

*“Altering the Views of Jesus: The Later Gospels”*

Why do writers and followers alter Jesus’s words? To what end?

Which writers changed Jesus’s words to indicate a kingdom with God in heaven? Why?

What happened to Jesus’s apocalyptic teachings?

Distinguish between Jesus’s horizontal dualism and gospel writers’ vertical dualism.

According to later writers, what happens at the point of death?

How does the Luke writer contribute to the notion of rewards and punishments in the afterlife?

How does the Luke writer differ from Paul in interpreting the afterlife?

See p. 196: what happens if we move a comma—before or after *today*?

What happens in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar? What happens to each man in the afterlife? What does that tell us about the Luke writer’s beliefs?

What happens in the Egyptian tale of Si-Osire and Setne? What does that tell us about the afterlife? What does eternal life hinge on?

How do the Luke writer’s and the Matthew writer’s beatitudes differ? And what do the differences reveal about their beliefs and values?

Who does the John writer say Jesus is? How does this view differ from those in the synoptic gospels? What was Jesus’s role in the history of the universe and in creation? How might the date of the Johannine gospel reflect major changes in belief about Jesus and the afterlife?

What is unusual in the Johannine gospel about Jesus’s appearance in the Lazarus-of-Bethany story?

When does eternal life occur according the John writer?

What constitutes the Gospel of Thomas? According to this gospel, what does Jesus say about the kingdom of God? Where and when is it?

*“The Afterlife Mysteries of the Book of Revelation”*

Notice the singular noun *revelation*. Why do so many people refer to it as *revelations* plural? What is the actual revelation in this book?

How do readers misunderstand this book with regard to time and prophecy?

What characterizes the genre called *apocalypse*? How does this work meet those characteristics?

What do we know about the author and his writing habits? What does it mean when we say *de-apocalypticized*? (For good reason do Strunk and White admonish us not to create awkward verbs—particularly by adding *-ize* and other peculiar and unnecessary suffixes.)

Are the writer’s visions symbolic or literal? How do we know?

How does “a lamb stand as if it had been slaughtered”?

How big is heaven? Describe it.

What does 666 or 616 mean? Who is the beast? Who is the Whore of Babylon? What happens to them in this work? (Do you remember how vividly and wonderfully they appeared in *The Faerie Queene*, Book I? Don’t you wish we were reading that again?)

What and where is the “lake of fire”? Who goes there and for how long?

What happens to Christian martyrs in the afterlife? What happens at the final judgment of the wicked? Why appropriate or not? What is the final end for sinners, for the unrighteous? Why, according to this writer, must human beings have immortal souls (as opposed to mortal bodies)? And what happens to the immortal souls of the wicked?

After all the detail, all the symbols, all the codes, all the images, what, according to Ehrman, is the Revelation writer’s message?

Didn’t you enjoy the humor and sarcasm in this chapter?

*“Eternal Life in the Flesh”*

Who inside and outside the early church ridiculed the notion of a resurrection of the body? Who was Celsus? And how did Origen answer him?

What does 1 Clement say about the resurrection of the body? About cannibalism and other problems arising with this doctrine?

Distinguish between the resurrection of the body and the resurrection of the flesh according to Paul? How significant are his ideas to modern Christianity?

How does Platonism influence the Gospel of Thomas with regard to notions about body and soul?

See p. 242: "The evidence comes in Christ himself: Christ "swallowed death" when he died. He had taken on human flesh, and then at his death he laid the flesh aside to be rid of it. That led to his non-bodily existence in the world above." What does that mean?

How did human beings (*human* is an adjective and requires a noun after it) exist before birth in a body?

How do we know Paul wrote neither Colossians nor Ephesians? To whom does that matter and why?

What (see p. 243) does the *Letter to Rheginus* say about bodily resurrection? Where is eternal life?

Why is martyrdom so attractive? (See pp. 244-245.)

What is 3 Corinthians? Note the threat from the so-called "Paul": "... those who reject the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh will themselves experience it, in graphic and excruciating ways, for all eternity."

How does Tertullian rebut Paul's arguments about the resurrection of the body? Do you find Tertullian ghoulish?

Why do some rejoice in the horrors of justice inflicted on others? Why does it matter to so-called Christians who love their neighbors that others must suffer torment eternally?

See p. 250 at bottom: "This teaching of postmortem rewards and punishments, to be followed eventually with a resurrection, came to be the standard view of the Christian church by the third century, just as it is still for many Christians today." So what have we learned about love and forgiveness?