

Introduction to the Gospels

BIBLE BASICS

Not so distinctly different

St. Augustine's profound statement, "The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed; the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed," captures the intricate relationship between these two foundational texts of Christianity. The New Testament (NT) and the Old Testament (OT) are not separate entities but are deeply interconnected, each shedding light on the other.

The New Testament (NT) contains approximately 250 direct quotes from the Old Testament (OT) and over 1000 references to it. This illustrates the extent to which the NT authors drew upon and built upon the religious, historical, and cultural foundations established in the OT. Without a comprehensive understanding of the OT, it is challenging to grasp the full significance and depth of the NT.

One key example of this connection can be found in Jeremiah 31:31, where the prophet foretells the coming of a "new covenant" between God and His people. "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." -Jeremiah 31:31 This prophecy finds its fulfillment in the NT, particularly in the teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ. The "new covenant" represents a transformative relationship between God and humanity, characterized by forgiveness, grace, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The NT was written in Koine Greek, the common language of the Roman Empire at the time, from approximately 45 to 95 AD. It comprises 27 books, including the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. Contrary to chronological order, the NT begins with the Gospel According to St. Matthew due to its close alignment with the OT. St. Matthew's Gospel establishes a clear connection between Jesus and the prophecies, promises, and narratives found in the OT, emphasizing His lineage, fulfillment of prophecies, and role as the long-awaited Messiah.

Understanding the relationship between the OT and NT is crucial for comprehending the overarching narrative of God's redemptive plan for humanity. The OT provides the historical, cultural, and spiritual context for the events and teachings recorded in the NT. By reading the NT in light of the OT, Christians gain a deeper appreciation for the continuity and progression of God's revelation throughout history.

Historical Background

The intertestamental period is a significant era in religious history, spanning approximately 400 years between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. During this period, no prophecies were made, and significant changes occurred within the Jewish community. The Roman Empire had conquered Israel by the time Christ was born, relegating the Jews to a lower social status

with limited opportunities for social mobility. Several Jewish groups emerged during this time, each with distinct beliefs and practices. A table summarizing these groups is provided below:

Group	Beliefs and Practices
Pharisees	Strict legalists focused on adhering to the law; known for their self-righteousness.
Sadducees	Upper-class Jews who did not believe in the resurrection, emphasizing doing good without hope of reward or fear of punishment.
Herodians	Political families who supported the Herod family and collaborated with the Roman authorities.
Essenes	Lived in the wilderness, emphasized purity and communal living; believed in the coming of a Messiah; associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls.
Scribes	Professional class of experts, teachers, and lawyers who interpreted and applied the Jewish law.
Zealots	Armed Jewish rebels who fought against Roman rule and sought to restore Jewish independence.
Sanhedrin	Jewish Supreme Court composed of an odd number of Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests; held authority over religious and civil matters.
Proselytes	Gentiles who converted to Judaism and fully embraced Jewish beliefs and practices.
God-Fearers	Gentiles who partially practiced or respected some Jewish customs and beliefs but did not fully convert to Judaism.

These groups held distinct beliefs, practices, and political orientations, shaping the religious and political landscape of the time. Their collective influence ultimately laid the groundwork for the emergence of Christianity.

Among the most significant groups were the Pharisees, known for their meticulous adherence to the Torah and their emphasis on ritual purity. They developed a rich tradition of oral law and interpretation, which would later become central to Rabbinic Judaism. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were an aristocratic priestly class that held a more conservative interpretation of the Torah and opposed many of the Pharisaic innovations.

The Essenes, a reclusive monastic order, sought purity and holiness through communal living, ritual bathing, and strict dietary restrictions. They retreated to the desert wilderness, establishing communities such as Qumran, where they produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of ancient Jewish texts that shed light on their beliefs and practices.

Another influential group was the Zealots, a militant movement that yearned for political independence from Roman rule. They engaged in armed resistance against the Roman Empire and

played a pivotal role in the First Jewish-Roman War. Their actions reflected the deep-seated desire for sovereignty and self-determination among many Jews during this period.

The Diaspora Jews, scattered throughout the Mediterranean and beyond, formed vibrant communities that blended Jewish traditions with Hellenistic culture. They played a crucial role in spreading Jewish ideas and practices throughout the ancient world, paving the way for the eventual spread of Christianity.

The intertestamental period witnessed intense debates, theological discussions, and political tensions among these diverse Jewish groups. Their interactions and conflicts shaped the Jewish religious and cultural landscape, creating a fertile ground for the emergence of new ideas and movements, including Christianity.

Why Only Four Gospels?

The term "gospel" originates from the Greek word "evangelion," which means "good news." In Christianity, the gospel refers to the message of salvation and the life of Jesus Christ. While there are numerous accounts and writings about Jesus and his teachings, only four gospels are recognized as canonical and included in the New Testament of the Bible.

The number four holds significant symbolism in various religious and cultural contexts. In the Bible, particularly in the books of Ezekiel 10:1-22 and Revelation 4:6-9, four living creatures—a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a human—are described as surrounding the throne of God. These creatures represent different aspects of God's character and presence. Similarly, the four gospels are seen as presenting distinct perspectives on the life and ministry of Jesus, offering a comprehensive understanding of his message and teachings. There is thus actually only one gospel: the Gospel of Jesus Christ, written by four different apostles, thus the correct way to refer to the gospel is "The Gospel According to St. ..."

The early Church Fathers, who played a crucial role in shaping Christian beliefs and practices, recognized the authority and authenticity of only four gospels. Irenaeus (178 AD), a prominent second-century theologian, emphasized that there is evidence to support the existence of no more or less than four gospels: "Evidence to the existence of no more or less than four Gospels." - Irenaeus (178 AD). Justin Martyr (150 AD), another influential Church Father, referred to the four gospels as the "memoirs of the apostles," underscoring their historical and eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life.

Origen (185-254 AD), a prolific scholar and theologian of the third century, acknowledged the existence of other gospel accounts, such as the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Matthias. However, Origen maintained that only four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were legitimate and authoritative. He recognized the value of these other accounts for their insights into Jesus' teachings, but he did not consider them to be on par with the four canonical gospels.

The canonization of the four gospels was a gradual process that took place over several centuries. The early Church faced the challenge of discerning which writings accurately conveyed the true message of Jesus and were consistent with apostolic teachings. Through careful examination, theological debates, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church arrived at the consensus that these four gospels were inspired by God and provided a reliable and comprehensive account of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection.

Overview of Each Gospel

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Date Written	Aramaic 39-42 AD Greek 60-67 AD	60-61 AD	58-63 AD	After 70 AD
Place Written	Judea-Palestine	Rome	Rome?	Ephesus
Written for	Jews (Messiah)	Romans (Power)	Greeks (Philosophy)	Whole world (Incarnation)
Opening	Genealogy of Christ	Voice crying in the wilderness	Offerings	In the beginning was the Word
Portrayal of Christ	King	Miracle worker, Conquerer of Satan	Merciful, sacrificial	Incarnate Word
Christ came to	Fulfill the Law	Perform miracles	Save humanity	Dwell among us
Christ cared for	Prophecies	Performing miracles	History	Divinity
Symbol	Man	Lion	Ox	Eagle

The Synoptic Gospels

When a car accident occurs, the police try to collect statements from several different witnesses. This is because, together, these witnesses can provide a more complete and accurate picture of what happened. Similarly, the Gospels according to Saints Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels because they provide a "seen together" view of Jesus' life on earth.

The Synoptic Gospels are similar in style and content. They all begin with an account of Jesus' birth and early life, and they all end with his death and resurrection. They also share many of the same stories, such as the Sermon on the Mount, the feeding of the five thousand, and the raising of Lazarus.

However, there are also some differences between the Synoptic Gospels. For example, Matthew's Gospel includes a detailed account of Jesus' genealogy, while Mark's Gospel does not. Luke's Gospel, on the other hand, includes several stories that are not found in Matthew or Mark, such as the story of the birth of Jesus and the story of the prodigal son.

Despite these differences, the Synoptic Gospels are remarkably consistent in their overall message. They all portray Jesus as the Son of God who came to earth to save humanity from sin. They also all emphasize the importance of faith, repentance, and following Jesus' commands.

The Synoptic Gospels are a valuable resource for understanding the life and teachings of Jesus. By reading and comparing these three Gospels, we can gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Here are some additional points about the Synoptic Gospels:

- They were all written in the first century AD.
- They were all written in Greek.
- They were all intended to be read aloud to a community of believers.
- They are the most widely read and studied books in the New Testament.

The Synoptic Gospels are a testament to the early church's faith in Jesus Christ. They are a source of hope and inspiration for Christians around the world.

The Gospel According to St. Matthew

St. Matthew, whose original name was Levi, was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. He referred to himself as a tax collector, indicating his previous profession before becoming a follower of Jesus. St. Matthew's gospel was primarily written for a Jewish audience and contains significant references to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies by Christ. The word "fulfilled" appears 82 times in his gospel, highlighting Christ's role in bringing to completion the ancient prophecies.

St. Matthew aimed to correct the misconception that the Messiah would be an earthly king, as many Jews anticipated. Instead, he focused on the heavenly kingdom and the spiritual nature of Christ's reign. Chapters (5-8, 10, 13, 18, 23-25) are particularly notable for Christ's words and parables, which emphasize the values and principles of the heavenly kingdom.

St. Matthew's gospel includes several unique events not mentioned in the other gospels. These include the visit of the Magi and the massacre of infants at Bethlehem (2:1-18), the flight to Egypt and the return to Nazareth (2:19-23), the miracle of the two blind men (20:30-34), and the miracle of the coin found in the fish's mouth (17:24-27).

In addition, St. Matthew mentions six significant events that occurred during Passion Week. These include the suicide of Judas Iscariot, the dream of Pilate's wife, the resurrection of saints after Christ's crucifixion, the plot by the chief priests and Pharisees to steal Jesus' body, the watch at the sepulcher by Roman soldiers, and the earthquake that accompanied Christ's resurrection.

St. Matthew's gospel is a valuable source of information about Christ's life and teachings, providing unique insights into His ministry and the events surrounding His crucifixion and resurrection. It emphasizes the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, offering valuable guidance for Christians seeking to understand and follow the teachings of Jesus.

The Gospel According to St. Mark

St. Mark, also known as John Mark in Hebrew, stands as one of the 72 apostles. St. Mark's gospel is distinct in its focus on events and miracles. Despite being the shortest of the four gospels, it offers a vivid portrayal of Christ's emotions, capturing instances where Jesus sighed, had compassion, and

experienced deep distress. This attention to Christ's inner life adds depth and humanity to the narrative.

Written primarily for a Roman audience, St. Mark's gospel highlights Christ as a triumphant conqueror over death and evil. He emphasizes Christ's power through miraculous acts, showcasing his authority over nature, illness, and even death itself.

Among the unique events recorded exclusively in St. Mark's gospel are the parable of the seed in chapter 4, the healing of the deaf-mute man in chapter 7, the restoration of sight to a blind man in Bethsaida in chapter 8, the teaching on forgiveness as a prerequisite for receiving forgiveness in chapter 11, and the intriguing account of the young man who fled naked in chapter 14. All statements of Christ's authority.

St. Mark's gospel serves as a compelling testament to Christ's unwavering power and compassion. It invites readers to witness the profound impact of his ministry, as he confronts evil, heals the sick, and offers hope to the marginalized. Through St. Mark's vivid portrayal of Christ's actions and emotions, we gain a deeper understanding of his sacrificial love and unwavering commitment to redeeming humanity.

The Gospel According to St. Luke

St. Luke, a distinguished physician and the sole Gentile among the gospel writers, authored the longest gospel in the New Testament. His gospel is primarily intended for a Greek audience, and it presents a unique portrayal of Jesus Christ as the Physician of Humanity. Unlike the other gospel writers, St. Luke highlights Christ's role as a healer and savior for all people.

According to St. Luke, Christ embodies perfection and mercy. He emphasizes Christ's humanity, emphasizing that Christ experienced every aspect of human life except sin. St. Luke's gospel conveys the message that Christ came to redeem all people, irrespective of their social status, education, or wealth. Through his love and compassion, Christ offers salvation to the educated and illiterate, the philosopher and simple, the rich and poor.

Significantly, St. Luke's gospel does not focus on the Pharisees or the intricacies of Jewish law. Instead, he prioritizes translating Hebrew words and concepts for his Greek readers. By doing so, he aims to make the gospel accessible to a broader audience. Additionally, his gospel places emphasis on the good deeds of Gentiles, such as the ten lepers, the Centurion, and the good Samaritan. These narratives highlight the universality of God's love and grace, transcending cultural and religious boundaries.

St. Luke's gospel is further distinguished by its inclusion of several significant events that are not mentioned in the other gospels. These include the annunciation and birth of St. John the Baptist, as well as the annunciation of Jesus to St. Mary and her visit to Elizabeth. Events portraying the coming of the Lord as man. Furthermore, St. Luke narrates the appearance of angels to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. The angels announce the birth of Jesus, calling him the Savior and Christ the Lord. This event emphasizes the significance of Jesus' birth not only for the chosen people of Israel but also for all of humanity.

Another unique event in St. Luke's gospel is the presentation of Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. According to Jewish tradition, every firstborn male child was to be presented to the Lord in the temple, and St. Luke includes this event to show that Jesus fulfills the requirements of the law. St. Luke also provides a glimpse into Jesus' early years, describing how he grew in wisdom and stature, gaining favor with God and people. This account emphasizes Jesus' humanity and his natural development as a child, subject to the same processes of growth and learning as any other human being.

In addition to these events, St. Luke mentions the miracles of raising the widow's son, healing dropsy, healing the ear of the servant, and catching fish; he also records several parables that are unique to his gospel. These parables, such as the debtors, persistent neighbor, master's sudden return, barren fig tree, lost coin, lost son, unjust steward, obedient servant, unjust judge, and pharisee and tax collector, provide profound insights into Christ's teachings and the nature of God's kingdom; coming to seek the lost.

St. Luke's gospel ends with several significant events, including the angel appearing to Jesus in the garden, Jesus' journey to Herod, the presence of the thief on the right at the crucifixion, the road to Emmaus, and the sending of the 70 disciples. These events underscore the sacrificial nature of Christ's death and resurrection and His promise to send the Holy Spirit to restore, empower and guide His followers.

The Gospel According to St. John

The Gospel of John, often hailed as the "Gospel of all Gospels" by St. Clement of Alexandria and "the crown of all Gospels" by Origen, holds a unique and profound place within the New Testament. St. John the Beloved, one of the 12 disciples, had the distinction of being the only one who did not suffer a martyr's death. Instead, he lovingly cared for St. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and was later exiled to the island of Patmos, where he penned the enigmatic Book of Revelation near the end of his life.

Aptly known as "The Spiritual Gospel," the Gospel According to St. John sets itself apart from the Synoptic Gospels by not merely recounting the events of Jesus' life. Instead, it provides deeper knowledge and understanding through philosophical explanations and theological insights. The gospel begins with a majestic declaration of Jesus Christ's eternal existence, establishing his divinity from the outset. The remainder of the gospel serves as an extension and elaboration of this core belief.

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, St. John's Gospel omits significant events such as Jesus' birth, baptism, temptation, selection of the 12 disciples, and most of his miracles. It also offers only a concise depiction of the Passion Week. However, it compensates for this by incorporating unique and captivating details not mentioned in the other gospels. Among these notable inclusions are the Wedding at Cana, where Jesus transforms water into wine; the revelation that the woman with oil was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus; and the multitude's desire to crown Christ as king after he miraculously feeds 5,000 people. The Wedding at Cana was Jesus' first public miracle, showcasing his power to transform ordinary elements into something extraordinary. It symbolizes his ability to bring joy and abundance to life. The multitude's desire to crown Christ as king after he miraculously feeds 5,000 people indicates the recognition of Jesus' authority and the people's desire for a leader who can provide for their physical and spiritual needs. This event foreshadows Jesus' eventual triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where he is hailed as the Messiah.

It is noteworthy that the miracle of feeding the multitude is the only event explicitly mentioned in all four gospels, highlighting its pivotal significance in the narrative of Jesus' life and ministry. The Gospel According to St. John stands as a testament to the profound theological insights and spiritual depth that can be found within the Christian tradition. It invites readers to embark on a journey of contemplation, encouraging them to delve deeper into the mysteries of faith and the transformative power of divine love.



Review Questions

1. The Gospels According to Sts. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as what? (The Synoptic Gospels)
2. What is the focus of the Gospel According to St. John? (Christ's divinity)
3. What is the period between the Old and New Testaments called? (The intertestamental period)
4. "The ____ is in the ____ concealed. The ____ is in the ____ revealed." -St. Augustine (New Testament, Old Testament, Old Testament, New Testament)
5. Why does St. Mark highlight Christ's power? (It is written for the Romans who value power and strength)
6. Why doesn't St. Luke mention Jewish scripture like St. Matthew? (He was Greek and writing to the Gentiles)
7. What does "Gospel" mean? (Good News)
8. Who were the Zealots? (armed Jews who attacked Romans)
9. What word does the Gospel According to St. Matthew mention 82 times? (Fulfilled)
10. Why is it incorrect to say St. Mark's Gospel? (There is only one Gospel - the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ's Gospel was written by four different authors).

Appearances of the Resurrected Lord

BIBLE BASICS

Introduction: Christ's Appearances After the Resurrection

After the Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to many people for forty days. We cannot tell exactly how many times Jesus appeared after His Resurrection, since not every event was mentioned in the Bible. In this topic, we will look at some of Christ's appearances after the Resurrection and how we can benefit from them in our lives and in our service.

These appearances are not merely historical details. They are **pastoral encounters** by which Christ:

- confirms the truth of His Resurrection,
- heals fear and doubt,
- restores broken disciples,
- establishes the Church's mission,
- and prepares the disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Why Did Jesus Appear After His Resurrection?

Before listing reasons, we should frame the question theologically:

Christ's Resurrection is the foundation of Christian faith, and Christ's appearances are the Lord's own pastoral "teaching plan" for His disciples. The disciples were not yet strong. They were confused, fearful, and scattered. Therefore, the Lord appeared repeatedly—each time carrying a specific medicine for the soul.

Reasons for Jesus' Appearances After the Resurrection

1) Proof of Resurrection

There were rumors among the Jews that His disciples came at night and stole His body. So Jesus appeared to many people to prove His Resurrection. These appearances dispelled doubts, strengthened faith, and established the truth that He truly conquered death.

This is why later the apostolic preaching insists that the Resurrection was witnessed, proclaimed, and confessed publicly (see 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 below). The Church does not preach an idea; she preaches a **seen and testified reality**.

2) Revelation of His Glorified Body

Here we preserve your important point:

The church fathers say that before the crucifixion, Jesus was proving His Divinity. But after the Resurrection, He was proving His Humanity.

After the Resurrection, Christ shows that He is truly alive in His own glorified body:

- He asked Thomas to touch His wounds.
- At the Sea of Tiberias, Jesus ate with them.
- He entered the upper room while the doors were shut.
- He told Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him.

These events teach us two truths held together:

1. The Resurrection is **physical and real** (He is not a spirit or illusion).
2. The resurrected body is **glorified and transformed** (no longer limited by corruption and death).

So Christ is not merely “back.” He is risen in glory.

3) Establishment of the Church

The third reason why Jesus appeared after the Resurrection is to establish the Church. During the holy forty days, Jesus was teaching His disciples and assuring them that He is the Living God. He was confirming them in the faith—as He appeared to Thomas to cure his doubt. And as He appeared to Peter to call him back again to service: “Tend My sheep... Feed My sheep.”

Christ had to bring His disciples back together to start serving and spreading the Word of God all over the world. The Resurrection does not produce passive admirers; it creates witnesses and servants.

Christ’s appearances show us that the Church is built on:

- **truth** (Christ truly rose),
- **healing** (fear and doubt are restored),
- **mission** (the Gospel must be preached),
- and **grace** (Christ Himself gathers and strengthens His servants).

Who Did Jesus Appear To After the Resurrection?

Before listing appearances, we frame the purpose of this list:

The appearances of Christ are not random. Each appearance carries a **message**—joy, peace, hope,

restoration, and mission. As servants, we do not only teach what happened; we learn how Christ **deals with people**, because that becomes our model in service.

1) Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Resurrection morning)

“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.””

(Matthew 28:1–10, NKJV)

Jesus rewarded them for their diligent act—coming early to honor His Body. They were the first to receive the good news of the Resurrection. They saw Jesus Himself and touched Him. This teaches us that love, diligence, and seeking Christ early are not forgotten by God.

As servants, it also teaches: the first witnesses were not political leaders or scholars, but faithful hearts. Christ entrusts His joy to those who love Him.

2) Mary Magdalene (second time, Resurrection morning)

“Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ” Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.”

(John 20:14–18, NKJV)

You noted: Mary waited at the tomb crying; angels asked, “why are you weeping?”; she saw Jesus but thought He was the gardener. This moment is deeply pastoral: sorrow can blind us, even when Christ is near.

The message of the Resurrection is not only “He rose,” but also: “**Do not be afraid.**” If Christ conquered death, then the biggest enemy is defeated—so every smaller fear must be reinterpreted in that light.

- Rejoice, do not be afraid
- We should rejoice in the Lord regardless of the situation
- Focus on the Lord, our Savior

Mary Magdalene did not realize Christ because she was not looking at Him—her grief dominated her vision. This becomes a rule for spiritual life: when the heart is swallowed by circumstance, it can fail to recognize the Lord’s presence.

You connected this powerfully to St. Peter: he walked on water while focusing on Christ, but sank when looking at the wind and waves (Matthew 14:22–33). The same spiritual principle applies: **focus determines stability.**

And you rightly applied this to our current anxieties (pandemic, layoffs, sickness, worries): the Church does not deny tribulation, but she refuses despair, because the Resurrection is real.

You cited Philippians and John. Here are the verses in NKJV form where you quoted them partially:

“For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:”
(*Philippians 4:11, NKJV*)

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”
(*John 16:33, NKJV*)

And since you referenced 2 Corinthians 12:9, here is the verse verbatim NKJV (to anchor your line accurately):

“And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
(*2 Corinthians 12:9, NKJV*)

In our service:

The servant who believes the Resurrection must become a bearer of Resurrection peace.

- Always carry the message of joy and happiness
- Message of hope during the hard time
- Message that our God is mighty and merciful

Our students often live with hidden fear—family stress, identity confusion, academic pressure, loneliness. The servant brings them not mere positivity, but **Resurrection truth**: Christ is alive, Christ is present, Christ is victorious. That is why “Rejoice” is not emotional hype; it is theological reality.

3) The two disciples of Emmaus (Resurrection day)

“Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem...”
(*Luke 24:13–35, NKJV*)

(Your full Luke 24:13–35 is already verbatim and is retained.)

These disciples heard the testimony of the women and knew the tomb was empty, yet they remained doubtful and sad. They were walking away, as you wrote, “as if returning from heavenly Jerusalem to the materialistic world.” This is a powerful pastoral image: discouragement often makes us retreat from spiritual zeal back into the “old normal.”

Christ heals them in a distinctly Church-shaped way:

1. He walks with them
 2. He opens the Scriptures
 3. He is known “in the breaking of bread”
 4. They return immediately to witness
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- Learn & be ready
 - Conversed and reasoned (Luke 24:13–16)
 - The scripture (Luke 24:27)
 - Preach the word of God (Luke 24:33–35)

“Conversed and reasoned” shows that even sincere discussion can become closed if it is detached from revelation. Christ does not win them by argument alone; He opens the Scriptures and reorders their interpretation of suffering: “Ought not the Christ to have suffered...?” Their hearts burn not because they heard opinions, but because they encountered divine meaning.

Then they preach immediately. The true encounter with the risen Christ does not end in private comfort; it becomes mission.

In our service:

If we want our service to be Emmaus-like, it must be Scripture-shaped, not opinion-shaped.

- Serve based on the scripture not our opinion
- Be active, and don’t slack
- Keep learning

When servants rely on personal opinion, they may sound confident but give unstable guidance. When servants are filled with Scripture, the lesson carries authority and healing. This is why reading, learning, sermons, and spiritual study are not “extras”—they are fuel.

4) The disciples on Resurrection night (without Thomas)

“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ... “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.””

(John 20:19–23, NKJV)

The disciples were locked in fear. Christ does not rebuke first—He gives peace first. Then He sends them. Then He breathes the Holy Spirit. This is the pattern of apostolic life.

- Peace be with you
- Have peace
- Make peace
- Trust in Him

Peace is not the absence of problems; it is the presence of Christ. The Lord’s first word after the Resurrection becomes the Church’s first gift to the world.

In our service:

A servant must not transmit anxiety. The servant must carry the peace of Christ.

- Be a peacemaker
- Be reason of gladness
- Be ready to go wherever/whenever He send you

If the disciples were sent from behind locked doors, then servants must be ready to serve even when circumstances are not ideal. Peace does not wait for perfect conditions.

Small correction for accuracy: you wrote “Matthew 4:9 ‘Blessed are the peacemakers...’” — that Beatitude is **Matthew 5:9**.

5) The disciples with Thomas (one week after)

“Now Thomas, called the Twin...”

(John 20:24–29, NKJV)

The Lord did not abandon Thomas. Even when Thomas did not believe the disciples, and even after repeated discussion, Christ came specifically for him. This shows the Shepherd’s heart: He seeks the struggling and restores them.

Do we rejoice when a difficult child comes, or one who disappeared for a long time?

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them...”

(Luke 15:4–7, NKJV)

- You’re Special

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- Peace to you
 - Speak your heart
 - You're special
 - He will never forsake you

Thomas was allowed to speak his condition honestly. Christ did not shame him; Christ healed him. In service, struggling students are often “Thomas-like”: they need patient presence, truth, and love that does not give up on them.

In our service:

A servant must share the Shepherd's zeal.

- Seek the lost or least committed
- Seek and help those who struggle
- Zeal for the lost, not laziness

The servant who avoids the difficult child is not serving like Christ. Christ goes to the locked room and returns for Thomas. That is the model.

6) The disciples at the Sea of Tiberias

“After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias...”
(*John 21:1–14, NKJV*)

Christ didn't blame them for going back to fishing. He gently reoriented them back to their calling using the same miracle pattern as Luke 5. The message: “You may be weak, but I have not cancelled your vocation.”

- Fresh start
- Don't go back to the old way
- The influence
- A fresh start
- He is THE source

The “fresh start” is not merely emotional—it is a Resurrection gift. Many servants feel like Peter: “I failed; I cannot continue.” Christ answers: “Cast the net.” He restores calling by grace.

In our service:

Christ makes servants “fishers of men,” and He teaches us gentleness with His people.

- You're fisher of men
- Don't quit
- Don't rebuke His children, but guide them
- Give the little you have and seek His blessing

Christ already had fish and bread, yet He asked them to bring fish. That is a deep service principle: Christ does not *need* us, but He dignifies us by involving us, so we receive blessing and grow in love.

7) Christ's private restoration of Peter (John 21:15–19)

“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter...”

(John 21:15–19, NKJV)

Peter denied Christ three times. Christ restores him through three questions: “Do you love Me?” This is not punishment; it is healing. Christ replaces denial with confession, shame with responsibility, and fear with mission.

- He Forgives and forgets
- Never lose hope
- He is knocking on the door
- Accept the responsibility

A servant must know this personally: Christ does not only forgive; He restores. Many people can accept forgiveness but cannot accept restoration. Christ gives both.

In our service:

Restored servants must become restorers.

- Feed His lambs, Tend His sheep
- Never reject anyone
- Carry message of forgiveness and renewal

If Christ reinstated Peter, servants must never cancel people. We correct, but we do not crush.

8) The disciples before the Ascension: the Great Commission

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee...”

(Matthew 28:16–20, NKJV)

Christ's authority is declared, the Church's mission is given, and the promise of His presence remains: “lo, I am with you always.”

Your point is important: He told them not to leave Jerusalem until they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 1 context). Mission is not human courage—it is Spirit-empowered.

9) Multiple appearances testified by St. Paul

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received...”

(1 Corinthians 15:3–7, NKJV)

St. Paul preaches Resurrection as received tradition, seen witnesses, and lived proclamation. This anchors our teaching: we do not invent; we hand on what we received.

Messages of Christ's Appearances

When Christ appears, He does not only “show Himself.” He delivers spiritual realities. The appearances are not only proofs; they are **messages**, and servants must carry these same messages to the children entrusted to them.

- **Joy:** because death is defeated.
- **Salvation:** because the Resurrection is the seal of redemption.
- **Hope:** because despair is no longer logical in the presence of the risen Christ.
- **Peace:** because Christ stands in the locked room and says, “Peace be with you.”
- **Power:** because the weak become witnesses, and fear becomes preaching.
- **Love:** because Christ seeks Mary, walks with Emmaus, and restores Peter.
- **Confirmation:** because Thomas confesses, “My Lord and my God!”

These are not abstract words; they are the very substance of what our students need.

A Working List of Appearances

This list helps servants organize the Gospel accounts. Some appearances may overlap across Gospels, and some are summarized in apostolic testimony. The purpose is not to force a perfect timeline, but to show the richness of Christ's pastoral encounters.

There are 13 appearances for our Lord after resurrections:

- Appearance to Mary Magdalene (Early morning) - John 20:1-18
- Appearance to the Mary's (Early morning) - Matthew 28:9-10
- Appearance to Simon Peter (mid-day Easter) (mentioned by the 2 disciples of Emmaus) - Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:4-7
- Appearance to the 2 disciples of Emmaus (Easter day afternoon) - Luke 24:13-35
- The disciples without Thomas (Easter evening) - John 20:19-23
- The disciples with Thomas (Next Sunday after resurrection) - John 20:24-29
- Appearance to 500 or more - 1 Corinthians 15:6
- Appearance to James - 1 Corinthians 15:7
- Appearance to the apostles - 1 Corinthians 15:7
- By the sea of Galilee / Tiberias - John 21:1-14
- Reinstatement of Peter - John 21:15-19
- The Great Commission - Matthew 28:16-20
- Appearance to St. Paul - Acts 9:1-9

Christ's Resurrection was not hidden; it was revealed repeatedly, across places, people, and needs—grief, doubt, fear, discouragement, and mission.

Conclusion

In our lives, Jesus appears and encounters us in many ways. We need to discern, believe He is alive, and believe He is with us. We should be His image to the world. We ought to follow Him and preach His word. He called each one of us to serve Him in this life, honestly and faithfully.

And as we proclaim in the Liturgy:

“Your death O Lord, we proclaim, Your Holy Resurrection and Ascension into the heavens, we confess.”

The appearances of Christ deliver many messages: joy, salvation, hope, peace, power, love, and confirmation. We, as servants, ought to be all of that for our students—and to the whole world—through Christ who is present in our lives.



Review Questions

1. Why did Jesus appear to many people after the Resurrection? (A. To prove His resurrection, to confirm their faith, to establish the church.)
2. How many times did Jesus appear to his disciples after the resurrection? (A. We don't know the exact number because not every event was mentioned in the Bible.)
3. How can we be true servants of the Lord? (A. By being His image to the world. To find Him in our lives so we would be able to deliver Him to others.)

Judgment Day

BIBLE BASICS

Inside the Courtroom: A Story of Judgment

When the veil of this life was lifted, I found myself overwhelmed by the weight of truth. There was no darkness hiding anything now, only clarity, only reality. My heart trembled, not because God was cruel, but because I realized I could no longer pretend.

The doors creaked open slowly, and a voice echoed from within: "Come inside." My heart pounded. I rose on unsteady legs, walking into the room as though I were stepping into my doom. I saw two figures standing on either side of the courtroom. To my right, the prosecutor loomed, his eyes burning with hatred, lips twisted into a cruel sneer. His presence was suffocating, the weight of evil emanating from him like a black fog. I could feel the heat of his malice even from across the room.

I knew though did not need to invent lies. He pointed to my sins, my negligence, my pride, my hypocrisy, my half-hearted repentance, my wasted time. Each memory pierced me, because it was mine.

I stood before the Judgment, not as a spectator of a drama, but as a soul exposed.

And I understood something terrible: the accusations were not entirely false. I was not innocent.

To my left, my lawyer stood silent, serene. His face was kind but shrouded in mystery. Though He radiated a peaceful aura, I was gripped with fear. Could He possibly defend me? Was He truly strong enough to stand against the accusations that I knew were coming?

The Judge sat down, His face solemn, His eyes piercing. "Let us begin," He commanded, His voice ringing with authority.

Satan, the accuser began, The words poured from him like venom, recounting every dark moment of my life. He spoke of the lies I had told, the anger I had let fester, the times I had hurt those I loved, the moments of cowardice when I had turned away from doing what was right. Each sin was like a knife plunging deeper into my soul. Satan's voice grew louder, more vicious, as he recalled my betrayals, my failures, and the times I had abandoned my faith.

I tried to hold my composure, but with each accusation, I sank lower in my seat. My breath grew shallow, my chest tightened. Sweat trickled down my back. How could I have forgotten so much? So many sins—things I thought I had buried, long gone, but here they were, paraded before the Judge in horrifying detail. And yet, through all this, my lawyer said nothing. He stood silent, His face impassive. Fear gnawed at me. Was He abandoning me?

Then I saw Him.

Christ stood there not as a powerless defender, but as the Lord. And in that moment I realized the mystery: **the One who would judge me was also the One who had pursued me all my life with mercy.**

His wounds were visible, not as shame, but as victory. The marks of love were still present.

The Accuser spoke loudly. Christ spoke quietly.

And Christ did not deny justice. He did not call sin “small.” He did not excuse rebellion.

Jesus, turned His gaze toward me, His eyes filled with compassion, “this man is not to be judged by his sins alone. He has also walked in faith, though faltering, and he has turned to Me in repentance. He was baptized into My death and resurrection, cleansed by the waters of life. He has partaken in the sacraments of the Church, in My body and blood, and through them, I have been with him.”

Then I understood the true terror: not that God judges, but that I might refuse His mercy.

And I also understood the true hope: that **the Judge is the Savior**, and that the Savior does not crush the repentant.

And Christ, who judges in righteousness, received the repentant in mercy.

Note: This story is not meant to define the mechanics of the judgment as a literal human courtroom. It is a pastoral image to awaken repentance and hope, always within the Church’s faith that Christ is both Judge and Savior.

Who Is the Judge? Who Is Our Advocate?

This question is not a technical detail—it is spiritually decisive. Many people fear judgment because they imagine a distant courtroom where God is only angry. But the Gospel reveals something far deeper: **the Judge is the One who loved us, died for us, and rose for us.**

Christ Himself teaches:

“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,”
(John 5:22, NKJV)

So **Christ is the Judge**. And yet the Church also confesses that **Christ intercedes for us**, and that in Him we have mercy as well as justice. This is not a contradiction. It is the mystery of the Savior: the One who judges is the One who saves.

That is why your line is spiritually powerful and worth keeping:

Christ is both our Judge and Advocate.

What better way to make sure to enter heaven than having your Judge as Advocate!

We must hold this Orthodox balance:

- We do not erase judgment.
- We do not despair under judgment.
- We prepare through repentance, faith, and the sacramental life of the Church.

Christ is Coming!

The Orthodox Creed teaches us plainly: **Christ is coming again**—not symbolically, not only spiritually, but truly and openly:

“He is coming on the last day to judge the living and the dead.”
(*Orthodox Creed*)

This expectation is not meant to produce panic, but **sobriety, repentance, and hope**. The Second Coming is the final unveiling of what the Resurrection already declared: Christ is Lord of life and death, and history is moving toward His righteous judgment and His eternal Kingdom.

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.”
(*Revelation 1:7, NKJV*)

“so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”
(*Hebrews 9:28, NKJV*)

At the Ascension, the angelic message confirmed that Christ’s departure was not abandonment, but a promise:

“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.””
(*Acts 1:10–11, NKJV*)

And the apostolic preaching declares that God has appointed a definite Day of judgment:

“because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”
(*Acts 17:31, NKJV*)

Signs Preceding the Last Day

The Lord did not give signs so that we become obsessed with timelines. He gave signs so that we remain **watchful, sober, and faithful**, and so we do not fall into deception.

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,”

“who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

(2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, NKJV)

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.”

(Matthew 24:9, NKJV)

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

(Matthew 24:14, NKJV)

“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

(Matthew 24:24, NKJV)

Notice how these signs are both external and internal:

- persecution outside,
- deception outside,
- and falling away within.

So the safest preparation is not speculation, but **faithfulness**: repentance, sacramental life, endurance in truth, and discernment.

God Desires the Salvation of All

Before speaking further about judgment, the Church must proclaim clearly **the heart of God**. Judgment is real, but it is not God’s desire that any should perish. The Judge Himself reveals His will openly in Scripture.

“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but should raise it up at the last day.

And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

(John 6:39–40, NKJV)

The Second Coming is therefore not only a day of reckoning, but also a day of **fulfillment**—the completion of salvation for those who have remained in Christ.

At the same time, Scripture reminds us that the nearness of Christ’s coming calls for vigilance:

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”

(Revelation 3:11, NKJV)

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

(Revelation 22:12, NKJV)

God’s desire to save does not eliminate human responsibility. Salvation is offered freely, but it must be received faithfully. The same coming of Christ that is joy for the faithful becomes sorrow for those who rejected Him.

The Universal Judgment: Separation and Revelation

The Judgment Day is universal—no one is excluded, forgotten, or overlooked. Christ Himself describes it with clarity and solemnity:

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”

(Matthew 25:31–33, NKJV)

This judgment is not arbitrary. It is a **revelation of what each person has chosen** through their life—communion with God or separation from Him.

Scripture emphasizes that judgment involves full disclosure:

“For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

(Ecclesiastes 12:14, NKJV)

These are not meant to terrify into despair, but to awaken sobriety, humility, and repentance.

- **We will all appear:** the weak Christian and the strong one. No one escapes. There is no imagined preference based on outward piety alone.
- **God’s authority is absolute:** He will make no mistake. He will examine not only actions, but motives.
- **Everything will be revealed:** nothing hidden remains hidden.
- **The judgment is final:** there is no appeal, because it is based on God’s perfect knowledge and justice.

The terror of judgment does not come from injustice, but from truth. Judgment reveals reality as it is. For the repentant, this revelation becomes healing. For the unrepentant, it becomes exposure.

“Judge Not”: Escaping Condemnation by Repentance

The Lord teaches us that how we live now directly shapes how we will stand before Him then.

“Judge not, that you be not judged.

For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

(Matthew 7:1–2, NKJV)

Saint Paul echoes this warning:

“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”

(Romans 14:10, NKJV)

And he also gives us the remedy:

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”

(1 Corinthians 11:31, NKJV)

Self-examination, confession, and repentance are not signs of weakness—they are preparation for judgment. The person who judges himself honestly before God now will not fear standing before Him later.

Scripture assures us:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

(1 John 1:9, NKJV)

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

(1 John 2:2, NKJV)

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

(John 20:23, NKJV)

For sin to be forgiven, it must be **forsaken**. Repentance is not merely regret, but turning away from sin and returning to God.

Fear of Judgment and the Fear of the Lord

The Church does not deny fear—but she **purifies** it.

The Compline prayer expresses the sober fear that awakens repentance:

“Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge in fear because of my numerous sins, for the life spent in pleasures deserves condemnation.

Repent therefore, O my soul so long as you dwell on earth, for the dust in the grave offers no praise...

Rise up from your laziness and implore the Savior in repentance, saying; Lord have mercy upon me and save me.”

(Compline Litany)

At the same time, Scripture teaches that fear is not the final state of the believer:

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect

The Church therefore teaches us to distinguish between **sinful fear** and **holy fear**.

- **Sinful fear** paralyzes, produces despair, and pushes the soul away from God.
- **Holy fear (the fear of the Lord)** awakens repentance, humility, watchfulness, and obedience.

This is why Scripture never abolishes fear entirely, but **transforms it**:

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

(Proverbs 9:10, NKJV)

Fear at the beginning of spiritual life restrains sin and awakens conscience. As the soul grows in love, fear is purified and becomes reverence. The mature Christian does not live in terror of judgment, but in **reverent readiness**, careful not to grieve the One he loves.

Yet even the mature Christian remains sober:

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

(Revelation 22:12, NKJV)

The Testing Fire and the Revelation of Works

Scripture teaches that on the Day of Judgment, works will not only be counted, but **tested**.

“each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.”

(1 Corinthians 3:13, NKJV)

This fire is not arbitrary punishment. It is the **revealing presence of God**. The same divine presence that is light and warmth for the righteous becomes burning exposure for what is false, selfish, or empty.

What is built on love, obedience, humility, and truth remains.
What is built on pride, hypocrisy, and self-glory is consumed.
The fire does not change the work—it reveals what it truly is.

This is why the Christian life is not about appearances, but about **inner truth**.

The State of the Soul After Death

What is the state of a person after death? Is he in Heaven or hell immediately? If judgment is in the future, why do we pray for the departed? Is there redemption after death?

After death, a person enters an **intermediate state**—either **Paradise** or **Hades**—where the soul awaits the final Judgment at the Second Coming of Christ.

This intermediate state is **not** the final destiny.

- Paradise is a place of comfort, peace, and joy for those who “die in the Lord.”
- Hades is a place of conscious torment for those who rejected God.

The final and complete judgment occurs only at the Second Coming:

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice

and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

(John 5:28–29, NKJV)

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory...”

(Matthew 25:31–46, NKJV)

Why There Is No Second Chance After Death

The Church teaches clearly that **there is no repentance after death**. Earthly life is the time given for repentance, faith, and transformation.

Those who die in Christ are already blessed:

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”

(Revelation 14:13, NKJV)

“having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

(Philippians 1:23, NKJV)

“Let not your heart be troubled... I go to prepare a place for you.”
(*John 14:1–3, NKJV*)

But those who willfully rejected salvation in this life have no second opportunity after death.

This is illustrated clearly in the parable:

The Rich Man and Lazarus
(*Luke 16:19–31, NKJV*)

The rich man is conscious, aware, and in torment. His condition cannot be reversed. On the Day of Judgment, Hades itself will surrender the dead:

“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.”
(*Revelation 20:13–14, NKJV*)

Pastoral Analogy: Waiting for Judgment

Analogy 1: The Prisoner Awaiting Trial

A soul in Hades is like someone arrested and imprisoned without bail, fully conscious of guilt, awaiting the final verdict. The torment is not only punishment—it is anticipation of what is coming.

Analogy 2: The Student Awaiting Results

The soul in Paradise is like a student who studied well and now waits peacefully for results, confident in the coming reward.

Both are waiting.

But one waits in fear, the other in peace.

The difference was not decided after death—but during life.

Redemption: What It Is and Why We Must Be Ready

Redemption means **to buy back, to pay a ransom.**

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.”
(*Galatians 3:13, NKJV*)

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”
(*Ephesians 1:7, NKJV*)

“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things... but with the precious blood of Christ.”

(1 Peter 1:18–19, NKJV)

Redemption was accomplished fully on the Cross. It is offered to all—but effective only for those who accept it through faith, repentance, and a holy life.

If a person does not lead a holy life and death comes, there is no turning back.
Therefore, **we must always be ready.**

Choosing Life Now

God places the decision before us clearly:

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.”

(Deuteronomy 30:19, NKJV)

The Judgment Day is not meant to terrify us into despair, but to awaken us into **repentance, vigilance, humility, and hope.**

Christ is coming.

Christ is Judge.

Christ is Savior.

And because **our Judge is our Advocate**, the safest place to stand on that Day is **in Him**, through repentance, faith, and life in His Church.



Review Questions

1. **What does the Orthodox Creed teach about the Second Coming of Christ?**
That Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead.
2. **Who will judge the world on the Last Day?**
The Lord Jesus Christ.
3. **How can Christ be both Judge and Advocate?**
Because He judges in righteousness and intercedes for those who repent and belong to Him.
4. **What is God's will regarding the salvation of humanity?**
That everyone who believes in Christ may have eternal life.
5. **What will happen to the dead and the living at the Second Coming?**

The dead will be raised, and the living will be changed.

6. **What is the difference between Paradise and Hades?**

Paradise is a place of comfort and joy for the righteous, and Hades is a place of conscious torment for the wicked, both awaiting final judgment.

7. **Is there repentance or salvation after death?**

No, repentance is only possible during earthly life.

8. **What does it mean that a person's work will be tested by fire?**

God will reveal the true nature and motive of every person's deeds.

9. **What kind of fear should a Christian have toward the Judgment Day?**

Reverent fear that leads to repentance, not despair.

10. **How can a Christian be ready for the Judgment Day?**

By repentance, faith in Christ, and living a holy life within the Church.

Revelation

BIBLE BASICS

The Book of Revelation

The Holy Bible begins with the beauty of creation and humanity's calling to communion with God. From the very first pages of Genesis, God creates the heavens and the earth so that humanity might find joy and fulfillment in fellowship with Him (Genesis 2:15). However, sin fractured that communion, and humanity lost paradise.

The Book of Revelation, written at the close of the New Testament canon, shows how God's plan for salvation is completed and perfected. It reveals that the destiny of creation and of humanity is not abandonment, but restoration, communion, and eternal life with God. This book opens for us "the door of heaven," showing Jesus Christ as the victorious King and Bridegroom of the Church, triumphing over all spiritual opposition and bringing His people into everlasting glory.

Revelation is therefore not a foreign appendix to Scripture, but the culmination of the entire biblical story:

- What was lost in Genesis, fellowship with God, is restored (Revelation 21:1–4).
- What was broken by sin, our union with the Father, is renewed through Christ's victory.
- What was promised in prophecy, the Kingdom of God, is fully revealed (Revelation 1:1).
- What was hidden from human sight is now unveiled in glory and worship.

In this way, Revelation reveals the fullness of God's love, mercy, and plan, showing that God does not abandon history to chance, but governs it with wisdom and purpose.

Authorship and Historical Context

The Book of Revelation begins with a clear introduction: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants, things which must shortly take place" (Revelation 1:1). St. John the Beloved, once the fisherman called by Christ, now receives a heavenly vision while exiled on the island of Patmos, banished for his witness to Jesus Christ.

That St. John openly names himself four times in the text (Revelation 1:1, 1:4, 1:9, 22:8) reflects both humility and authority. In his Gospel and Epistles, he often refrains from personal reference, but here he affirms his identity because the visions he will record are not private dreams, they are prophetic unveiling of divine truth.

Historically, the book was written in the late first century, around the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian (81–96 A.D.), during a time of persecution and pressure for Christians to conform to imperial

demands of worship. The messages to the churches (Revelation 2–3) show how church communities of believers were tested by external oppression and internal weakness.

The early Church universally accepted the book as canonical. Fathers such as St. Justin the Martyr, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, and others cited it; Leaders in Alexandria and Rome affirmed its apostolic authority. Even those who found its imagery challenging still embraced its theological power.

Why is Revelation Often Misunderstood?

Revelation contains approximately 300 symbolic images, each with meaning beyond literal interpretation. These symbols are not meant to confuse believers, but to *dig into the deeper spiritual realities that ordinary language cannot express*.

Symbols, numbers, beasts, scrolls, and visions are all part of a heavenly language: a language that calls believers beyond the surface of daily life into the deeper truth of Christ's sovereignty over history and eternity. Numbers, for example, are primarily spiritual, not mathematical: *seven* signifies fullness, *twelve* points to the Church, and “incomplete” numbers teach that evil is always limited and temporary.

Rather than a cryptic code for predicting dates or timelines, Revelation is a book of encouragement, worship, and hope:

- It is the “**book of hope**”: Comforting the faithful amid trials.
- It is the “**book of victory**”: Showing Christ's triumph over evil.
- It is the “**book of praise**”: Drawing hearts to heavenly worship.
- It is the “**book of heavenly life**”: Revealing eternal communion with God.

The Title and Meaning of the Book

The very Greek word for “Revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις - *apokalypsis*) means unveiling or revealing. The title given, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, indicates two things:

1. The focus of the book is Christ Himself: His person, work, and triumph.
2. The content is not an abstract future show, but God's plan revealed to His servants, for their encouragement, not their confusion.

Thus, everything in Revelation points to Christ's victory over sin, Satan, and death. A victory secured by His Blood and presented to His Church as both hope and inheritance.

Revelation begins and ends with Christ:

- **Beginning**: Christ revealed in glory among the lampstands — symbolizing His presence in the Church (Revelation 1:12–13).
- **End**: Christ as the Lamb — victorious, worshiped, and reigning eternally (Revelation 5:12; 22:13).

Christ is not an abstract figure. He is:

- The **conqueror** who overcomes Satan and his forces,
- The **Lamb who was slain** yet lives for ever,
- The **Bridegroom welcoming His beloved Bride: The Church** (Revelation 19:7)

The Structure and Message of the Book of Revelation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chapter 1)

The book opens with a **vision of the risen and glorified Christ**. He is no longer presented in humility, as in the Gospels, but in divine majesty and authority. He stands among the lampstands, which represent the churches, signifying that He is present in the midst of His people, guiding, sustaining, and protecting them.

Christ declares Himself to be the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of history. This affirmation assures believers that all events—past, present, and future—are under His sovereign control. Nothing occurs outside His providence.

The Seven Churches: The Church in the Present Age (Chapters 2–3)

Christ addresses seven churches located in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These churches were real historical church communities, each facing unique challenges, temptations, and spiritual struggles.

At the same time, they represent the Church in every age and in every spiritual condition. In each message, Christ reveals Himself in a manner suited to the needs of that particular church. He commends faithfulness where it exists, rebukes complacency and compromise, calls for repentance, and promises eternal reward to those who overcome. They represent every spiritual condition that can exist in the Church across all ages. Christ's words are therefore not only historical judgments, but ongoing spiritual evaluations addressed to the Church today including those preparing for service.

A repeated phrase in these messages is Christ's assurance: "**I know...**". This is not mere observation but divine pastoral care. He knows the Church's visible works and her hidden struggles; He sees what is faithful, what is wounded, and what is compromised. His rebuke is therefore never random or harsh, but a physician's diagnosis meant to heal and restore.

Church	Christ's Evaluation	Spiritual Meaning	Implication for Pre-Servants
Ephesus	Sound doctrine and hard work, but love has grown cold; abandoned first love	Orthodoxy without love	Serve from love for Christ, not routine or duty alone

Smyrna	Faithful amid suffering; no rebuke	Enduring faith under persecution	Measure success by faithfulness, not comfort or outcome
Pergamos	Loyal to Christ, yet tolerates false teaching	Compromised truth	Guard doctrine and morals with discernment. Love does not mean silence.
Thyatira	Growing in love and service, but tolerates sin	Love without discipline	Balance compassion with holiness. Compassion without accountability harms souls. True pastoral care includes correction.
Sardis	Reputation of life, but spiritually dead	Appearance without inner life	Prioritize personal prayer and repentance over activity
Philadelphia	Faithful with little strength	Humble obedience	Trust God's work over visibility or size.
Laodicea	Lukewarm and self-reliant	Complacent faith	Serve with repentance and dependence on Christ, not resources or status.

Each message reveals that:

- Christ *knows* the inner condition of His Church,
- Activity does not replace repentance,
- Orthodoxy does not excuse lovelessness,
- Love does not excuse compromise,
- Suffering does not imply abandonment,
- Success does not imply approval.

For pre-servants, this table functions as a **spiritual mirror**:

- Which warning applies to my service?
- Which promise encourages me?

Christ's repeated command "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*" is not optional. It is a **call to self-examination, repentance, and renewal**, especially for those preparing to

serve others. Christ walks among the churches, correcting them not to condemn but to heal and restore them.

The Heavenly Vision and the Church’s Struggle (Chapters 4–5)

The scene then shifts from earth to heaven, where St. John beholds the throne of God. This heavenly vision reveals that despite the chaos and suffering experienced by the Church on earth, heaven remains ordered, peaceful, and governed by divine love.

At the center of the vision stands the Lamb who was slain ... a victory revealed through sacrifice rather than force, teaching that the Church overcomes by sharing in Christ’s humble, suffering love.

Revelation is profoundly liturgical. The heavenly throne room reflects the Church’s worship on earth: the altar, incense, hymns, white garments, and prostrations reveal that the Church already participates mystically in heavenly worship.

The Lamb opens the sealed scroll of history, revealing the unfolding of God’s plan. The seals, trumpets, and bowls depict the spiritual and historical trials faced by humanity and the Church: persecution, false teachings, moral decay, and divine warnings. These are not random catastrophes but part of God’s call to repentance and transformation.

The Seven Seals (Revelation 6–8): The Church’s Journey Through Suffering

Seal	Vision	Spiritual Meaning	Meaning for the Church & the Servant
1st	White horse	Christ conquers and leads His Church	Christ remains sovereign; servants serve under His victory
2nd	Red horse	Persecution and martyrdom	Suffering is part of faithful witness
3rd	Black horse	Material and spiritual famine	Servants guard true doctrine and spiritual nourishment
4th	Pale horse	Death, disease, spiritual decay	Separation from Christ leads to death
5th	Souls of martyrs	Cry for divine justice	Faithfulness is precious before God
6th	Cosmic upheaval	Collapse of worldly powers	Earthly authority is temporary
7th	Silence in heaven	Awe before divine judgment	God’s timing invites reverence and trust

The Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8–11): Divine Warnings and Calls to Repentance

Trumpet	Vision	Spiritual Meaning	Meaning for the Church & the Servant
1st	Fire and hail	Destruction of earthly security	Creation itself testifies against sin
2nd	Burning mountain	Rise of violent powers	Earthly rulers are judged by God
3rd	Falling star	Spread of heresy	False teaching poisons spiritual life
4th	Darkened lights	Loss of spiritual clarity	Without Christ, hope grows dim
5th	Demonic locusts	Inner torment and deception	Sin enslaves from within
6th	Vast army	Escalation toward final conflict	God permits, but controls, history
7th	Kingdom proclaimed	God reigns eternally	Christ's victory is final and sure

The Seven Bowls (Revelation 15–17) Final Judgment and the End of Repentance

Bowl	Vision	Spiritual Meaning	Meaning for the Church & the Servant
1st	Painful sores	Exposure of false allegiance	Sin ultimately reveals its bitterness
2nd	Sea becomes blood	Widespread death	Evil destroys what sustains life
3rd	Waters become blood	Loss of spiritual refreshment	Rejecting truth brings despair
4th	Scorching sun	Tyrannical power	Authority without God oppresses
5th	Darkness	Spiritual blindness	Separation from God is true darkness

6th	Euphrates dries	Fall of Babylon	Evil collapses under God's judgment
7th	Earth shaken	Final judgment	No further opportunity to repent

Revelation also portrays Christ as the **King and the Reaper** (Rev. 14:14–20): when the earth's "harvest" is fully ripe, He reaps, signifying the final separation between truth and deception, righteousness and rebellion!

The seals, trumpets, and bowls are not merely chronological events but spiritual lenses:

- **Seals** → describe the *experience of the Church* in the world
- **Trumpets** → serve as *warnings calling humanity to repentance*
- **Bowls** → reveal *final judgment when repentance is rejected*

Throughout these visions, the Church is persecuted by evil forces symbolized as the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Yet despite their apparent power, their defeat is certain. Evil is permitted to act for a time, but it is never victorious.

The Final Judgment and the Defeat of Evil (Chapter 20)

Satan, the deceiver, is shown as bound, revealing that his power is not equal to God's and that deception is permitted only within divine limits. After a final, brief outbreak of rebellion, he is cast down forever, and Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire, proclaiming the complete and irreversible end of death's dominion. Evil is not merely restrained, it is destroyed.

This chapter affirms that history is moving toward a definitive conclusion, where justice is fulfilled and God's righteousness is revealed.

The Heavenly Jerusalem: The Church Glorified (Chapters 21–22)

The Book of Revelation concludes with a vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the eternal dwelling place of God and His people. The Church appears as the Bride of Christ, radiant and purified, dwelling forever in the presence of God.

There is no sorrow, pain, or death. God wipes away every tear. Humanity's deepest longing, to dwell with God, is finally fulfilled. The Bible ends not with fear, but with hope, not with judgment alone, but with communion and joy.

 Books	 Supplementary Material
<u>An Introduction to the Book of Revelation by Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty</u>	<u>https://suscopts.org/diocese/bishop/bible-study/holy-book-of-revelation/</u>



Review Questions

1. Who wrote the Book of Revelation? St. John the Beloved
2. To whom the Book of Revelation was addressed? To the seven churches of Asia
3. What are the four living creatures & what do they symbolize? Like a lion for the power, Like a calf for sacrifice, like a man for humanity, and like an eagle for spirituality
4. What does number 7 symbolize? The fullness of time.
5. What does the woman clothed with the sun symbolize? The church.