:10) is not the WAY of entering the earthly kingdom but is the CHARACTER traits of those who enter the kingdom. People who "thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6) and exhibit a life of transformation give evidence of their salvation and will have access to future blessings (Rev. 22:14). As a result of possessing a saving relationship before God through grace, which has been evidenced through transformation and spiritual

character traits, these saints will one day enter the earthly kingdom to experience the blessings of Christ's rule.

Joseph Dillow comments on the word inherit:

"All Christians will enter the kingdom, but not all will rule there, i.e., inherit it....They will, having been justified, be in the kingdom; however, they will not inherit it....There is a difference between being a resident of the kingdom and inheriting it." (*Joseph C. Dillow, The Reign of the Servant Kings, Miami Springs, Florida: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992, pages 62, 64, 78*).

Elsewhere he teaches:

"In each instance we find that, in order to inherit the kingdom, there must be some work done or certain character traits, such as immorality, must be absent from our lives. The fact that such conditions are necessary suggests that the term is not to be equated with entering the kingdom which is available to all, freely, on the basis of faith alone but with something in addition to entering. Indeed, the very use of the word "inherit" instead of "enter" in these passages suggests that more than just entrance is meant" (*Dillow, J. C., 2011, The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man, p. 75*).

Dillow is incorrect in his assessment. He builds a strawman argument by assuming something is true and then knocks down the Biblical conclusions of those who reject his ideas.

First, he assumes the word "inherit" is a reference to only those saints who rule with Christ and not a reference to the rest of the saints who enter the Millennium. This is a false assessment. As we have confirmed repeatedly, the Bible teaches that all of God's saints will reign with Christ over the earth and enjoy these kingdom blessings based on varying amounts of faithfulness and services rendered unto to the Lord (Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:6; 1 Cor. 6:2; Matt. 25:21, 23). Dillow's findings are the result of sloppy exegesis of the Biblical facts and texts.

(Rev. 5:10; 20:6).

Second, he also assumes that Galatians 5:21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9 is referring to *Christian* homosexuals, murderers, sorcerers, and such like, who are not faithful and will not "inherit" the privilege to rule with Christ during the kingdom. Of course, this is not what Paul is teaching because he is making a contrast between the saved

and unsaved in these texts. He states, “And such were some of you” (contrasting the saved from the unsaved in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and also contrasting “they which do such things” (the unbelievers) with “they that are Christs” (the believers) in Galatians 5:21-24.

I do agree with Dillow when he states that “more than just entrance is meant” when referring to inheriting the kingdom. But despite Dillow’s conclusion, inheriting the kingdom can be another way of saying one must enter the kingdom. How can a person inherit a piece of property without going to the property and living on the property! It’s understood that *entering* the kingdom results in *inheriting* the kingdom because all the saints who enter will enjoy the blessings of their future reign with Christ.

This is similarly taught in relation to the saint’s inheritance of their future heavenly blessings.

1 Peter 1:3-4

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Would Dillow conclude that only some of the saints will “inherit” or enjoy an eternally secure and wonderful future in Heaven while other saints do not receive the heavenly inheritance? If not, then why would he conclude this about those who enter the Millennium? In most places the New Testament passages address the believer’s inheritance as a gift of God’s grace lavished upon *all* believers in Christ.

Colossians 1:12

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Ephesians 1:11

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Ephesians 1:14

“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

Colossians 3:24

“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Here our eternal reward is seen as a future inheritance, but it too can only be received because of the transforming work of grace occurring in our hearts and lives. Furthermore, we know that all the saints will receive a reward in the future which is part of their inheritance (1 Cor. 4:5).

Here is the point concerning inhering the kingdom. Jesus taught we enter the kingdom by New Birth (John 3:5) and therefore will also “inherit” the kingdom someday when entering this Golden Age of Christ. We will rule and enjoy the future blessings that await all of God’s children who enter the earthly kingdom (Matt. 8:11). The *position* of Church Age saints as overcomers grants them the promise of a future reign with Christ (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). The *practice* of overcomers results in individual reward and reigning privileges (Rev. 2:26).

1 Corinthians 15:50 is another inheritance verse related to the kingdom:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”

This verse addresses Church Age saints who will be raptured or raised from the dead and given a glorified body (1 Cor. 15:51-52). You will notice that all Church saints will enter the Millennium in glorified bodies which means that they will have received their rewards (1 Cor. 3:8; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 22:12) and are now ready to reign with Christ in their glorified bodies (Rev. 5:10).

Based on this verse (1 Cor. 15:50), Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin teach that everyone, including Tribulation saints, will possess resurrection bodies when entering the Millennial Kingdom, not mortal bodies (“flesh and blood”). However, this certainly is not the case. There is no mention of bodily resurrection in Matthew 25 of the wise virgins, faithful servants, and sheep (Tribulation saints who survive the

Tribulation) being raised to enter the Millennium. How could surviving Tribulation saints be resurrected if they did not die?

Dillow has no explanation. Look at his analysis of the 1 Corinthians 15:50 text:

“It is quite clear to the apostle Paul that men and women in mortal bodies will be in the kingdom. There will be physical procreation and physical death (Isa. 65:20; Ezek. 36:11). Furthermore, a multitude of unregenerate men in mortal bodies will rebel at the end of the thousand-year kingdom and will be “devoured,” hardly an experience of resurrected and immortal saints (Rev. 20:7–10).

“Paul’s statement, in order to be made consistent with the rest of the Bible, requires that there is a difference between being a resident of the kingdom and inheriting it. Clearly, human beings in mortal bodies do live in the kingdom, but they are not heirs of that kingdom, a privilege which only those in resurrection bodies can share.

“When the apostle declares that men in mortal bodies will not inherit the kingdom, this obviously requires that the resurrection and transformation of the sheep occurs prior to their “receiving the kingdom” and must be simultaneous with the judgment of the sheep and the goats. If this is the case, then a problem develops in that there appear to be no saints left in mortal bodies to populate the millennium in contradiction to the Old Testament passages previously discussed. Since the Scriptures are silent on this problem, one must be careful how he explains the difficulty.”

Dillow wants to have his cake and eat it too. He assumes without any Biblical evidence that the sheep or living Tribulation saints will receive their glorified bodies through resurrection at the Second Coming. But how can this be if they have not died? You cannot have a resurrection without a death! Dillow is infected with the virus of eisegesis as he reads things into these texts of Scripture which are not present. In fact, he knows that many mortals will live during the Kingdom Age but provides no sensible answer to how this occurs if everyone enters the Millennium in glorified bodies which cannot procreate (Matt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25).

A great number of people will enter the earthly kingdom in their mortal bodies and repopulate the earth (Rev. 20:8). The Church will enter the Kingdom as glorified reigning saints. The same will be true for the Tribulation martyrs and Old Testament saints who are resurrected and receive their glorified bodies (Rev. 20:6; Dan. 12:2-

3; Isa. 26:19). However, the Tribulation saints (Jewish and Gentile) who survive the Tribulation will enter the kingdom in their mortal bodies (Matthew 10:22; 24-25; Luke 13:29; Zech. 13:9). There is no Scripture that teaches the resurrection of Jewish and Gentile saints prior to the Millennium who have survived the seven-year Tribulation. Scripture is silent on this. Crickets!



The Grace Evangelical Society which embraces the teaching of Hodges and Dillow concludes that only resurrected and glorified people enter the Millennium. But this is a false assumption. If this were true then no repopulation of the earth could occur throughout the 1,000 years.

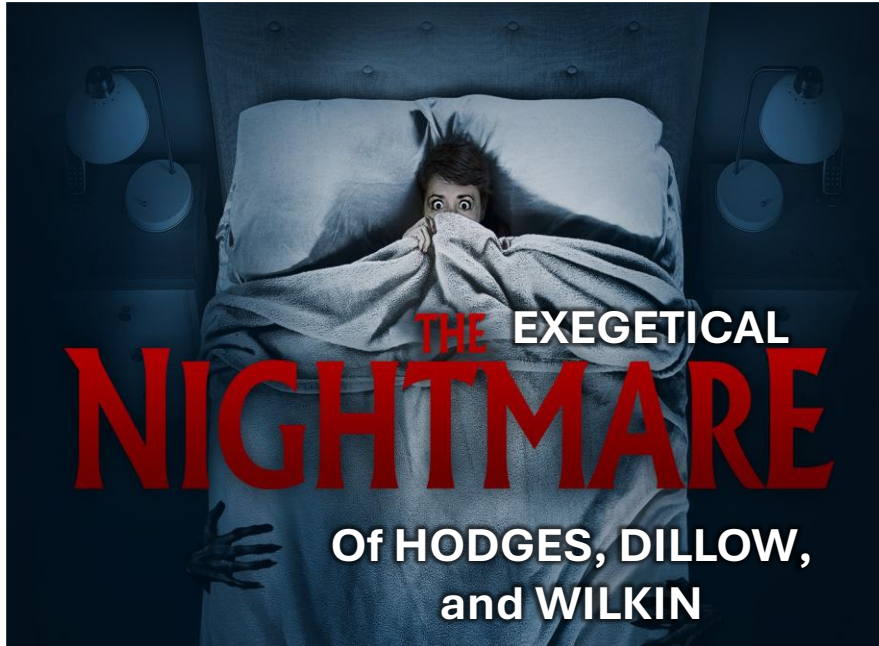
Goerge Zeller sees an obvious flaw in this debunked theory:

“It is absolutely true that no church-age believer will inherit the kingdom in a flesh-and-blood body. When it comes to the church, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (verse 50). Why not? Verses 51-53 explain.

“Dillow and Hodges err by taking verse 50 to be a truism for all saints, even tribulation saints. The truth set forth in verses 51-53 clearly applies only to church saints. May not verse 50 apply only to church saints as well?

“Actually, 1 Corinthians 15:50 and its context argue strongly against the Dillow/Hodges view. Dillow and Hodges teach that out of all the church saints, only the spiritual elite (the ‘overcomers’) inherit the kingdom. Some church saints inherit the kingdom but not all. But in the very next verse, verse 51, notice the twice repeated emphasis on the word “all.” All will be changed and delivered from flesh and blood corruption, including the carnal Corinthians! ALL church saints inherit the kingdom apart from corruption (verse 50) by way of the rapture/resurrection (verses 51-53).”

When we properly understand the simplicity of the word “inherit” it would mean to enter the Millennial Kingdom and receive the blessings of that inheritance which is promised to all saints because of their grace relationship with Christ (Rom. 8:17). But in order to stop some saints (non-overcomers) from ruling with Christ during the kingdom or inheriting the kingdom as Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin purport, they create an exegetical nightmare out of various Bible texts.



Some of these texts are Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 which speak of failure to inherit the kingdom of God. They claim that these passages are contrasting faithful and unfaithful believers (not saved and unsaved people) and that the unfaithful believers, such as wicked Christians who are born again witches and homosexuals, will not “inherit” the kingdom or be given the privilege to rule during the Millennium. Again, Hodges equates inheriting the kingdom with earning the right to rule during the millennial reign of Christ on earth (See Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, pp. 76-77; Dillow, p. 90; Robert N. Wilkin, “Galatians 5:19-21: Who Will Inherit the Kingdom?” *Grace Evangelical Society Newsletter*; December 1987, p. 2).

The Grace Commentary follows the conclusions of Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin: “The context shows that Paul is talking about a lifestyle. He is saying that the prodigal believer who lives in the spiritual foreign country forfeits his inheritance (Luke 15:11–32). Obviously, Paul is picturing the lifestyle typical of unbelievers (cf. 1 Cor 6:1–11). If believers live like unbelievers, they will not inherit the kingdom of God” (*The Grace New Testament Commentary* (p. 850). *Grace Evangelical Society*).

Are we to believe that those who do not inherit the kingdom actually saved people (believers), as this view of Hodges and others suggest, or are they unregenerate people? The Scriptures speak for themselves. “What saith the Scripture?” – not what saith Hodges, Dillow, or Wilkin.

Galatians 5:19-21 states:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Although Christians can commit these types of fleshly sins and “such like” (Gal. 5:21) Paul is emphasizing a habitual lifestyle of sinning without possessing any evidence of God’s life and nature. This description fits the life of the unregenerate person or unbeliever. The emphasis on the verb “do” (prasso) means to practice, perpetrate, and pursue these types of sins as a pattern or way of life as an unbeliever which is a life set in contrast to those who possess the Spirit and manifest fruitful living within their Christian experience and walk (Gal. 5:22-23).

Paul uses the pronoun “they” (“they which do”) in Galatians 5:21 (a reference to unbelievers) in contrast to “they that are Christ’s” (Gal. 5:24) which is a direct reference to believers. The text is separating believers from the nonbelievers, not wicked or unfaithful believers from faithful believers, as is suggested by Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin. Paul is talking about unbelievers (“they”) who practice this type of rebellious lifestyle and who will not enter the earthly theocracy.

These passages, among others, refer to unsaved people who “do these things” (Gal. 5:21) and “which do iniquity” (Matt.13:41) as a habitual practice and pattern of rebellion against God (1 John 3:8-9; 5:18). The person who practices these sins shall not inherit (enter and enjoy) the kingdom of God. Paul is not talking about an *act* of sin, but a *habit* of sin without demonstrating any signs of regenerating life.

Boice argues:

“The tense of the verb (present) indicates a habitual continuation in fleshly sins rather than an isolated lapse, and the point is that those who continually practice such sins give evidence of having never received God’s Spirit.” Morris also confirms that practice “represents a present participle, ‘people doing such things’, and it carries the implication that they do them constantly.” Stott agrees: “The verb *prassontes* [practice] referring to habitual practice rather than an isolated lapse.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary on Galatians 5:21 is correct when concluding: “This does not say that a Christian loses his salvation if he lapses into a sin of the flesh, but that a person who lives continually on such a level of moral corruption gives evidence of not being a child of God.”

Those who habitually practice the “sin list” mentioned in Galatians 5:21 are the same type or group of people who practice the “sin list” of Revelation 21:8: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” Similar to Galatians 5:19-21, Revelation 21:8 is a clear reference to unbelievers who will be judged by God.

The teaching of God’s Word is not complicated. Hodges and the rest of the gang (Dillow and Wilkin) made it difficult to understand with their strange and unconventional, if not bizarre, understanding of these passages. Paul is very clear in his teaching. Unbelievers who habitually practice sin, wickedness, and rebellion against God and His ways are unsaved and will not inherit the kingdom (the earthly theocracy) as specified in Galatians 5:21 nor will they enter Heaven (Rev. 21:8). The unsaved will not only be banned from the earthly kingdom (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:10) but also banned from Heaven (Rev. 21:27).

Jesus taught the same thing in Matthew 13:41:

“The Son of man shall send forth his angels (*at the Second Coming*), and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity” (*the severing of the unsaved from the earth before the inauguration or commencement of the kingdom*).

Matthew 13:42 speaks of their judgment:

“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus spoke of this same timing and judgment in Matthew 13:30:

“Let both grow together until the harvest (*the saved and unsaved*): and in the time of harvest (*at the Second Coming*) I will say to the reapers (*the angels*), Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them (*a clear reference to future judgment of unbelievers in Hades*): but gather the wheat into my barn” (*the redeemed or saved saints will enter the Millennium*).

The uniform teaching of Scripture contrasts the saved from the unsaved at the inception of Christ's kingdom program and only the saved will enter the Millennial Kingdom.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 reveals the same truth:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate (*meaning ‘soft’ – the passive role or feminine side in male homosexuality*), nor abusers of themselves with mankind (*the active role or male side in male homosexuality*), Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The Grace Commentary dances around the clear meaning of these verses:

“Yet these believers will not inherit the kingdom of God because of their practice of unrighteousness. The word inherit (klēronomeō) is often used in the OT to express the wider meaning of entering into full possession of a family inheritance. In other words, inheriting the kingdom of God is not equivalent to entering God's kingdom. To inherit simply means to possess and it includes ruling with Christ (cf. 1 Cor 4:8; 2 Tim 2:12). Both the OT and NT illustrate the possibility that some believers may lose their inheritance (Gen 22:15–18; 27:38–40; 2 Tim 2:12; Heb 12:16–17). Therefore, Paul informs the Corinthians that they could renounce their inheritance privilege by their sinful lifestyles. They could live in the future kingdom but not possess it if they continued to live in their sins” (The Grace New Testament Commentary, pp. 729–730, Grace Evangelical Society).

This conclusion is an exegetical nightmare for various reasons.

First, no grace believer can lose his grace identity and inheritance in Christ which is eternal (1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 9:15). This means every child of God will also inherit the kingdom because they are “joint-heirs” with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Every child of God can claim Christ's promise: “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). This means that all the saints will experience the blessings of the kingdom and millennial reign.

Second, every believer by virtue of their overcoming position in Christ (Rev. 2:26; 3:20) will live in the future kingdom and possess the joys and reigning privileges of this Golden Age (Rev. 5:10; 1 Cor. 6:2). No saint will be left out.

Third, this means that *entering* the kingdom of God is equivalent to *inheriting* God's kingdom for all the saints are "heirs of the kingdom" (James 2:5) destined to enjoy its blessings and privileges as they reign with Christ (Rev. 19:6-20:1-6).

Fourth, the unrighteous presented in this context are portrayed as unbelievers.

Robert Gromacki comments in this way:

"In this passage, Paul affirmed twice that the unsaved would "not inherit the kingdom of God." This judgment is based both on the unbeliever's position (6:9a) and practice (6:10b). The inference is evident. Why should Christians, who are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7), submit themselves to those whose character and conduct will prevent them from entering into the kingdom? The term "unrighteous" is the same word translated "unjust" (6:1). It refers to the unjustified standing of the lost, although it also could include their sinful behavior. Regardless of his religious profession (cf. 5:11), a person whose life-style is habitually marked by any of these catalogued sins is not saved (cf. 1 John 3:6–10). A Christian is "deceived" if he thinks that there is no correlation between spiritual position and practice (James 2:14, 18)" (Gromacki, R. (2002). *Called to Be Saints: An Exposition of I Corinthians*. pp. 78–79. Kress Christian Publications).

The contrast in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is once again between the unsaved who are labeled as "the unrighteous" in their *position* and *practice* before God and the saved whose *position* and *practice* has been radically changed. The expression "such were some of you" indicates that their position (their way of acceptance before God) and practice (their way of life) were now different. Paul goes on to explain "**but ye are washed** (a permanent position of spiritual cleansing before God – the cleansing of regeneration – John 3:5; Titus 3:5), **but ye are sanctified** (a positional sanctification of being set apart from the world and made holy before God), **but ye are justified**" (a position of legal righteousness before God).

Paul is simply teaching that a believer's position in Christ (cleansing, sanctification, and justification or righteous) should result in a different way of life. He is saying, "You are not the unrighteous sinners that you used to be but are now washed,

sanctified, and justified believers whose lives are to reflect who and what you already are in Christ.”

This indicates that believers have been saved and delivered from the power and bondage of sin because of their positional deliverance in Christ through the agency of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (“and by the Spirit of our God” – 1 Cor. 6:11). Out of position (an unchanging standing before God) flows practice (a changed life before God). Because of their new position believers were expected to live differently than the unsaved due to the influence of grace upon their lives.

Tom Constable also comments on 1 Corinthians 6:

“Paul’s point in this whole section (vv. 1–11) was that genuine Christians should not continue in or return to the sinful practices that mark unbelievers. We should become what we are in our practice because of what Jesus Christ has done for us in our position. This appeal runs throughout the New Testament, and it underlies every exhortation to pursue godliness.”

A person’s position in Christ frees them from the way they used to live as a sinner who was continually and habitually bound and enslaved to sin (John 8:31-32, 36; Romans 6:1-14). The pattern of sinfulness in the lives of unsaved people serves as proof of their unbelief and lack of repentance (Gal. 5:21; Rev. 16:9, 11) whereas the transformation in the lives of those who are saved (regenerated) results in a new way of life (“such were some of you”).

Goerge Zeller speaks of the distinction between the saved and unsaved in this passage and context when stating: “When Paul speaks of the ‘unrighteous’ (unjust) in 1 Corinthians 6:9 he is not speaking of some carnal, unworthy, unpersevering members of the Body and Bride of Christ. No, Paul uses the term “unrighteous” (unjust) as a description of unsaved, unregenerate, lost people. This term “unjust” is clearly defined for us in the context of this chapter. In verse 1 Paul says, ‘Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?’ (1 Cor. 6:1).

“Paul clearly distinguishes two groups: 1) The unjust (the unsaved) and 2) the saints (the saved). These same two groups are seen in verses 9-11. In verse 9-10 we have the unrighteous (unjust) which are the unsaved. They will not inherit the kingdom. In verse 11 we have those who are justified and sanctified. These are the saints (the

saved) who will inherit the kingdom. There is no such thing as a saint or a saved person who will not inherit the kingdom, contrary to the teachings of Hodges and Dillow.”

Ephesians 5:3-6 gives a similar contrast between the saved and unsaved:

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

This is a similar reference that marks a distinction between the saved (“among you, as becometh saints”) and the unsaved (“the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience”) who are characterized by the pattern and habitual practice of sin and rebellion against God. They will not enter and participate in the kingdom’s blessings (“the kingdom of Christ and of God”). This is what Paul was teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Colossians 3:5-7 is another passage of Scripture that speaks of a distinction between the saved and unsaved: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience (*those who are unsaved and persist in their rebellion against God – Eph. 2:1-2*): In the which ye (*who are not believers*) also walked some time, when ye lived in them.”

We once again see the marked difference between the saved and unsaved when contrasting believers (“in the which ye”) versus unbelievers (“children of disobedience” as in Eph. 2:2) upon which God’s wrath falls. There is a stark contrast between the saved and unsaved in all these references. There is no third person (an unfaithful believer) being presented on these lists of sinners and saints. Paul’s purpose was to present the difference between the unsaved and saved and urge the believers to live and reflect their position in Christ.

Notice the same analogy between the two Bible passages. Colossians 3:7 says, “In the which ye also walked (*as a way of life, a pattern of disobedience*) some time, when ye lived in them” (*the sins of the past*). This is similar to what Paul taught when he stated: “And such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:10). In other words, through the amazing work of transforming grace these people no longer lived in constant rebellion against God. Because of their newfound grace position in Christ, they were able to see their lives changed because of the energizing work of God occurring within them (Phil. 2:13).

“Never the same!” That is what my college evangelism teacher shared with us one day in class. He did not mean he was perfect after his conversion but with God at work in his heart (Phil. 2:13) his life was never really the same after his conversion. The reason is because he was now indwelt by the Spirit of God and His life-changing and transforming work (2 Cor. 3:18).



Contrary to Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin, Paul is not creating a dichotomy or division in Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 between two classes of believers (the faithful and unfaithful, the good and the bad) and that only the faithful saints will “inherit” or rule with Christ in the Millenium. In other words, these texts do not say that “unfaithful Christians shall not inherit the privilege to rule with Christ in the kingdom of God.”

This is eisegesis or reading into these texts something that is not there. It is committing hermeneutical gymnastics. Paul is actually creating the familiar dichotomy between the saved and the unsaved and it’s the unsaved who do not inherit or enter the earthly kingdom while the saved will enter the earthly theocracy. No saved person will be left out of the kingdom and every saved person will have something to do in the kingdom (Rev. 5:10).

Ephesians 5:5 also conveys the same truth as Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 when it states: “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

Can any honest exegete of Scripture conclude that the people mentioned here are *saved or born-again* whoremongers, unclean people, covetous, and idolaters that

will enter the Millennial Kingdom but be banned from reigning during the kingdom while being locked up in a dark room where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Such is the exegetical nightmare that Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin create when ignoring the clear revelation of these texts.

To summarize, Christ presented the same contrasts between the saved and unsaved as Paul when speaking of His Second Coming and those who will enter the Millennium. The *sheep* are pictured as believers while the *goats* are pictured as unbelievers who will be damned forever in everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:31-46). This contrast between the saved and unsaved is also drawn in other kingdom entrance contexts where Jesus made a distinction between *wicked and faithful servants* (Matt. 24:44-51), *wise and foolish virgins* (Matt. 25:1-13), *profitable and unprofitable stewards* (Matt. 25:14-30), *tares and wheat* (Matt. 13:24-31), and *different types of marine life* which is further explained as the time when Christ will “sever the wicked from among the just” at His Second Coming and the beginning of the Millennium (Matt. 13:47- 50).

All of the kingdom passages are designed to teach a dichotomy between the saved and unsaved – not spiritual and unspiritual Christians. The prophetic scenes are all portraying the judgment of the unsaved. Therefore, the familiar dichotomy is once again drawn in Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 where two types of people (saved and unsaved) are being contrasted and only the saved will “inherit” or enter the earthly kingdom to experience the joy of reigning with Christ.

The kingdom itself is pictured as an “inheritance” that all saved people enter (Matt. 25:34) by virtue of the new birth (John 3:5) and which has been prepared as an “inheritance” for them before the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34). But unsaved people do not enter the kingdom (Matt. 25:46). The unsaved (not wicked and carnal believers as Hodges and others teach) are “thrust out” (Luke 13:38) and the door is “shut” (Matt. 25:10) to the earthly kingdom because of their unbelief which is evidenced in their rebellious living (Matt. 24:48-51; 25:26; Gal. 5:21 and 1 Cor. 6:10). However, the saved whose lives are evidenced by righteous living will enter the Millennium (Matt. 13:43).

Fire, Kingdom, Outer Darkness & Temporal Punishment

The interpretive nightmare continues. Other texts which are wrongly interpreted by Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin are those which are clearly referencing the

punishment of the unsaved. They must be reinterpreted to mean that saved people miss out on ruling with Christ during the kingdom. The scenes of judgment for the wicked (unsaved) are reinterpreted and reimagined to teach the banishment of believers in a dark hiding place throughout the 1,000 years. Yes, it is a nightmare!



I recall a time when one of my cousins woke up in the morning and claimed to have seen a wolf sitting in the corner of the bedroom. We were just boys and my cousin to this day claims there was wolf in the bedroom! Of course, the wolf was not there but the nightmare was scary. But so is the interpretive nightmare of Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin on the texts of Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28. When I read what these men say about these verses, I am reminded that there is a wolf in the corner of the bedroom. In other words, this is an interpretive dream of Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin which creates a prophetic nightmare scenario for God's saints.

Seriously, this is one of the strangest and most bizarre conclusions of this trio of authors. They claim that unfaithful Christians are locked up during the Millennial Kingdom in some kind of dark place of seclusion and punishment for not being more faithful in their Christian life. So much for free grace! As in the previous verses, these men wrongly interpret the judgment of God for the wicked (unbelievers) as pertaining to believers who are considered "wicked servants" (Matt. 25:26) and unwise virgins (Matt. 25:1-11) in the prophetic parabolic

teachings of the kingdom. Therefore, they must be excluded from inheriting the reigning privileges of the kingdom.

But once again, they twist the prophetic meaning of these texts which refer to unsaved people who are judged in the fires of Hades (Matt. 25:46) and relate them to believers who are somehow assigned to a place of disciplinary judgment during the 1,000 years. Their teaching on this subject does remind me of a Protestant Purgatory. But more than anything else it certainly does not reflect the grace relationship we have with Christ! In the “world to come” (Heb. 2:5; 6:5) there is the promise of blessing and bliss (Isaiah 11:4-10; 35:6; 55:11-13) – not jail time and banishment from Christ.

A series of prophetic texts are misinterpreted by Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin to keep these so-called *unfaithful believers* that are allegedly described elsewhere as wicked, whoremongers, homosexuals, murderers, drunkards, adulterers, and sorcerers (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10) from “inheriting” or ruling during the kingdom. In other words, its alleged that the believers (Christians) who keep practicing these acts of sinful disobedience against God must be disciplined during the Millennium. Therefore, the only way they can get rid of these alleged Christians is by banning them from ruling during the kingdom reign.

So, what do the authors do with these alleged unfaithful atheists, Satanists, homosexuals, and murderers who are actually Christians? They put them in some dark room where Christ can scold them, teach them a good lesson for being unfaithful, and make sure that for 1,000 years they cannot reign with Christ. If it sounds kooky and spooky, it’s because it is! This is an interpretive nightmare!



Here are the verses they grossly misrepresent.

Matthew 8:12

“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 22:12-13

“And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 24:51

“And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25:30

“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Luke 13:28

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out” (*removed from the kingdom at its formation or establishment*).

J. D. Faust interprets this place of “outer darkness” as a literal place where believers will be cast and confined somewhere outside the Millennial Kingdom while obedient servants are enjoying Christ’s presence in during the 1,000 years. Watchman Nee and Chuck Missler adopt the basic view that unfaithful believers will not enter the earthly kingdom. They will be in some kind of “kingdom suburb” that is outside the real earthly kingdom because of their lack of faithfulness. The teachers who embrace banishment from the kingdom conclude that Christians will face God’s punishment, condemnation, or retribution for their unconfessed sins and unfaithful living in the afterlife.

Others like Charles Stanley view the “outer darkness” as a non-literal metaphorical darkness and even the language of weeping and gnashing of teeth are metaphorical in nature.

Charles Stanley writes:

“The ‘outer darkness’ represents not so much an actual place as it does a sphere of influence and privilege. It is not a geographical place in the kingdom where certain men and women are consigned to stay. It is simply a figure of speech describing

their low rank or status in God's kingdom" (*Charles Stanley, Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure? Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1990, 126-127*).

Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin and other popular men such as Tony Evans would have us believe that those who experience the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" are actually believers who enter the kingdom, but they are placed in some kind of dark hole or holding tank where they cannot rule during the Millennium. Of course, this is an exegetical nightmare that does not reflect our grace relationship with Christ in the afterlife (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1). The whole idea of judgment, condemnation, retribution, or temporal punishments for God's saints in the next life defies the nature of grace and the promise of no condemnation (John 3:18, 36) or future wrath and punishment for our sins (Heb. 8:12).

Any chastisement or chastening for our sins occurs in this life (Heb. 12:6-8) but in the "world to come" (Heb. 6:5), when the Church has already been glorified and is like Christ (Rom. 8:17, 30), there will be no chastening, retribution, and punishment for the believer's sins in some kind of place of outer darkness that resembles Hell and God's judgment. How defenders of free grace and forgiveness could arrive at this conclusion is paradoxical. How can the justification of free grace (Rom. 3:24) and the "no condemnation" for a person's sins (Rom. 8:1) result in being punished for one's sins in a place of outer darkness for 1,000 years!

This is utterly preposterous! To talk about free grace out of one side of the mouth and then out of the other side condemn believers to some kind of black hole for 1,000 years where they are banned from seeing Christ, reigning with Christ, and enjoying the afterlife is nothing more than grace gone amok! These conclusions are beyond the pale, they are unacceptable and express the outer limits of improper theological thinking. The concept of glorified believers suffering punishment for their sins and being banished from blessings of the kingdom reign are not only doctrinally unsound but exegetically wrong when reflecting upon the meaning of the verses that teach "outer darkness."

You will notice that the people mentioned in the above verses do not get into the kingdom while it is being formed. They will not remain part of the earthly theocracy. They are "thrust out" (Lk. 13:28) or removed from the kingdom at its inception and this is because they are unbelievers who will not be allowed to enter the earthly Messianic Age but instead be judged in Hades (Matt. 7:21-23; Matt.

25:31-46). Hodges, Dillow and Wilkin teach that the one being bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness (Matt. 22:13) represents the saved or people who are regenerated.

George Zeller makes a valid point:

“If the Son has made believers free indeed (John 8:36), how could they someday be bound hand and foot? If they are partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12), how could they be cast into outer darkness?”

Then too, in every case, there is no mention of a third person (an unfaithful Christian who won't reign with Christ). For instance, if one person is cast into a “furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:42,49-50) which refers to judgment as Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin agree, then this leaves only one other person in the verses and setting which is the believer who sits down with Abraham, and who is identified as being just, wheat, wearing a wedding garment, and as one of Christ's sheep. There is no room for a third party (a faithless or hypocrite believer).

In other references the authors suggest there is a distinction made between the faithful and unfaithful believer but then where is the person (the unbeliever) who is cast into the furnace of fire? You cannot have it both ways. These are inconsistent interpretations of the same passages with the same backgrounds. All these texts make a clear distinction between the saved and unsaved with the appropriate descriptive names given to believers (the righteous, sheep) and unbelievers (unprofitable servant, hypocrites, goats).

Dillow says that the hypocrite in Luke 13:15 represents a regenerate person. However, the word "hypocrite" in the kingdom contexts it is used of unsaved people, mostly unsaved religious scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 6:2, 5, 6:16; 7:5; 15:7; 16:3; 22:19; 23:13-15, 23, 35, 27, 20; 24:51). Why in Matthew 24:51 is the man appointed his portion with the unsaved hypocrites? It's because he is an unsaved hypocrite like the rest of the hypocrites Jesus referenced. The expression "cut him asunder" (Matt. 25:41) does not refer to the regret, sorrow, and remorse of a believer but is a word of severe judgment brought against an unbeliever.

Dillow also pushes his “hobby horse” narrative that the person not wearing a wedding garment in the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14) is actually a believer who does not rule during the Millennium whereas the one wearing a

wedding garment is the faithful believer. Again, if this were the case, then where is the unbeliever as in the other passages? Furthermore, as mentioned previously, the entire Millennial Kingdom is presented as a joyous banquet that all believers will enter in contrast to those who are unbelievers because they are not wearing the garment of God's imputed righteousness (Isa. 61:10; Matt. 5:2; Rom. 4:5-6; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The real exegetical and interpretive nightmare of Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin begins when they teach how unfaithful believers are confined to a dark place for 1,000 years (the duration of the Millennium). Essentially, they are hidden in some kind of dark corner of the kingdom and are not permitted to enjoy the blessings of the Millennium which include reigning with Christ. Since all the texts should be interpreted literally regarding outer darkness and the gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28), the authors must conclude that there is a literal place where unfaithful, hypocritical, non-overcoming saints will be confined during the Millennial Kingdom.

Joseph Dillow, in his book *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, writes the following: "The phrase 'wailing and gnashing of teeth' is found seven times in the New Testament. Even though it is used on three occasions of the experience of the unregenerate in hell (Matthew 13:42, 50; Luke 13:28), it is also used on four occasions of the regenerate in the kingdom (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30--these are marked in red above). The fact that the nonbeliever can experience profound regret in hell in no way implies that the true Christian cannot experience profound regret in the kingdom (there will be no remorse in heaven)...It seems that these verses adequately explain the experience of profound regret for the unfaithful Christian which Matthew calls 'wailing and gnashing of teeth' (p. 351)."

Zane Hodges, in his book *Grace in Eclipse*, also agrees with this rogue interpretation: "Most Christian readers identify the 'outer darkness' as a description of hell. They would be surprised to learn that the Greek phrase employed here is used only three times, all in Matthew (8:12; 22:13; 25:30--these passages are highlighted above), and nowhere else in the New Testament....There is no suggestion here of punishment or torment. The presence of remorse, in the form of weeping and gnashing of teeth, does not in any way require this inference" (p.89).

It's interesting that Dillow acknowledges that the phrase "wailing (*weeping*) and gnashing of teeth" is used on three occasions of the experience of unsaved people in Hell (Matt. 13:42,50; Luke 13:28) but then insists that four other places where this same expression appears, it is used of genuine believers who have entered the kingdom but are not worthy of reigning. According to Dillow, the "wailing" is understood as a metaphor for mourning. However, dividing the meaning and understanding of these references is not sound hermeneutics. The principle of first mention and the repeated mention of judgment within all of these prophetic End Time contexts provide the exegete with the evidence he needs to conclude that all the references are pointing to the same thing: unbelievers, judgment, and exclusion from the kingdom. These unsaved people are not filled with remorse but terrified screaming and wailing for the judgment that has befallen them.

Dillow and Hodges confuse the meaning of Matthew 8:11-12:

"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Both Hodges and Dillow teach that these children or sons of the kingdom refer regenerate people who will be excluded from the earthly banquet in the kingdom and not be permitted to reign with Christ. Dillow teaches that these unbelievers will experience sorrow and remorse and great regret for their unfaithfulness which was the cause of their exclusion. They base their conclusions on several things.

1. Believers are identified as children of the kingdom.

Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin conclude that the reference to "children of the kingdom" (Matt. 8:12) would indicate their regeneration or salvation. But this is a false assessment. The Israelites were viewed as the sons of the kingdom by virtue of their Jewish heritage and covenant promises given to them by God. The Jews saw themselves as the patriarchs' descendants and therefore as children of the kingdom. They thought that they had a right to enter the Messianic Kingdom because of their ancestor's righteousness.

Jesus taught in Matthew 3:9-10:

“And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

John 8:33 is another example of the Jewish way of thinking:

“They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?”

The Jewish people because of their covenants and association with Abraham believed they were “children of the kingdom” but this was by name only. There had to be the expression of faith in the Messiah to become a true child of the kingdom. “The good seed are the children of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:38).

Paul declares in Romans 2:28-29:

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.”

In other words, only those Jews who express faith in Christ were considered to be regenerate and prepared to enter the earthly kingdom. Their covenant relationship and heritage as sons of the kingdom do not make the Jews true children of God (John 1:11-12).

Stanley Toussaint summarizes what Jesus meant by children of the kingdom:

"But here the unbelieving sons of the kingdom, who are the Jews and the natural heirs, are prophesied as being cast out, while believing Gentiles take part in it. The Lord indicates that as a result of their faith Gentiles will have a definite part in the coming kingdom. Entrance into the kingdom for Jew and Gentile is contingent upon the spiritual basis of faith in Jesus the Messiah" (*Stanley D. Toussaint (Behold the King: A Study of Matthew, p. 124)*).

The “children of the kingdom” refers to the Jewish people who simply assumed their inclusion in the Messianic Age. Jesus reminds his Jewish listeners that just as the Gentile’s racial identity was no automatic barrier to the kingdom, their racial

identity as Jews was no guarantee of entrance into the kingdom. However, the idea that Gentiles would take their place in the coming kingdom was unthinkable to the Jews because of the pride of their heritage. The end result is that the unsaved Jews who prided themselves in being “children of the kingdom” would be “thrust out” (Luke 13:28) or removed from the kingdom at its establishment and not be allowed to enter the earthly theocracy. No unsaved Jew or Gentile will enter the earthly kingdom (Matt. 7:13-14; John 3:5; Matt. 25:46).

Of course, in contrast to the “tares” (the unsaved) are the “wheat” (Matt. 13:29-30) which are later identified as “the good seed are the children of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:38), a reference to the saved, those who have embraced Christ as Savior during the Tribulation Period and therefore are prepared to enter the earthly kingdom at the Second Coming. Jesus taught there are only two types of people He will meet at His Second Coming: “the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one” (Matt. 13:38). And yet, Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin must essentially force a third group of people among the tares and wheat to make their point of only the faithful inheriting ruling privileges during the kingdom.

In addition, only sheep and goats are pictured as facing Christ at the Second Coming. The goats are clearly a reference to the unsaved who are judged (Matt. 25:46) so this must mean there are two types of sheep (the faithful versus unfaithful). Of course, no such group appears in any of these Second Coming texts.

The Matthew 13, 24, and 25 passages contradict the theories of Hodges, Wilkin and Dillow. Only two groups are mentioned in Matthew 13:41-43, Matthew 24:45-51, Matthew 25:14-30, and Matthew 25:31-46. There is no mention of a third group of unrighteous believers who fail to inherit the kingdom, which is what Hodges, Wilkin and Dillow teach based on other texts such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21.

2. Believers will experience remorse and be cast into darkness.

Since Hodges and Dillow interpret the “children of the kingdom” as genuine believers, they then surmise that this same group of saved people will be “cast out into outer darkness” where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” and prevent them (a certain unfaithful class of saints) from sharing in the reign of Jesus Christ. In other words, many believers will be kept from ruling with Christ during

the kingdom and to be sure about this they are going to be consigned to some place of outer darkness. Dillow taking the position that there will be remorse and heartache for 1,000 years as a group of God's saints pay the price for not being a faithful servant.

According to Dillow, Christ will essentially say, "No reigning for the naughty little boys and girls. Go sit in the corner of this dark room for 1,000 years because you have been an unfaithful non-overcomer. Maybe after a millennium you will have learned your lesson." If this doesn't sound like grace, it's because it's not grace! Those who embrace this false interpretive nightmare of these Bible verses should



not identify themselves as promoting "free grace." If for 1,000 years Christ banishes certain believers who are deemed unfaithful in a dark place to bring retribution against them for not being an overcomer, then grace is no more grace!

Hodges and Wilkin seem to teach that this sorrow and remorse will take place at the Judgment Seat of Christ and will not last very long. Wilkin, in correspondence with my friend George Zeller, said, "neither Hodges nor I believe that believers will be grieved beyond the bema." Of course, it's not what these men believe but what God's Word teaches. The Bible never speaks of believers being "cast" to the Judgment Seat of Christ but appearing before the Judgment Seat (2 Cor. 5:10). Nor does it teach that the grief associated with loss of reward will result in banishment from reigning with King Jesus since all believers will receive reward and reign with Christ (Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 6:2).

The kingdom passages have no relation to sorrow or remorse that might be experienced at the Judgment Seat of Christ since this event occurs seven years earlier following the Rapture. How can being cast into a dark place during the Millennium which is connected with "wailing" (weeping) have anything to do with the Bema Seat? This is a totally separate event. One of the interpretive errors of Wilkin and others is backreading into the gospel accounts prophetic verses dealing with Church truth, such as the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is only taught in the epistles.

The Judgment Seat of Christ which occurs at the Rapture is an event totally separate from the Judgment of the Living Nations at the Second Coming (Matthew 24-25). Failing to separate these two events and mixing the Jews with the Church with the same event in the kingdom passages creates dispensational confusion. In addition, if the weeping relates to the Judgment Seat of Christ for Church saints, then what about the darkness? Apparently Hodges and Wilkin still believe that believers will be kept from reigning with Christ during the kingdom by placing them in some imaginary disciplinary place allotted for unfaithful saints who did not meet the approval of the King.

Dillow seems to teach that the weeping and gnashing of teeth will take place in the kingdom: "The phrase 'wailing and gnashing of teeth' is found seven times in the N.T. Even though it is used on three occasions of the experience of the unregenerate in hell, it is also used on four occasions of the regenerate in the kingdom...The fact that the nonbeliever can experience profound regret in hell in no way implies that the true Christian cannot experience profound regret in the kingdom" (*Joseph Dillow, The Reign of the Servant Kings, p. 351*).

At the same time, Dillow teaches elsewhere that the duration of remorse in the kingdom will not be for long when he states: "The experience of remorse need not last that long. We suspect that the duration of this period of self-examination is equal to the duration of the [millennial] banquet" (p. 532).

To summarize, the authors conclude that there can be some regrets at the Judgment Seat of Christ which after dwelling in the Father's House for seven years (John 14:1-3) will somehow be passed on in their experience during the Millennial Kingdom (Dillow's view). However, they are adamant that every unfaithful believer will end up in some dark hole for 1,000 years during the Millennium, essentially being punished for not being a faithful servant of the Lord, be excluded from the joys associated with kingdom living, which include not being able to reign with Christ (Hodges, Dillow, Wilkin).

Of course, these are fluke interpretations of the Biblical texts. The notion that these people are believers being judged in a place of darkness for being unfaithful is an erroneous conclusion which is forced upon these texts to try and extrapolate the meaning that some saints will be excluded from reigning with Christ. But there is a united witness in all these texts that the unsaved Jews and Gentiles who survive

the Tribulation Period, who do not express faith in Messiah to be their Savior, will face the judgment of Hades at the Second Coming of Christ.



The noun “weeping” (klauthmos - lamenting, crying, shrieking, bitter crying) in the stated passages does not connote sorrow or disappointment in a believer’s life but is related to the dread and fear of God’s wrath being meted out upon the unregenerate. The “weeping” is associated with the judgment of unbelievers who

survive the Tribulation Period. At the Second Coming of Christ the unsaved will be cast into Hades which is a place of temporary punishment until they face their final judgment in the Lake of Fire or Gehenna (“these shall go away into everlasting punishment” - Matt. 25:46). The definite articles with “weeping” and “gnashing” emphasize the horror of the scene: “the weeping and the gnashing.” Weeping suggests suffering and gnashing of teeth despair.

William Hendricksen writes:

“The tears of which Jesus speaks here in Matthew 8:12 are those of inconsolable, never-ending wretchedness, and utter, everlasting hopelessness. The accompanying grinding or gnashing of teeth (cf. 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28) denotes excruciating pain and frenzied anger. This grinding of teeth, too, will never come to an end or cease.”

The idea of being "cast" into judgment is a common word that is used for being cast or thrown into Hades or into the Lake of Fire (Matt. 5:29; 5:30; 13:42; 13:50; 18:8; 18:9; Mk. 9:45; 9:47; Rev. 19:20; 20:10; 20:14; 20:15). It’s used in prophetic imagery as an expression of God’s wrath and judgment.



Matthew 13:42

“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 13:50

“And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25:30

“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The judgment scene is the same whenever Jesus repeats the phrases “weeping and gnashing of teeth” and being cast into “outer darkness” even if the word “fire” does not appear in some of the related texts (Matt. 8:12. 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). This is because the setting and context is always the same. It points to the Second Coming and the judgment of lost sinners who will not escape the wrath of the returning King (Jesus Christ).

To try and change the meaning of the same texts is another case of sloppy exegesis. When comparing Scripture with Scripture you cannot arrive at a different conclusion regarding these End Time judgment scenes. They are the same scenes related to the Second Coming and the judgment of the unsaved earth dwellers versus the entrance of the saved into the kingdom.

The concept of blackness is also part of God’s judgment program for lost sinners who reject the saving grace of God.

2 Peter 2:17

“These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.”

Jude 1:13

“Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”

To interpret the darkness as a place for unbelievers in the afterlife is an exegetical nightmare. Darkness in the next life always relates to God’s judgment upon the wicked and lost – not the disciplinary judgment upon the saints for failing to overcome in their present lives.

The “gnashing of teeth” (brygmos - grinding of teeth) is used to denote extreme anguish and the utter despair of the lost consigned to eternal punishment. The idea is that the unsaved will grind or clench their teeth because of the pain and agonies they are experiencing in judgment. “I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24). Others suggest that people will grind or clench their teeth in anger and resentment against God. Probably both will be true during the eternal ages as unsaved people suffer the righteous judgment of God for their sins.



In Matthew 3:12 Jesus preached judgment to the Pharisees and Sadducees: “Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

In Matthew 24-25 the same Second Coming scene portrays judgment of the surviving unsaved Jewish people (Matthew 24) and Gentiles (Matthew 25) of the Tribulation Period who will be exposed as unbelievers by the returning King. The prophetic scene depicts the same scene of Christ’s Second Coming to planet earth and the fiery judgment that awaits unbelievers who survive the Tribulation Period.

“Matthew 25:30

“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25:46

“And these (*the goats*) shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous (*the sheep*) into life eternal.”

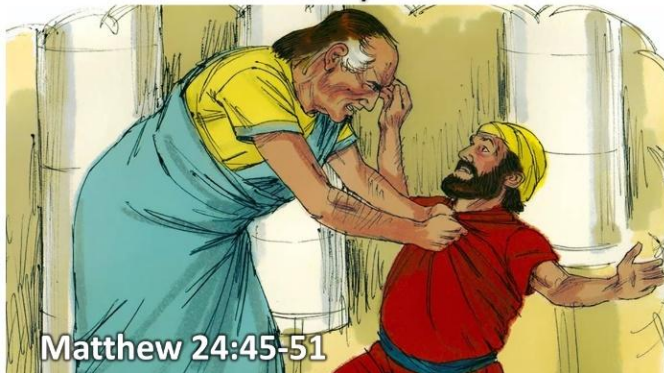


When interpreting the Second Coming contexts naturally, letting these texts speak for themselves, the honest expositor will arrive at the conclusion that they are pointing to the same judgment of the wicked or unsaved. They do not point to a 1,000-year confinement of believers in a black place for the duration of the Millennium. You cannot find this meaning in these texts any more than you can find a needle in a haystack! It is unsound to change the meaning of these texts which relate to the judgment of the unsaved (the wicked

and unrighteous) and reinterpret them to mean temporal punishment for the saved (the unfaithful and non-overcomers).

There are clear contrasts being made between the saved and unsaved in the Second Coming contexts and texts. The “faithful” and “wise” servant versus the “evil” or wicked servant (Matt. 24:45-51). The “wise” versus “foolish” virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). The “faithful” steward versus the “wicked and slothful (*lazy*) servant” (Matt. 25:14-30). The “sheep” or “righteous” versus the goats who are unrighteous (Matt. 25:37, 46). Matthew 24-25 give various illustrations to mark the difference between the saved and unsaved.

Faithful and Wise Servant
versus
Evil and Lazy Servant



Wise Virgins With Oil
versus
Unwise Virgins Without Oil



Good and Faithful Steward
versus
Wicked, Lazy, Unprofitable Steward



To try and create a third group of unfaithful believers out of only two descriptions of people is erroneous. There are only two groups mentioned in the kingdom parables, and they are the saved and the unsaved with their accompanying descriptive titles (wheat and tares, the righteous and the unrighteous, wise and unwise virgins, faithful and evil servants, good and wicked stewards, sheep and goats. etc.). There is no mention of an unfaithful Christian in any of these texts. You cannot find it unless you are wearing “Grace Evangelical Society” interpretive eyeglasses and add this meaning to the text which is what Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin do.

Those who embrace the teaching that not all believers will enter the earthly kingdom base their findings on the parables and the “wicked servants” that Jesus referenced throughout His kingdom parables. If one is called a “servant” many assume that the individual mentioned must automatically be a believer. This is not the case. When studying the parables we must remember that there is one primary teaching which is being presented. We should not get lost in all the minute details.

In addition, we should we read events such as the Judgment Seat of Christ which is strictly for Church Age saints (2 Cor. 5:10) back into the kingdom parables for these parables have nothing to do with event of the Bema and time the Church receives her rewards. This event (the examination of Church Age saints) will occur seven years prior to the Second Coming and establishment of the Millennium. For this reason, Church saints are not envisioned in the Second Coming texts of the gospel records for they are specifically dealing with God’s judgment and evaluation of the surviving Jews and Gentiles of the Tribulation Period and who will enter the kingdom (Matt. 24-25). The Judgment Seat of Christ should not be mixed with the Judgment of the Living (surviving) nations of the Tribulation Period. The people, timing, and results are different.

Again, I have noticed that some who are part of Grace Evangelical Society have a tendency to place Church truth in the context of Kingdom truth. But inserting and reading Church teaching back into kingdom contexts breeds confusion. Equating certain events which are only for the Church to events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ to earth is a dispensational breach and mixes Church truth with kingdom truth.

The Church Age saints do not appear in these judgment scenes which relate only to surviving Tribulation saints, nor do they look back to the Judgment Seat of Christ

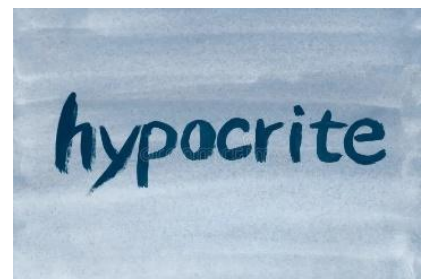
where according to the authors the Church saints have allegedly been censored and excluded from reigning during the kingdom. All of this is make-believe” interpretation for it mixes Church saints with Tribulation saints, Church truth with kingdom truth, turns nonbelievers into believers, and condemns and confines God’s true saints to 1,000 years of darkness.

One thing is certain. God does not identify His own people as being wicked (Matt. 13:49) nor does He compare them to wicked servants anywhere in the Bible. Where does the Bible actually talk about “wicked believers?” No one has ever showed me this exact terminology (“wicked Christians” or “wicked believers”) in the Bible. The Bible talks about a “wicked and slothful servant” (Matt. 25:26; Luke 19:22), “evil servant” (Matt. 24:48), and “unprofitable servant” (Matt. 25:30) in the parabolic teachings of Christ to make a contrast between the saved and the unsaved – the true and the false. However, I have never found any reference to a wicked and evil believer. This is not Scriptural language.

I understand that Christians can be carnal (1 Cor. 3:3) and struggle with the flesh (Rom. 7) but the term “wicked” is assigned to the unsaved who live out their entire lives in total rebellion against God and abandonment from His purposes and ways (“wicked men: for all men have not faith” - 2 Thess. 3:2). For the believer this type of wickedness is past (Col. 1:21; 2 Pet. 2:7). Only nonbelievers are termed as being wicked and of the “wicked one” (1 John 3:12). The term “wicked” is repeatedly assigned to the unsaved in the Bible.

In the kingdom passages “wicked servants” are clearly identified as unsaved people for they will go into “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46) – not experience everlasting loss of reward and reigning privilege during the Millennial Kingdom. The unsaved in the kingdom contexts are pictured as “tares among the wheat” (Matt. 13:24-30) – not wicked believers among righteous believers. The “tares” and “wicked servants” in these parables are burned in a furnace of fire which Jesus clearly reveals as a time of eschatological judgment at His Second Coming (Matt. 3:12; 13:30, 42).

As previously mentioned, the term “hypocrite” in the gospel records is associated with the unsaved people who were basically religious but who would not escape the damnation of Hell (Matt. 6:2, 5, 6:16; 7:5;



15:7; 16:3; 22:19; 23:13-15, 23, 35, 27, 20; 24:51). The term in the gospel records and apocalyptic contexts is never associated with believers.

To misconstrue these texts as “wicked believers” and “hypocrite believers” whose reward is being lost at the Judgment Seat of Christ and who miss reigning in the Millennial as a result of being confined in a disciplinary place of “outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) is a case of severe eisegesis and interpretive license. The same people who are cast into “outer darkness” will also experience “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46) which in Biblical terminology always refers to an expression of God’s wrath upon the unsaved.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 describes the judgment of Christ’s Second Coming: “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

The Second Coming will result in the judgment of the unsaved hypocrites, those who do not know God or possess a saving relationship with Him, who have not obeyed the Gospel message by refusing to believe on Jesus Christ.


$$1 + 1 = 2$$

I do not want to sound like a broken record or be redundant, but there are only two groups of people represented in the parables and the epistles in relation to entrance and ruling in the kingdom. There are not three groups: the unbelievers, believers, and the less faithful believers. It is not the good sheep, the bad sheep, and the bad goats. It is not good wheat, bad wheat, and bad tares. It is not good soil, better soil, and bad soil. It’s not righteous, less righteous, and unrighteous. Unfaithful and non-overcoming Christians is a third category invented by Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin which is not found anywhere in the parabolic teachings of the Second Coming and kingdom parables, nor is it found in the teachings of the epistles. These men need to catch up on their arithmetic!

A chart on the next page reveals the clear dichotomy and contrast between the saved and unsaved in the Second Coming and kingdom contexts.

Only Two Groups (Saved and Unsaved) Appear in the Second Coming & Kingdom Contexts

- ➔ **Wheat vs. Chaff (Matt. 3:12)**
- ➔ **Productive Soil vs. Unproductive Soil (Matt. 13:1-9)**
- ➔ **Wheat vs. Tares (Matt. 13:24-30)**
- ➔ **Those That Offend and Do Iniquity vs. the Righteous (Matt. 13:41-43)**
- ➔ **Gather the Good into Vessels, but Cast the Bad Away (Matt. 13:48)**
- ➔ **Sever the Wicked from Among the Just (Matt. 13:49)**
- ➔ **Faithful vs. Wise Servant (Matt. 24:45-51)**
- ➔ **Wise vs. Unwise Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13)**
- ➔ **Good & Faithful vs. Wicked, Lazy, Unprofitable Steward (Matt. 25:14-30)**
- ➔ **Sheep vs. Goats - the Hypocrites (Matt. 25:31-46)**
- ➔ **They Which DO and They Which ARE Christ's (Gal. 5:19-24)**
- ➔ **The Righteous and Unrighteous ("such were some of you" 1 Cor. 6:9-10)**

The parables of Matthew 13, among other kingdom-related texts and parables (Matt. 7:13-23 24-25) are always designed to demonstrate the distinction between the true and false, the real and counterfeit, the saved and unsaved, or believers and nonbelievers. This is the intent of Jesus' parabolic teaching which looks back to what He taught earlier in



Matthew 3:12. With scathing and terrifying words Jesus described the judgment upon the unsaved: "Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The "parable of the soils" which is found earlier in Matthew 13 is designed to make the same distinction among the saved and lost or the true and counterfeit. This is evident because only one of the people represented in the parable of the soils

would actually bear fruit that was genuine and which would continue to manifest itself.

The fact that the first person is described as hardened or trampled down soil pictures Satan's victory in keeping this person's heart hardened and insensitive to the presentation of the truth of salvation (Matt. 13:19). As a result, no fruit is seen in their person's life. None.

The second person is said to possess "no root" (Matt. 13:21) which is a clear sign that this person lacked genuine repentance and is therefore a counterfeit. Where there is no *root* there can no true *fruit* which is the sign of regenerating life ("fruits worthy of repentance" - Luke 3:8).

The same is true regarding the third person who is overcome by worldliness and "becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22), bearing no genuine or lasting fruit, which is the sign of spiritual deadness and a lost condition before God (John 15:1-2; Eph. 2:1-2). This person did not repent of his sins and therefore went back into the same unregenerate lifestyle (2 Pet. 3:19-21) bearing no genuine and lasting fruit. This marked him as a counterfeit and not a genuine believer.



It can be observed that only the last individual which is pictured as "good ground" is said to bear fruit (transformation of living) that was genuine and lasting. The fruit becomes evidence of this person's salvation and regenerate life ("which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" -

Matt. 13:23). Fruitfulness is the sign of regenerating life - not the absence of fruit (James 2:20, 26) or the opposite of fruitful and godly living (Matt. 7:16, 20).

Only one of the four soil types produces lasting fruit which is the sign of regeneration and spiritual life (Eph. 2:10; John 15:1-5) and failure to produce fruit is the tell-tale sign that there is an absence of spiritual life (Matt. 7:15-20; John 15:6; 2 Cor. 13:5). In summary, all the parables of Matthew 13 are designed to teach the danger of false profession, the distinction between the true and false, separating true believers from the counterfeits (1 John 2:19).

The kingdom parables provide a united testimony of the same scene of judgment at the Second Coming. Unbelievers (the counterfeit) are being cast into Hades to be judged by the King. There is no mention of a third group of alleged “wicked believers” or “hypocrite believers” who have failed to follow Christ properly and who will not reign during the Millennium. Again, believers are spanked and disciplined in this life (Heb. 12:6) – not the next life.

This means the judgment scenes that surround the Second Coming of Christ to earth which mention fire and outer darkness (Matt. 3:12; 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) are not referencing some kind of temporal punishment and banishment of believers from the Millennium (the Protestant Purgatory) which lasts for 1,000 years. As we have already confirmed, the Bible uses the same imagery of darkness and fire everywhere to indicate judgment upon the lost (2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13; Rev. 20:10, 14-15; 21:8).

Dillow speaks of “the profound regret the carnal Christian will feel at the Judgment Seat of Christ when he faces rebuke and exclusion from the privilege of reigning with Christ in the fulfillment of human destiny.”

This is certainly an unbiblical conclusion in every way.

First, the Judgment Seat of Christ is not a place of *condemnation* but *commendation* for the life that we have lived which is honorable to God.

Second, the “wood, hay, and stubble” (1 Cor. 3:12) will be seen as worthless and end up as loss of reward but the primary emphasis is not placed on the *worthless* but the *worthy* works which will result in reward (1 Cor. 3:14). To think that we will be hounded and rebuked at the Bema and then seven years later, after dwelling in God’s heavenly city, be incarcerated for 1,000 years during the Millennial Kingdom is an affront (offense) on the free grace of no condemnation promised by Jesus (John 3:18). The Bible says that in the afterlife “their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13) which is true of all the saints who die and enter the presence of the Lord. There is no mention of punishment in the next life for not having enough works, enough commitment, enough faithfulness, enough victory, etc.?

Third, if grace is freely received with the promise of forgiveness, no condemnation, and punishment for every Gospel believer (Rom. 8:1, 38-39), then how can Hodges,

Dillow, and Wilkin conclude that there will be rebuke, harassment, and fear at the Judgment Seat of Christ over one's carnality and unconfessed sins, which will then translate into judicial judgment and banishment from the kingdom reign of Christ for 1,000 years, as unfaithful, non-overcoming Christians are cast into some kind of expanse of eerie darkness where there will weeping and gnashing of teeth.



This is not the picture that Scripture reveals of our grace relationship with Christ (Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 5:12). Hebrews 10:17 says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" which means we will not be harassed, disciplined, and sentenced to a place of dread and darkness

because of our sins. Anybody who comes to these antibiblical conclusions has removed grace from their theology. Saved by grace but then condemned for our sins in outer darkness and blackness for 1,000 years? Not happening!

This kind of punishment for Christians in the afterlife is totally incompatible with grace. Jesus will not say at the Bema, "You unfaithful Christian sinners, you have not lived a life that deserves any reward. Depart from me ye non-overcomers into the darkness (abyss) for 1,000 years, take your stripes and learn the hard lesson of not being faithful to Me." Let's face it. This is not grace and forgiveness. It is straight out of the book of condemnation. When we are saved by grace, God throws away the key to judgment and we will never answer for our sins again!

According to Hodges, Dillow, and Wilking a dichotomy is created between faithful and unfaithful Christians in the kingdom parables and Second Coming contexts that deal exclusively with the judgment of the lost and entrance of the saved into the Millennium where they will rule and reign with Christ. It is absolutely preposterous to conclude that the uniform witness of the fiery and dark judgment scenes associated with the Second Coming of Christ to earth can in any way reference a judgment upon unfaithful Church Age saints and their banishment from the blessing of reigning with Christ during the Millennium. These are very strange, unusual, and unsound conclusions that occur outside the bounds of normal, dispensational, and prophetic interpretation of Scripture.

Take the advice of Harry Ironside who said:
“If it’s new it not true; and if it’s true it’s not new.”

If unfaithful or uncommitted stewards are not allowed to reign with Christ, then how much lack of commitment does it take to miss out on the kingdom blessings and the privilege to reign with Christ? What degree of unfaithfulness causes one to miss the blessings of the kingdom? Is it 20, 50, or 70%? Who could ever know if they have done enough to be worthy of ruling with Christ? The Bible is very clear on one matter.



All the blood-bought and redeemed saints will rule with Christ in the Millennium since every believer in Heaven anticipates this future time of ruling by singing: **“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood (*this includes all the saints*) out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us (*all the redeemed saints*) unto our God kings and priests: and we (*all the redeemed saints*) shall reign on the earth”** (Rev. 5:9-10). This is God’s promise and the glorious prospect for all the redeemed saints – not just a select few.

Revelation 19:11-16 pictures all the redeemed saints returning with the King as victors to rule and reign with Him on earth. “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Rev. 19:14). Not one saint was returning to be cast into some kind of make-believe place of darkness during the kingdom. They were turning to reign with Christ. What a day of victory it will be for all saints!

Let me share some fake news with you as we finish this study. But first the real news! The wicked and godless are going to experience punishment and banishment from Jesus Christ in the next life. These expressions are always associated with

unbelievers (Matt. 13:42; 13:50; 25:46; Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8). Thank God this is not the case for His beloved and blood-bought saints since they are given the promise of *no condemnation* and *no separation* from Christ in the afterlife (John 3:18, 36; Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21).

Now the fake news. It's a very real possibility that we might not meet the standards Christ gave to the overcomers (Rev. 2-3). There is a glaring probability that we could very easily come up short and not be the kind of overcomer Jesus wants us to be. As a result, we are going to be reprimanded, ridiculed, and punished at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Then for 1,000 years during Millennium we will be confined to some dark and eerie place where we cannot reign with Christ, be with Christ, and enjoy the kingdom blessings. This is fake news!



The promise is that every Gospel believer by virtue of his grace position in Christ will always have the security and continued access to the heavenly city (“and he shall go no more out” – Rev. 3:12). This means no believer will be banned from his eternal heavenly destiny. He will not be cast into some dark hole and be confined there for 1,000 years. This is descriptive of the place where Satan is bound for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3) – not God’s saints! As previously mentioned, to teach that all believers will enter the *Father’s House* (John 14:1-3) but not the *Father’s kingdom* (Matt. 25:34) as Faust suggests is a theological contradiction since both enter on the basis of grace and the New Birth (John 3:5; John 14:6).

Also, to conclude that all believers will enter the kingdom but all will not rule during the Millennium as Hodges, Dillow, and Wilkin teach does not reflect the believers “joint-heir” grace relationship with Christ (Rom. 8:17), the blessed *promise* that we are all overcomers in Christ (1 John 5:5), and that all Church Age saints will reign with Christ (Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10). However, we have seen that the saint’s ruling privileges will be in *proportion* to how they have responded to the sanctifying work of grace occurring in their lives (Rom. 6:1-15; 1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 2:13; 1 John 3:9-10) and will be based upon the rewards they will receive for their faithfulness and services rendered unto God (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12).

Of course, to think that a group of Church Age saints could live in the heavenly city for hundreds of years after their death, based upon their overcoming grace position in Christ (Rev. 2:7; 3:12), and then be banned from the blessings of the earthly kingdom which include ruling with Christ for 1,000 years is a gross misrepresentation of Biblical texts. It certainly is not a grace position and teaching. Furthermore, this fabricated conclusion creates doubt, fear, and dread in the hearts of God's saints regarding their role, if any, in the coming Millennium. We can be sure we are not only entering the kingdom but will participate in the blessings of the "world to come" (Heb. 2:5; 6:5).



Hebrews 6:10 gives us a tremendous promise and hope:

“For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

It is true. God never forgets! For this reason, the rewards of the saints will result in reigning privileges. A great day is ahead for all saints! Together we will enter the earthly kingdom and enjoy the inheritance of the promised millennial age as “heirs of God, and join-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). The best is yet to come when the saints go marching into the kingdom!

There is a personal note of application of what Jesus taught regarding the saint's entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. It's something we can all claim today. He promised that each beloved saint would one day enter and therefore “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 24:36). Someday we are going to enter the earthly theocracy of Christ's New World Order (The Great Reset!) and as His beloved saints we will rule and reign with Him for a thousand years.