

CHARIOTS OF FIRE : A VOLUNTARY VOYAGE TO HEAVEN? : PT 1

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God's Golden Nuggets, Remember Lot's Wife, Vacillation And Backsliding, God's Mercy Love And Patience, Narrow Path Of Faith, Doubts Murmuring Sin And Rebellion, Receiving Things From God, Satan's Rebellion, Run The Race, Don't Look Back, Lost Horizon, One Way Into The Kingdom, World In Our Hearts Demas And Lot's Wife, Noah's Flood And Sodom Warnings, As A Thief In The Night, Abraham And Lot, Two Angelic Messengers, A High Price To Pay?, Lot Dragged Out Of Sodom, Destruction!

The other day while I was updating my original series on the topic of homosexuality and lesbianism, I believe that the Lord revealed another profound truth to me from the Golden Treasures of His wonderful Word. If there is one thing which never ceases to amaze me regarding the Scriptures, it is the fact that no matter how many times I study them, there are always precious, new jewels just waiting to be discovered within their pages. It isn't that they are really new; they have actually been there all along; but sometimes we tend to read certain passages over and over again, yet without truly realizing the spiritual value of what we are reading; until one day, the Lord just suddenly opens our spiritual eyes a bit further, and we are finally able to comprehend, and be amazed by that sparkling Golden Nugget. I don't doubt that this has happened to some of you as well. I am reminded of a verse I have shared with you on previous occasions. In the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord tells us:

". . . Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."
Matthew 13:52, KJV

At any rate, in order for you to fully understand this new truth which I believe the Lord has revealed to me, it is first necessary for me to share some information with you which I also include in the aforementioned series. I was discussing the fact that, in the Gospel of Luke, while describing the conditions which would exist on the Earth just prior to His Return, Jesus used the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. More specifically, the Lord said in part:

"Remember Lot's wife."
Luke 17:32, KJV

At first, it struck me as being rather odd that Jesus would say this; that is, until I suddenly realized that there is apparently more at issue in the Lord's words, than what may appear on the surface. As I continued to explain in that series, the sin of Lot's wife, is that possibly in a brief moment of doubt and personal weakness, she hesitated; she vacillated; she wondered if she was truly making the right

decision to leave wicked Sodom behind; and we are told that the Lord judged her harshly for it by immediately transforming her into a pillar of salt, as we read here:

"But his wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt."
Genesis 19:26, KJV

I then go on to explain that despite their shortness, those three words from the Gospel of Luke, i.e., "Remember Lot's wife", carry an extremely powerful message for Christians. Not only do they remind us of God's utter disgust towards homosexuality, but they also let us know in very clear terms that when God says "Go! now!" He means exactly that! There is simply no time for turning around and looking back; there is no time for vacillation and wondering if we are making the right decision; there is no longer time to desire the things from our past life, no matter what they were; there is no time to be a foolish backslider in heart.

As I continued to point out in that series, the Bible makes it equally clear that God absolutely abhors the backslider; He looks at the backslider with disgust; as we see by the following verses:

"And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate. And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins."
Leviticus 26:21-28, KJV

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself."
Proverbs 14:14, KJV

"Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return."
Jeremiah 8:5, KJV

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto

them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
2 Peter 2:20-22, KJV

That is how the Lord views the way of the backslider; as a dog which returns to its vomit; or as a pig which returns to its stinking, fly-infested, disease-laden mud pit! Yet at the same time, in His Love and Mercy, the Lord also tells us that He longs for the backslider to repent, and to return to Him. This was most certainly true for the people of ancient Israel, and it still holds true for us today as well. Again, consider the following verses in which the Lord beckons us to return, and reveals His everlasting Love for us:

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:"
Jeremiah 3:14, KJV

". . . for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
Hebrews 13:5b, KJV

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."
2 Timothy 2:13, KJV

Such is God's Love, Mercy and Patience; even when we act as an unfaithful, and ungrateful, Bride-to-Be. He still waits; hoping that we will wake up, come to our senses, and return to Him, in order that we might partake of His wonderful Love and blessings once again.

Returning to the sad story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jesus' warning concerning Lot's wife demonstrates that God simply will not tolerate, or allow, any half-hearts in His Kingdom. It seems that He requires of each one of us, all, or nothing at all. It is either total obedience to His Word and Will, or else no obedience whatsoever. It is either total faith in His Word, or else no faith at all. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Apostle Paul wrote the following in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
Hebrews 11:6, KJV

As you may recall, in discussing faithfulness, obedience and choosing the narrow path which leads to Eternal Life and the coming Kingdom, Jesus likewise taught such things as the following in the four Gospels:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
Matthew 7:13-14, KJV

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words

in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8:38, KJV

". . . Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:8, KJV

Why must it be this way? Why is God so stringent regarding those who desire to enter His Kingdom? Why has He set the standard so high? Why is He so selective concerning those whom He has predestinated to be His children? Why is there no room for looking back? If you think about it, and if you consider some of the examples found in the Bible, the answer becomes rather obvious. Quite simply, lack of faith results in doubts; and doubts lead to compromise; and compromise ultimately leads to sin and rebellion. The sad examples of the children of Israel found in the Old Testament, such as their making the Golden Calf, and their murmurings in the wilderness, verify this point beyond a shadow of a doubt. It is for this very reason, that just as Jesus pointed to Lot's wife, as a stern reminder to us to remain firm in our faith until the very end, the Apostle Paul offers us a similar warning concerning faith, doubts and murmuring when he says:

"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

1 Corinthians 10:10-11, KJV

So Paul is basically saying "Look what happened to them due to their murmuring and rebellion. Learn from their example, and don't let the same thing happen to you!" In discussing the importance of faith, as a requirement for obtaining things from the Lord, Jesus, and the Apostles James and John also said the following:

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Matthew 21:22, KJV

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."

James 1:6-8, KJV

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

1 John 5:14-15, KJV

So what we can learn from the previous verses, is that faith and obedience are not only requirements for being a part of God's Kingdom, but they are also necessary if we truly expect to receive things from the Lord as well.

As I also explain in the aforementioned series, it is when

Satan lost faith in God's Word; it is when he began to doubt God's Leadership; it is when he became spiritually unstable; it is when in his foolish pride, he thought that he could do a better job than God at ruling the universe; that he sinned and rebelled; and ultimately fell from grace; and his fall has taken him all the way to Earth! Sadly, as is often the case, when people backslide from the Lord, they sometimes drag others along with them; sometimes intentionally, and sometimes without even realizing it. In Satan's case, we know that a third of the Angels rebelled right along with him, as these verses indicate:

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: . . . And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."
Revelation 12:3-4a, 7-9, KJV

So, we must never look back to our old life of sin as Lot's wife and the ancient Israelites did. We must lay aside our sins of the past, and keep looking forward to the glories of the coming Kingdom. We must maintain our eyes on Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith, and keep running with patience, the race that is set before us. We must fight the good fight of faith to the very end, until the day in which we finally hear "Well done thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!". Please consider the following verses:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:13,14, KJV

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
Hebrews 12:1-2, KJV

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."
1 Timothy 6:12, KJV

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Matthew 25:23, KJV

So there should be no doubt then, that looking back, and compromising our faith, and desiring things from our former life of sin, is a very serious issue with the Lord, and can have very serious consequences if we are not careful. The Lord simply cannot allow such half-hearted people into His Kingdom, because if He were to do so, there would always be the possibility that rebellion could arise in the ranks; just as it occurred with Satan and his band of demons.

On a related note, I recall a movie I saw three decades ago entitled "Lost Horizon", which was actually a remake of an original movie made in 1937. This movie was based on a book written several years earlier by British novelist James Hill. Without getting into all of the details of the movie, being as I already do so in the article "Admiral Richard E. Byrd and the Hollow Earth Theory", allow me to just point out that one of the important lessons which is conveyed in the movie, is that even when some people are placed in an idyllic world such as the legendary Shangri-La, they still don't know how to be happy; they still desire to return to the old way of life; because they simply just don't fit in; and the reason why they don't fit in, is because the world, and sin, is still in their hearts. I am reminded of a man Jesus described in one of His many Parables when He said:

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:11-14, KJV

As I point out in other articles, perhaps this man truly did want to be in the Kingdom, but he was dressed improperly for the occasion; he was dressed in his own righteousness, and not in the Righteousness of Christ. He tried to sneak into the Kingdom another way; when we all know that there is only one way; for as Jesus plainly stated:

". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 14:6b, KJV

As I stated a moment ago, one reason why some people will simply not fit in the Kingdom of God, in fact many people according to Jesus' own words, is because the world, and sin, are still in their hearts. They haven't truly forsaken all. They have a divided heart. They want to have one foot in Heaven, and one foot in Hell. Such apparently was the case with a poor fellow by the name of Demas, who was one of the Apostle Paul's helpers. This person is mentioned by name three times in the Epistles; and on one of these occasions, we read the following:

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."
2 Timothy 4:10, KJV

According to a footnote included in the Greek lexicon, this person abandoned Paul while he was a prisoner at Rome. Now isn't that truly sad? Paul says "having loved this present world". That was apparently Lot's wife's mistake as well. The woman was still enticed by the sinful city of Sodom; so she turned around to look at it one more time; and God said in so many words, "Well, if you have doubts about leaving Sodom, if you want to go back to living with those sinful people, then you might as well die right along with them"; and she did.

At this point, perhaps some of you may be wondering what all of this talk about Lot's wife, backsliders and compromisers, faith and obedience, the Devil's rebellion, etc., have to do with the title of this article. As some of my readers know, I will often lay a strong foundation for my case, before I present my final conclusions, backed by a sudden flurry of Scriptures. In other words, it is important that you fully understand where I am coming from, so that you can likewise better understand where I am going, or leading you, as well.

As I stated earlier, it struck me as being rather strange, that Jesus would be discussing the Endtime, and conclude His remarks concerning Sodom and Gomorrah with "Remember Lot's wife". For me personally, this fact seems to shift the main emphasis of the Lord's Words. It reveals a deeper meaning. Allow me to explain. First of all, allow me to share with you the full text of what Jesus had to say concerning Sodom and Gomorrah in His Endtime discussion found in the Gospel of Luke:

"For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day . . . And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."
Luke 17:24, 26-37, KJV

What is obvious here, is that Jesus is using the examples of the Great Flood that occurred in the days of the Patriarch Noah, as well as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, to emphasize not only the sinful condition which would exist in the world just prior to His Second Coming, but also to highlight the sudden destruction of the wicked when they least expect it. The Lord is also using the example of lightning to impress upon us the swiftness of His own Arrival as well. For the sinful, unbelieving people of the world, it will be business as usual, until it is simply too late! As I point out in other articles, such as in "As a Thief in the Night? Not for Me!", as well as in "The Great Tribulation and the Rapture" series, this thought is in full agreement with what Jesus, Peter and Paul tell us in other verses as well, as we see here:

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, KJV

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

2 Peter 3:10, KJV

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

Matthew 24:42-44, KJV

It is right after making the previous comments, that Jesus seems to suddenly shift gears; as if He wants to emphasize another point. Part of His emphasis is on the urgency of the situation. Just as it was urgent for Lot and his family to leave Sodom immediately, lest they be destroyed along with the wicked of that generation, Jesus says that if a man is on the rooftop, he shouldn't even consider going to get his belongings in the house. If a man is working in the field, he shouldn't even consider going back to his house. It is then that the Lord makes the famous pronouncement: "Remember Lot's wife". For whatever her reasons, she turned back; she looked back; and she was destroyed; because she made the wrong decision.

And that, my friends, is the beginning of the profound truth which I believe the Lord began to reveal to me through these verses. Just as Lot's wife had to make a decision, we will also have to make a final decision of faith; a very great decision of faith; as you will see in a moment.

What is the very next thing that the Lord says after telling us about Lot's wife? He states "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it". Now remember; Jesus' words are a direct

reflection back to what He just said regarding Lot's wife. To fully understand this, we need to remember what kind of a situation Lot and his family were living in. I am not just referring to the sinful condition of Sodom here; I am speaking of something else. Allow me to give you a hint:

"And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly." Genesis 13:7-13, KJV

Now do you see it? In his selfishness, Lot chose the best of the land. We are told that prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Jordan River Valley was a virtual paradise very much like the Garden of Eden; and this is where Lot and his family chose to live; in the best of the land; but very close to a very wicked place! As you can see, Abraham and his relatives were herdsmen, and they were wealthy herdsmen at that. Perhaps we can compare them to some of the affluent cattle ranchers of the American Midwest. So Lot's family must have lived a very prosperous life next to the sinful Sodomites.

Then what happened? Those two Angels arrived! Oh my! Why in the world did they have to show up at a time like that when everything was going so well? Or was it? Their basic message to Lot and his family was "We are sorry, folks, but the Lord says that it is time for you to leave this place. You need to drop everything and leave this very night. You can't even wait until the sun comes up. Just pack a few belongings which you can carry, and let us be on our way out of here". Now, in spite of the fact that the Angels had just blinded the men and boys of Sodom, because they were trying to get into Lot's house in order to have forced sex with the Angels, as I also explain in such articles as "The Gay and Lesbian Agenda: To The Point!" and "Pornography: Flee Youthful Lusts!", Lot and his family still didn't want to leave; they resisted the Angels' message. It was simply too much to ask of them; at least so Lot's family must have thought.

How could they possibly just forsake a lifelong, prosperous business, and go only God-knows-where? Oh yes; where in the world were they going anyway? Lot and his family must have really resisted when the two Angels informed them of their destination; the mountains! "What? Oh no! Not there! That is asking too much of us! We have all of this livestock; and

these servants of ours; and all of these children; and all of this luggage! My God! It is too rugged! It is too high of a price to pay! We will all die there!"

Well, as we know from the Biblical story, in spite of the foolishness of Lot and his family, the Angels finally got their way; but they had to literally drag Lot and his family out of that wicked place in order to do it; as we see here:

"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."
Genesis 19:16-17, KJV

Surprisingly, in spite of God's mercy, Lot still argued and pleaded with the Angels to allow them to go to some easier place, and not to those rugged mountains, where they feared that they would die. I can only wonder if those Angels were amazed by Lot's lack of appreciation, his obviously deeply rooted selfishness, and his lack of fear of the Lord. At any rate, we are told that Zoar became their new destination: "Ah yes! Zoar! That is it! How about Zoar Mr. Angels? It is just a little place! Surely you can spare that place for us, can't you? At least we won't die in those dangerous mountains!":

"And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."
Genesis 19:18-25, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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CHARIOTS OF FIRE : A VOLUNTARY VOYAGE TO HEAVEN? : PT 2

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Truth Twisted By Deception, The Price Of Our Faith, God's Ways vs Man's Ways, Be Content With What You Have, Snare Of Worldliness And Materialism, The Rugged Sacrificial Life Of Discipleship, Jesus' Seven Points, Invasion And Destruction Of Jerusalem, Flee To The Mountains - Great Tribulation, 3 1/2 Years From Matthew 24:21 to Luke 17:33, Faith To Die In Order To Live, Tabernacle Of Flesh, Jesus: Bread Of Life And Passover Lamb, Carcase And Eagles, In The Clouds Of Heaven

While I have added a bit of humor to Lot's story, do you better understand the situation now? Can you see what was apparently occurring in the minds of Lot and his family? When they were informed of their original destination, that is, the mountains, they were fearful that they would surely die there. In their state of rebellion and delusion, they were convinced that they were safe in Sodom. They could not even sense the danger that they were in. They were living an easy, comfortable life in what was apparently one of the most beautiful places upon the Earth. In fact, we are told that it was similar to Eden itself! In their twisted way of thinking, Lot's family erroneously thought that they could preserve their lives by remaining there; when the truth of the matter was the exact opposite. It was by seemingly putting their lives in danger, and even risking death, by going to the mountains, that they would in fact save themselves from destruction.

But there was a high price to pay: They had to be willing to forsake their worldly wealth and social status. Even more importantly, they had to be willing to forsake their human way of thinking and understanding things; they had to simply trust in the Lord completely, by obeying His order to flee to the mountains; and that required total faith. Again I am reminded of the following verses:

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
Proverbs 14:12, KJV

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8-9, KJV

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
Hebrews 11:6, KJV

After using a lot of persuasion, and "hands-on" tactics --if you will excuse my pun -- the two Angelic Messengers finally helped Lot to muster up enough faith to obey the Lord. While Lot may have gotten the point, his wife apparently did not. She still lacked the faith, and the willingness, to obey the Lord. Thus, going against the Angels' strict orders, in her foolishness, she chose to make a terribly wrong decision; and she looked back. Thousands of years later, the Apostle Paul made a wise observation, which would have suited her well at that moment. He wrote the following:

"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
1 Timothy 6:7-10, KJV

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."
1 Corinthians 7:31, KJV

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."
Philippians 4:11, KJV

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
Hebrews 13:5, KJV

As I point out in quite a few other articles, such as "Going Down the Highway", "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God", "Are You Redeeming the Time?" and others, Paul was not alone in warning us to watch out for the physical trappings of the world. Jesus, John and James also offered us the following warnings concerning the dangers of materialism, worldliness, and giving pre-eminence to our physical well-being above our spiritual well-being:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
Matthew 6:19-21, KJV

". . . Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God . . . And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."
Matthew 19:23-24, 29, KJV

". . . Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

Mark 10:24b, KJV

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Mark 8:36-37, KJV

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

Luke 9:23-24, KJV

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:33, KJV

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

James 5:1-7, KJV

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

James 4:4, KJV

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

1 John 2:15-16, KJV

Having now thoroughly explained the sad story of Lot and his family, I think you will better understand what Jesus meant in His Endtime discussion found in the Gospel of Luke, when right after saying "Remember Lot's wife", He added:

"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

Luke 17:33, KJV

While this is obviously not what the Lord had intended for them by any means -- that is, that they would die -- Lot and

his family had to be willing to demonstrate such faith in God, that they would even risk dying in the mountains, in order to be saved from His Wrath, which was about to fall upon evil Sodom and Gomorrah. They were being asked to do something which seemed totally contrary to their natural way of thinking. They were being asked to leave apparent safety, and run to what appeared to be certain danger, and possibly even death.

Now, if you are still a little confused about all of this, please don't be. I didn't fully understand what was being said here until the Lord opened my eyes and understanding of the Spirit. In fact, I still haven't explained everything to you yet, because it is quite profound. To continue then, in verse thirty-three which I just quoted above, Jesus is NOT talking about self-sacrifice and a lifelong service to God's Kingdom. Neither is he discussing Discipleship, as we see in the following verses taken from an earlier chapter in the same Gospel:

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."
Luke 9:23-24, KJV

In the above verses, it is very apparent, that Jesus is in fact talking about dying to ourselves, such as I point out in the article "Are You Crucified With Christ?", in order to follow Him. While the words used here are very similar to what we find in Luke 17:33, there is something which makes the meaning of the verses very different; and that is the time frame. The setting for the verses I have just quoted are during Jesus' own lifetime. They are about being one of His followers, such as Peter, James or John. Of course, we can also apply them to people today who wish to follow Christ as well.

On the other hand, Luke 17:33 is not talking about being a Disciple of Christ through self-denial two thousand years ago. In fact, neither is the verse talking about living a sacrificial life for the Lord today. So what is it talking about then? Well, before I tell you, let me explain another point which may have some of you rather confused. In the previous verses, we saw how the Lord was using the various examples of lightning, Noah and his family, and Lot and his family, in order to clarify the following points:

1. The sinful condition of the world
2. The business-as-usual attitude of the world
3. The lack of faith and rebellion against God
4. The Lord's unexpected Arrival
5. The swift and unexpected Judgments of God
6. The destruction of the wicked
7. The salvation of God's children from His Wrath

Now, in the case of Noah and Lot, we are told how they were both instructed to take their families and flee, in order to save their lives; Noah, by means of an Ark, and Lot, by fleeing to the mountain. They were very specifically told to save their families, and they were told how to do it.

This is very similar to what we find the Lord describing in Luke chapters nineteen and twenty-one, where He discusses the total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple:

"For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."
Luke 19:43-44, KJV

"As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down . . . And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."
Luke 21:6, 20-24, KJV

Similar to the warnings given to Noah and Lot, it can be seen then, that the previous verses are a clear warning to flee the wrath to come. Jesus is plainly saying that if a person, and more specifically, an Israelite, wants to save his life, he had better flee from Jerusalem; he had better get himself to the mountains outside of Jerusalem. To the contrary, in His warning in Luke 17:33, Jesus isn't talking about running to the hills in order to save our lives as Lot and his family did, or even as the Jews were forced to do when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, or even as they will be forced to do once again in coming years when a final invasion of Jerusalem occurs. The Lord is talking about something very different in these verses; and He makes that very clear in the verses that follow these comments.

As I said a moment ago, we need to consider the time factor in order to properly understand Luke 17:33. Please remember that Jesus is talking about Endtime events. He is talking about His Second Coming, and the final Seventh Trumpet when the Mystery of God will be completed. In these verses, the life of Discipleship is past. This is it! This is the Big Day which everyone has been waiting for, for thousands of years! You see, when Jesus tells the Israelites to flee to the mountain, that is at the beginning of the period which many of us refer to as the Great Tribulation. In fact; in describing these very same events in the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord says:

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."
Matthew 24:21, KJV

To clarify this point once again, when the Great Tribulation begins in Jerusalem in the not-too-distant future, the Lord says to flee to the mountains if you want to save your life; but then, in Luke 17:33, where He is also discussing the Endtime, He turns around and says the exact opposite. He says:

"Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."
Luke 17:33, KJV

So what is going on here? Is Jesus contradicting Himself? Most definitely not! You simply need to understand the time factor. Fleeing to the mountains outside of Jerusalem, in order to save one's life, occurs some three and half years BEFORE Luke 17:33 occurs. Fleeing occurs at the beginning of the Great Tribulation period, while Luke 17:33 occurs at the very end of the Great Tribulation; in fact, on the very night of Christ's Return! There is a three and a half year gap between Matthew 24:21 and Luke 17:33. How else can we explain that Jesus is saying to flee to the mountains if you want to save your life, in one verse, and then He makes a U-turn, and says that if you try to save your life, you will lose it?

The astounding truth, is that what the Lord seems to be saying in Luke 17:33, is that if you try to save your life, by not choosing to go, you will lose your life; but, if you lose your life, that is, if you decide to go when they come for you, if you decide to die, you will preserve your life, and in fact, gain Eternal Life! That is the great decision of faith; that is the great choice that He is talking about here; and that is why right before this, Jesus clearly says "Remember Lot's wife"! Why? Because that woman had a very important decision to make, and she made the wrong choice! Lot's wife tried to hold on to the world instead of letting go of it. She apparently thought that it was crazy to go to the mountains and risk death, when that is the very thing which could have saved her. Like Demas, Lot's wife loved this present world; or in her particular case, the sinful life in Sodom; and how ironic that the spirit of Sodom and Gomorrah is alive and well in the world today!

We often hear it said that the most important decision that a person will ever make in this life, is the decision to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour; but is that truly the most important decision we will ever make? I am really beginning to wonder. Allow me to explain. While accepting Christ is indeed a very important decision which involves a certain amount of faith, it pales next to the decision we Endtime Christians may have to make on the Day of Christ's Return.

You see, my friend, it is easy to say that we believe in Jesus; it is even relatively easy to live the life of a Christian Disciple; but how many of us will be willing to die the death of a Christian Disciple? It is at that time, that our faith will truly be tested. God will see if we really trust enough in His Word, and particularly in His Promise of Eternal Life, to be willing to lay down our Earthly lives at His Son's Return. He will see if we truly

believe in everything we have said and preached during the course of our lives. Do you see my point? We are going to have to have so much faith, that when His Angels come for us, we will be able to say with faith unwavering, "Take me out of this world, Lord; I am ready to go." We are each going to have to have the faith to be willing to die in the flesh, to voluntarily leave our tabernacle of the flesh behind, in order that we might graduate to the World of the Spirit.

In other words, contrary to what some of us have believed for many years, myself included, the coming Rapture may not be an automatic event. Some, if not all of us, have held to the idea that when Jesus returns, we will immediately begin to rise up to meet Him in the air; but what if we have been mistaken? What if, as the previous verses seem to indicate, there is a decision to be made? What if the Lord sends His Angels around, and we are each asked first "Are you ready to go? Are you ready to peel off your vessel of flesh in order that you might live in the Spirit? Are you ready to die?" Why else would Jesus tell us to remember Lot's wife, and immediately follow that comment by telling us that if we seek to save our life, we will lose it, but if we lose our life, we will in fact save it?

Now, if you think that I am crazy, or that I am wrong in my understanding, then consider what the very next thing is that Jesus says in those verses in Luke chapter seventeen, after warning us about Lot's wife, and telling us that we must lose our lives if we wish to save them. He states that that night -- What night? The night of His Return! -- there will be two in the bed, and only one will be taken; there will be two women grinding at the mill, and only one will be taken; there will be two men working in the field, and only one will be taken. Why is this? Could it be that one chose to go, while the other lacked the faith to believe that this was it, that this was The Day? Could it be that one had the faith found in Peter and Paul's words, while the other did not?:

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

2 Corinthians 5:1-4, KJV

"Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

2 Peter 1:13-15, KJV

Of course, the Disciples still didn't quite understand what Jesus was talking about, so they ask Him, "Where, Lord? Where will they be taken?"; and He answered them in a very

cryptic manner by saying:

"Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."

Luke 17:37, KJV

Let me point out here, that in the Gospel of Matthew, this verse is translated a little differently. It says:

"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Matthew 24:28, KJV

In the verse from Matthew, the Greek word used is "ptoma", pronounced pto'-mah, which refers to the fallen body of one dead or slain, a corpse, or a carcase. Similarly, in the verse from Luke, the Greek word used is "soma", which also is used to refer to a dead body or corpse.

As I explain in some of my Endtime articles, such as "The Great Tribulation and the Rapture" series, by using "body", or "carcase", I have no doubt that Jesus was referring to Himself as the Sacrificial Lamb of God who, following the evening of the Passover, was crucified upon a Roman Cross, or tree, as the Scriptures tell us, in order to atone for the sins of the world. As we all know, three days later, He was miraculously resurrected from the dead; thus gaining a victory over death, sin and Satan, once and for all. Here are a few more verses for your consideration:

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

Isaiah 53:7, KJV

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world . . . And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God . . . And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"

John 1:29, 34, 36, KJV

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

John 2:19, KJV

"The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:"

Acts 8:32, KJV

"And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre."

Acts 13:29, KJV

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;"

Hebrews 2:14, KJV

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,"

1 Peter 1:18-20, KJV

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

1 Peter 2:24, KJV

As can be clearly seen by the previous verses, Jesus became the final slaughtered Passover Lamb; He became the Carcase. Jesus also tells us that He is the Bread of Life who gives us Eternal Life, as we see by these additional verses:

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Matthew 26:26-28, KJV

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst . . . I am that bread of life . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

John 6:35, 48, 53b, KJV

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 10:28, KJV

In a similar manner, just as Jesus represented Himself as a Carcase, we, the resurrected and transformed Saints, are obviously the eagles who will rise up to meet Him in the air at His Coming; exactly as has been prophesied for thousands of years; because like eagles, we have symbolically fed upon the Carcase of our slain Saviour. Thus, just as we shall choose to die in Him, we shall also live again through Him, exactly as He has promised us. When His Disciples asked where these people would be taken, Jesus said "Up there; in the clouds of Heaven; that is where you will all meet me! You will all fly up like the eagles!" Please consider the following inspiring verses which clarify these points:

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Isaiah 40:31, KJV

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with

them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, KJV

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Matthew 24:30, KJV

"Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Matthew 26:64, KJV

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

Mark 13:26, KJV

"And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Mark 14:62, KJV

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:9-11, KJV

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

Revelation 1:7, KJV

When this wonderful Endtime event occurs, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, as we have seen by previous verses, it appears that, similar to Lot's wife, we may each have a very important decision to make; in fact, a life and death decision. It seems that there may possibly be a choice involved, and that we may each have to pass one final great test of faith. Perhaps we will have to voluntarily choose death, or transformation if you prefer, over Earthly life, in order to attain Eternal Life. It is for these reasons, that I now wonder if the Rapture will truly be an automatic fly-up-to-the-sky event as many of us have imagined it will be. Yes, it will indeed occur precisely as the Scriptures tell us that it will occur, BUT, will the only flyers be the people who have faith to forsake their Earthly tabernacles and die, in order that they might be transformed and live?

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

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CHARIOTS OF FIRE : A VOLUNTARY VOYAGE TO HEAVEN? : PT 3

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God's Rapture Protocol, Died In Faith, Fight The Good Fight Of Faith, Choose Wisely, Don't Miss The Ship, Press Toward The Mark, Christ's Prophetic Crucifixion, Jewish Rejection And Dogs, Jesus The Rejected Cornerstone, A Hastened Death, Mercy Of A Father?, Firstfruits Of The Resurrection, Coming Glorified Bodies, Flesh And Blood Can't Inherit The Kingdom The Kingdom Within, Faith Backed By Obedience And Action, Backslidden Christians, God's Heavenly Fleet?, Invasion From Outer Space, Subtle UFO Propaganda And Fear, Chariots Of Fire

If there is one thing which the Scriptures make clear, it is that at the time of Christ's Return, there will be two main categories of Christians. Allow me to clarify that I am not referring to on-fire Christians who are still burning brightly for the Lord, as opposed to those who have become backslidden in their faith, and who have compromised with the world. While this is also true, I am simply referring to deceased Christians and living Christians. As we saw in part two, the Apostle Paul makes mention of this very same point in his Epistle to the Thessalonian brethren, where he states "the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds." Allow me to ask you a question: Why is it that the dead in Christ are raptured first? Is it simply a matter of Divine Protocol? Is it to show respect for those who have gone on before us? Possibly. In Hebrews chapter eleven, Paul makes a very interesting point when he says in verse thirteen:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."
Hebrews 11:13, KJV

What I wish to call to your attention in that verse are the first five words: "These all died in faith". You see, these people who are raptured before us, all died in faith. In other words, they kept their faith until the very end. They didn't backslide; they persevered in their faith until the very end of their Earthly lives. The Lord made a similar statement that is found in the Gospel of Matthew. He said the following:

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
Matthew 10:22, KJV

So what we learn from this, is that the person who has real faith endures until the end. He doesn't give up. He doesn't surrender. He doesn't backslide. He doesn't compromise. He perseveres, and he fights the good fight of faith until the day in which the Lord calls him Home. Thus, Paul also wrote the following to Timothy. Please notice that the second set of verses were apparently written a short time before Paul was beheaded by the Romans, and sound similar to Peter's own words of departure, which I shared with you in part one:

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

1 Timothy 6:12, KJV

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

2 Timothy 4:6-8, KJV

I find it very interesting that right after saying "Fight the good fight of faith", Paul writes "lay hold on eternal life." That sound exactly like Jesus' own words when He said "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." So the point is, these people who are raptured first, apparently all died in faith; that is, they kept their faith until the end; and as a matter of Divine Protocol, that may possibly be why they are raptured ahead of the rest of us; however, there may be an even simpler reason. Perhaps you already know what it is. I think that I have already dropped enough hints. The fact of the matter is, they are already dead; and if a person is already dead, then obviously, that puts them one step ahead of those of us who are still alive and in the flesh.

As I have already stated, in order for we living Christians to be transported to Heaven, we have to die first. Not only do we have to die first, but we also have to die in faith. If you accept the theories I have presented in this series, then not only do we have to die first, but we may also have to voluntarily choose to die, if we still happen to be alive at Christ's Return. Can you see that now? That may possibly be why the Lord says "the one shall be taken, and the other left." One person makes the right choice, and steps out by faith saying "Yes! Take me home, Jesus! I am ready to go!", while the other person, thinking to save his Earthly life, possibly because he is still too attached to it, or perhaps because he is even afraid, because his faith has been in word only, and not truly a living faith, makes the wrong choice, just like Lot's wife.

Why else would Jesus put all of those things together like that? He cautions us to remember Lot's wife; He tells us that he that loses his life will save it; and He says one will be taken and the other left; so it really sounds to me like the Lord is telling us to count the cost, and to make sure that we choose wisely when His Angels come for us. He seems to be saying "Don't be so attached to your flesh, and

to your Earthly life, that you miss the ship when your ride arrives! Don't look back to your past life in the flesh as Lot's wife did; look ahead to the bright future ahead of you in the Kingdom of God!" The Apostle Paul was inspired to write similar words when he said:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:13-14, KJV

". . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."
1 Corinthians 2:9, KJV

While the following thought may seem strange to some worldly people, particularly because many of them greatly fear death, and do everything within their power to try to avoid it as long as possible, as we saw earlier, the Bible plainly tells us that Jesus willingly died for us, in order to atone for the sins of the world. In addition to the verses I already shared with you in part two, consider the fact that in the Gospel of John, Jesus is recorded as having said:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."
John 10:17-18, KJV

However, what some Christians may not even realize, is that the Lord apparently died much quicker than was the normal expectation for that manner of corporal punishment. We know that He died before the two thieves who were crucified on both sides of Him, which is why their legs were broken -- to hasten their deaths by asphyxiation -- while His were not. This, of course, was in direct fulfillment of several Old Testament prophecies, as we see by the verses that follow:

"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."
John 19:31-37, KJV

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may

tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."
Psalms 22:16-18, KJV

"He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."
Psalms 34:20, KJV

Please notice that it was the ungodly Jews, whom the Old Testament prophecies refer to as "dogs", and "the assembly of the wicked" -- the Sanhedrin? -- who demanded of Pilate that the legs of all three of them be broken, so that their dead bodies could be taken down from the crosses, before the High Sabbath began. As Jesus Himself plainly told those self-righteous hypocrites, they were more interested in keeping their dead rituals and traditions, than they were in observing the true Law of God, and honoring the true Word of God, who came in the flesh. They wanted Him killed swiftly, and have His dead body taken down quickly, so it wouldn't interfere with their spiritless observances. They didn't want to have the Blood of the Savior on their minds. That is how little Jesus meant to them. But you see, the prophecies had already marked them as the real dogs, and Jesus Himself warned His followers to beware of those Jewish dogs when He said:

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
Matthew 7:6, KJV

That is exactly what they did too. Those Jews trampled the true Word of God under foot; they rejected the Saviour; and they turned on Jesus like a pack of blood-thirsty wild dogs; and they used the Romans to tear Him apart with the whipping, the Crown of Thorns, and the Crucifixion. That is why the Scriptures also tell us:

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."
Isaiah 53:3, KJV

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"
Matthew 21:42, KJV

"And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."
Mark 8:31, KJV

"Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."
Luke 9:22, KJV

"But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation."
Luke 17:25, KJV

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

John 1:11, KJV

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

Acts 4:11, KJV

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be con-founded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."

1 Peter 2:4-8, KJV

What you may find interesting, is the fact that we are told that even Pilate marvelled, or wondered, when he heard that Jesus had died so quickly. You see, unlike other criminals, who sometimes remained alive for several days as they died a slow agonizing on the cross -- which is apparently why the Romans chose such a cruel form of punishment -- Jesus died in a matter of about six hours. The Gospel accounts tell us that He was crucified at about the third hour of the day, which would have been around nine o'clock in the morning, and that He died at about the ninth hour of the day, which would have been around three o'clock in the afternoon:

"And it was the third hour, and they crucified him . . . And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? . . . And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."

Mark 15:25, 33-34, 37, KJV

"And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead."

Mark 15:44, KJV

So you see, Pilate was very familiar with crucifixion. He must have already bloodied his hands with perhaps dozens, hundreds, or maybe even thousands of people who had met such a cruel and humiliating death, before the time came to judge Jesus. The Jews also knew that men could survive for several days on the cross, and they certainly didn't want that "false prophet", Jesus, disrupting their holy day, so they asked Pilate to have their legs broken in order to hasten their deaths. But you see, either in His Mercy and Love for His Son, or perhaps because He simply didn't want those Jewish dogs doing any more physical harm to His Son, such as by having His legs broken so that He would die of asphyxiation, God had Jesus die after only six hours. It may

even be that Jesus voluntarily chose to give up His spirit to His Father at that time. After all, He did say:

". . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."
Luke 23:46b, KJV

Another possible interpretation, is that Jesus was saying, "Father, I commit my Spirit into Your Hands; and I trust you to bring me back to life; just as you promised Me that you would." Whatever the correct interpretation of the verse might be, we know that Jesus only remained dead for three days; and then He returned in a new Glorified Body, thus becoming the Firstfruits of the Resurrection, as I point out in other articles, such as "Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?". He became the first of a new genre of spiritual beings. This is why in the Gospel of John, in prophesying of His own coming death, and the many spiritual children which would result from it, He also said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."
John 12:24-26, KJV

Of course, we are the fruit to which He is referring; and just like Him, someday, we too will put on our wonderful new Spiritual Bodies, which are fashioned just like His Spiritual Body. Consider these verses:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."
Romans 8:29, KJV

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
Philippians 3:21, KJV

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."
1 John 3:2, KJV

So the Scriptures make it clear that we cannot enter the Realm of Heaven in our current physical state. We must be changed; we must be transformed; and no matter how you look at it, or try to interpret it, that involves what we know as death to the flesh. Notice in the following verses where Paul discusses our physical Earthly bodies and our coming Spiritual Bodies, that he very specifically says in verse fifty that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God". That can mean only one thing: It has to die; it has to be replaced by something better:

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial:

but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Corinthians 15:40-52, KJV

If we are still alive in a flesh and blood body when Jesus returns, we will not be fully ready to entire the Realm of the Spirit. Even Jesus plainly said to Nicodemus in John chapter three:

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."
John 3:6, KJV

So God is going to have to transform us first; and that will involve peeling off the outer Earthly shell of the flesh, or the tabernacle as Peter and Paul called it, in order to reveal the full glory of the inner spiritual man, which is currently hidden from human eyes. Remember; Jesus also said in the Gospel of Luke:

". . . The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."
Luke 17:20b-21, KJV

So at Christ's Return, we are going to have to die in the flesh; even if it is for but a brief moment as we are being transformed; and as I have said all along, I think that God may give us the choice to do so, in order that we can put on the full man of the Spirit; and thus meet the Lord in the air, and enter His Kingdom. I don't think that He will force it upon us. If there is one thing which we have seen in the various examples I have presented in this series, it is that an important decision had, or has, to be made in each case. The person(s) involved had, or have, to make a certain choice, and then it becomes necessary to put their faith into action through obedience. Noah had to believe that he was hearing from God, and then build the Ark. Lot had to believe that the two men were truly Angels sent by

God, and then obey their warning by fleeing Sodom. In the coming days when Jerusalem is once again surrounded by her enemies, the Jews are going to have to have the faith to flee to the mountains. In like manner, when the Angels of the Lord come around for us, will we too have to have the faith to make the right choice and hop on board for the ride of our lives, even if it means peeling off the old flesh? As James wrote:

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
James 2:26, KJV

Now, some Christians might argue, "Well, what Christian in his right mind would refuse to go to be with the Lord when the wonderful day of His Second Coming finally arrives?" This question brings us to the final topic I wish to discuss in this series. The obvious answer would be those Christians who have become totally backslidden in their faith, who have seriously compromised with the world, and who no longer even believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, of which there are already many. As I have pointed out a number of times before, if we are ashamed of Him, then He will most certainly be ashamed of us at His Return, for as Jesus said in Mark chapter eight:

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."
Mark 8:38, KJV

But these are not the only people who might miss the ship. You may have noticed that I have repeatedly used the word "ship", to describe our going to be with the Lord. As you may already know from reading some of my other articles that deal with aliens and UFO's, my use of this word is not meant to be taken as a metaphor; and it may be for this very same reason, that some people will be scared out of their wits when Christ and His Angelic Forces arrive in the clouds of Heaven. While most of us are familiar with the multitude of stories, books, TV programs and movies which have been made, the theme of which revolves around alien invasions from the depths of outer space, the simple truth of the matter, is that from a earthly human perspective, Christ's Second Coming may indeed seem like an invasion by a super-advanced intelligent race from Outer Space!

As I point out in such articles as "Age of Deception, Age of Delusion", "Under the Cloud: UFO's and the Holy Bible", "Nature of the Alien", and "Nostradamus: Prophet of God, Or Messenger of Satan?", there are some strong indications in the Bible that God may possess some kind of highly-advanced Heavenly Fleet. Without delving into a lot of details, being as I amply explain this topic in the aforementioned articles, allow me to simply remind you of a few very strange Biblical events.

Most Christians are familiar with the Prophet Ezekiel's "wheel within a wheel" which had "eyes" rotating around its periphery -- which was a very unusual vision indeed -- but was it just a vision? Let us also remember the mysterious

"bright cloud" which overshadowed Peter James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, from which proceeded the very Voice of God, and into which we are even told that the three Disciples entered. We are told that they fell upon their faces out of fear, upon beholding this unusual manifestation from Heaven. Let us likewise not forget the "dove", and the Voice from Heaven, which occurred on the day of Jesus' water baptism. Allow me to also remind you that when Jesus returned to Heaven in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, we are told that "he was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight". Finally, let us not forget that at His Glorious Return, the Lord and His Angelic Army are in fact going to arrive in the clouds of Heaven, in order to engage in their final battle against none other than the Prince of the Power of the Air, the false god of this present world, who will be incarnate in the Jewish Antichrist!

Just as Jesus was taken up, and was received out of their sight by a cloud, He clearly tells us that when His Angels come for us, one will be taken, and the other left. In some way, the Lord's Angels are going to escort us, in order to meet Him in the air. What kind of escort will this be? Will it just be a matter of floating up in the sky in our new Glorified Bodies, or might there possibly be more that is being said here than what meets the eye?

Clearly then, we have some very unusual events occurring in the Bible; and many people who do not fully understand the Word of the Lord, are going to be totally shocked, and very frightened, when Jesus Christ returns. Because of the subtle negative propaganda surrounding UFO's which has been widely propagated for quite a few years via the mass media, some people are going to be utterly convinced that Christ's Return is an evil invasion from outer space; and instead of running to the Lord and His Angelic Escorts, they are going to run away; thinking all the while, that they are saving their lives, when in fact, they may very well end up facing the Lord's Wrath if they don't choose to go. They are going to lose their lives, in the process of trying to save them; just like Lot's wife! Think about this for a moment. If the scenario I've described for you is anywhere near accurate, and Christians do recognize this as Christ's Return, the ignorant people of Planet Earth are going to think that we are absolutely insane when we willingly submit ourselves to the Angelic Visitors who come for us, in order to escort us up to the "Celestial Mother Ships". If all of this sounds farfetched to you, then perhaps you would like to consider the following event which took place several thousand years ago. God has been in this business for a very long time:

"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."
2 Kings 2:9-11, KJV

There again we see that mysterious whirlwind which we find mentioned in a number of places throughout the Scriptures. It was a circular, fast-moving object of some sort, which was enveloped by what appeared to be a brilliant fire! You figure it out! Is that perhaps what Ezekiel saw as well? Could that even have been the "bright cloud" which hovered over the Mount of Transfiguration and boomed out God's Voice? God must have quite a sound system!

So praise God for His "Chariots of Fire"; His Celestial Vehicles which will whisk us off to Heaven, as in a mighty whirlwind! If this is indeed how it will be -- this is all only speculation on my part -- will you personally be ready for it? Will you have the faith to say, "Yes, Lord; take me Home! Beam me up! I am ready to go to be with You in Your Father's Kingdom!"? Will you be able to take that one last great step of faith into the World Beyond? I hope so, because time may be shorter than you think! We may only have a few short years left!

With these words, I will bring this series to its conclusion. I pray that you have found it informative, and I hope that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have been inspired by it, I ask you to please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account on Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link which is found on this page. Thank you so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of resources below which were either mentioned in this series, or which contain topics which are related to this serie. All of these articles are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

Admiral Richard E. Byrd and the Hollow Earth Theory
Age of Deception, Age of Delusion
Are You Crucified With Christ?
Are You Redeeming the Time?
As a Thief in the Night? Not for Me!
Going Down the Highway
Is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?
Nature of the Alien: ET's, Demons or a Government Plot?
Nostradamus: Prophet of God, Or Messenger of Satan?
Pornography: Flee Youthful Lusts!
Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God
The Gay and Lesbian Agenda: To the Point!
The Great Tribulation and the Rapture
Under the Cloud: UFO's and the Holy Bible

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