

The Promises of God

Promise of Christ's Return and Eternal Life

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 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 1:6-11)

<http://tinyurl.com/GodOfPromises>

Core Theme

- God promises that Christ will return to judge, restore, and bring His people into eternal life in a renewed creation.
- The return of Christ is not a threat to believers.
- It is the completion of God's plan.
- Eternal life begins now, but it is fully revealed when Jesus returns.
- The return of Christ and the promise of eternal life cannot be separated.
- Christ returns to judge what is broken and restore what is good.
- Eternal life is the result, not an escape.
- God keeps His promises.
- Jesus will return.
- And God will dwell with His people forever, in a world made new.

God's Character in Scripture

Promises made → Promises fulfilled

Acts 1:6–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 21:1–8

- At the ascension, the angels speak plainly.
 - *"This same Jesus... will come back in the same way you saw him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11).
- God ties hope to a real, future event.
- Paul describes Christ's return as a moment of comfort, not fear.
 - *"The Lord himself will come down from heaven... and we will always be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).
- The goal is presence.
- Life with Christ, without end.
- Revelation shows what follows His return.
 - A new heaven and a new earth.
 - God dwelling with humanity.
 - No death.
 - No pain.
 - This is the shape of eternal life (Revelation 21:1–4).

How should God's character in history affect our hope of this promise?

God's Character in Scripture

Act 1:6-11 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (7) And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. (8) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (9) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (10) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, (11) 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."

1Th 4:13-18 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him

those who sleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Rev 21:1-8 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. (2) Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. (4) And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (5) Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." (6) And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. (7) He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. (8) But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

God's character in History – From promises made to promises fulfilled...

- God has never failed to keep a redemptive promise.
- He promised a seed to Abraham.
- He delivered Israel from Egypt.
- He sent the Messiah at the appointed time.
- Christ's return stands in that same line.
 - It is not symbolic optimism.
 - It is the final act of a long, faithful story.

- From Eden lost to Eden restored, history moves toward reunion.
- Judgment removes what corrupts.
- Restoration brings what endures.

God's Character Revealed in Jesus

The Alpha and the Omega

Matthew 24:30–31; John 17:24; Revelation 22:12

- Jesus openly promised His return.
 - “*They will see the Son of Man arriving on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matthew 24:30).
- His coming is visible and decisive.
- But Jesus also reveals *why* He comes.
 - “*Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am*” (John 17:24).
- Return and eternal life belong together.
- At the close of Scripture, Jesus says,
 - “*Look! I am coming soon, and my reward is with me*” (Revelation 22:12).
- His return brings life, justice, and renewal.

Why does God delay?

2 Peter 3:9–13; Romans 8:18–25

God's Character Revealed in Jesus

Mat 24:29-31 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (31) And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Joh 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Rev 22:12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Why does God delay? God's Invitation to Know Him...

2 Peter 3:9–13; Romans 8:18–25

- God delays judgment out of mercy.
 - He is “*not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).
 - The promise of Christ’s return calls for patience, not complacency.
- Peter connects Christ’s return directly to the new creation.
 - “*We are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides*” (2 Peter 3:13).
 - Hope shapes conduct.
- Paul adds that creation itself waits for this day.
 - It groans for release and renewal (Romans 8:19–22).
 - Believers live in that tension.
 - Waiting.
 - Trusting.
 - Living holy lives pointed toward what is coming.

2Pe 3:9-13 The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (11) Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Rom 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not

worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (19) For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; (21) because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (23) Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. (24) For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? (25) But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

The Pearl, the Kingdom, and the Church

A biblical-theological correlation

The Kingdom as a Pearl (Matthew 13)

- 13:44 - “The kingdom of heaven is like a **treasure** hidden in a field that a person found and hid. Then because of joy, he went and sold all that he had and bought that field.”
- 13:45-46 - “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he found a **pearl** of great value, he sold everything he had and bought it.”

Observations:

- The pearl is **singular**. Nothing else compares.
- Its value is **recognized**, not imposed. It is worth everything.
- Possession requires **total surrender**.
- The merchant seeks intentionally, unlike the man who stumbles on the treasure in the field (13:44).
- The kingdom here is not described as inherited or assumed.
- It is recognized, valued, and chosen at great cost.

How are the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church related?

- Why did Jesus use the “kingdom of <__>” phraseology?

The Promises of the Return of Christ and of Eternal Life

- The return of Christ and the promise of eternal life cannot be separated.
- Christ returns to judge what is broken and restore what is good.
- Eternal life is the result, not an escape.
- God keeps His promises.
- Jesus will return.
- And God will dwell with His people forever, in a world made new.

How?

Matthew 13:44 (NET)

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field that a person found and hid. Then because of joy, he went and sold all that he had and bought that field.”

Jesus describes the kingdom as something of such value that it changes everything.

Once it is seen, nothing else compares.

Matthew 13:45–46 (NET)

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he found a pearl of great value, he sold everything he had and bought it.”

Jesus pairs this with the treasure parable.

The point is the same.

The kingdom is worth everything.

The Church, Like a Treasured Pearl

A biblical-theological correlation

Pearl as a Symbol of Costly Formation

- Scripture does not explain how pearls form.
- But biblical symbolism often assumes common human knowledge.
- A pearl forms through **irritation and suffering**.
- It is produced by a living organism responding to intrusion.
- This aligns with how Scripture describes God's people:
 - Formed through trial
 - Refined through suffering
 - Glorified through perseverance

Observations:

- **Romans 5:3–4** - “*Suffering produces endurance, endurance character, and character hope.*”
- The church is not created instantly.
- It is formed through faithfulness under pressure.

How do the similarities and contrasts between Old and New Covenants lead to an understanding of the cost of the formation of the Church?

- What were the risks and costs associated with prior covenants?
- What are the expectations and risks associated with the New Covenant?

Pearl as a Symbol of Costly Formation

The Church, New Jerusalem, Pearl Gates

A biblical-theological correlation

The New Jerusalem and the Pearl Gates (Revelation 21)

- 21:21 "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."
- 21:21 "The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl."
- 21:27 "But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Observations:

- Each gate is made from **one pearl**, not many.
- Gates are **points of entry**, not decoration.
- The city represents **the people of God**, not a mere structure (21:2, 9–10).
- The imagery is deliberate.
- If walls define identity, **gates define access**.

What are the key metaphors implied via the Pearl Gates?

- If 'suffering', whose suffering?
- If 'the way', what is the preceding path?
- What part, if any, does sin play in this correlation of metaphor to reality?

Rev 21:1-27

The New Jerusalem and the Pearl Gates (Revelation 21)

John writes: **Revelation 21:21** "The twelve gates are twelve pearls—each one of the gates is made from just one pearl."

Key observations:

Each gate is made from **one pearl**, not many.

Gates are **points of entry**, not decoration.

The city represents **the people of God**, not a mere structure (Revelation 21:2, 9–10).

The imagery is deliberate.

If walls define identity, **gates define access**.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. (2) Then I, John, saw the holy city, **New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband**. (3) And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. (4) And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (5) Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." (6) And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. (7) He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. (8) But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

The New Jerusalem

(9) Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." (10) And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (11) having the glory of God. **Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.** (12) Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: (13) three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. (14) Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (15) And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. (16) The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. (17) Then he measured its wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. (18) The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. (19) The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, (20) the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the

eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. (21) **The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl.** And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. (22) But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (23) The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. (24) And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. (25) Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). (26) And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. (27) But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The Church, a “Pearl of Great Value”

A biblical-theological correlation

The Church as the “Pearl of Great Value”

- There is a strong thematic coherence here:
 - In **Matthew 13**, the kingdom is a pearl worth everything.
 - In **Revelation 21**, the people of God are entered *through* pearl gates.
- Christ gives everything to purchase His people (Acts 20:28).
- Entry into eternal life comes through Christ's suffering, not bypassing it.
- This does **not** mean:
 - Believers earn salvation by suffering.
 - Suffering itself saves.
- It does mean:
 - The **way** into the kingdom is shaped by the cross.
 - The church exists because **Christ overcame suffering**.
 - Participation in the kingdom follows that same pattern.

Observations:

- **John 16:33** “*In the world you have trouble and suffering but take courage - I have conquered the world.*”

The Church as the “Pearl of Great Value”

Act 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which **He purchased with His own blood**.

Passing Through the Pearl Gates

Access to the fulfilled promises of God

Passing Through the Pearl Gates as the Way into the City of God

- Gates are crossed. They are not, as are the walls, just to be admired from a distance. The image suggests this pattern:
 - The kingdom is revealed as priceless.
 - Christ purchases it at infinite cost.
 - The church is formed through suffering and faith.
 - **Entry** into the final city comes **through what Christ has formed**.

Observations:

- **Matthew 7:13–14** “*Enter through the narrow gate... the way is narrow that leads to life.*”
- Revelation does not contradict Matthew. It completes it.
- The **pearl** in Matthew shows the value of the kingdom.
- The **pearl gates** in Revelation show the cost by which entry is made.
- The kingdom and the church are not separate realities.
 - One describes **value**.
 - The other describes **access**.
 - Both center on Christ.
 - Both are born through suffering.
 - Both lead to life with God.

Passing Through the Pearl Gates

- This correlation is not forced.
- It is consistent with Scripture’s unified story:
 - Glory comes through the cross,
 - Life through death,
 - And the kingdom through Christ alone.