

GOD'S MERCY, JUDGMENT AND FALLEN ANGELS : PART 1

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A number of years ago I was involved in a Christian network in my local area. We enjoyed discussing quite a range of topics. One day, we engaged in a conversation regarding the topics of Salvation and God's Mercy. During our exchange, I made a statement which apparently surprised some of my more conservative Christian friends. The statement which raised a few eyebrows was the following:

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"The Bible indicates that, ultimately, there will be very few people left in Hell. God won't be happy until He has saved as many of them as He can. Yes, many of the other religions still deny the divinity of Christ, but give the Lord more time to work on them. He hasn't given up on them yet. Have you?"

----- End Of Quote -----

I based the above statement on verses such as the following where we clearly see that our Heavenly Father's earnest desire is that all men repent of their sins and be saved. He does not truly wish to destroy anyone, if their destruction can be avoided, which it indeed can be, if they make the right choice:

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"
Ezekiel 33:11, KJV

"For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."
Lamentations 3:31-33, KJV

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."
Matthew 18:10-14, KJV

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."

Luke 9:51-56, KJV

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke 19:10, KJV

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

John 3:16-17, KJV

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

Acts 3:19-21, KJV

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

1 Timothy 2:3-4, KJV

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9, KJV

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much

rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Hebrews 12:5-13, KJV

Please notice some of the key phrases and sentences which are used in the previous set of verses. Do they not clearly demonstrate God's patience and mercy with fallen humanity?:

- I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked
- For he doth not afflict willingly
- It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish
- The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them
- For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved
- Until the times of restitution of all things
- Who will have all men to be saved
- Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance
- But let it rather be healed

Upon making my previous comment, one of the first responses came from a friend who quoted me the following verses that are found in the Gospel of Matthew. He then challenged me to present Scriptures which refute his position:

"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

The previous verses from the Gospel of Matthew were accompanied by the following remark from my friend:

----- Begin Quote -----

". . . This does not say, 'Don't bother to preach the Word, it's not worth it.' It does, however, seem to suggest that many won't enter heaven's gates."

----- End Quote -----

As I point out in such articles as "A Biblical Cafeteria, or the Whole Course?", "Is the KJV Bible the Inerrant Word of God?" and "In Defense of the KJV Bible", naturally, I accept the entire Bible as being the inspired Word of God. That, of course, includes the previous verses. However, as some of you may also know, for some time now -- years in fact -- I have pondered the remote possibility that even after people enter the broad way to destruction, even after our present physical life ends, there may still be a ray of hope for those people who have made the wrong choice by refusing to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Not only that, but if we truly believe in God's Righteousness and Mercy, then we must wonder about the fate of those people who were never even given an opportunity to know Jesus; such as stillborn babies, aborted babies, children who die at a young age, and other young people who die before they reach the age of accountability. I also discuss these and related issues in articles such as "Is the Message of Salvation Meant for All Men?", "All Are Given a Chance, But . . .", "Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen" and "Not Everyone is a Child of God".

In a number of other articles such as "Judgment of Azazel: Scapegoat of the High Priest", "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism", "The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?", "The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men" and "Nephilim: The Giants of Genesis", I also mention that in his two Epistles, the Apostle Peter explains that during the time that His body lay

in the sepulchre, Jesus descended in spirit form into what Peter describes as a prison. Jude likewise mentions this dark prison that appears to be located in the bowels of the Earth. Consider the following verses:

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

1 Peter 3:18-20, KJV

"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;"

2 Peter 2:4-5, KJV

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Jude 1:6, KJV

In Psalm Sixteen, King David also had some type of a vision regarding his future heir -- Jesus Christ -- and prophesied concerning Jesus' Death and Resurrection from the Dead, and His return to the Right Hand of His Father. This gave David great hope that someday he too would likewise be raised from the dead. In the Book of Acts, while preaching about Jesus' Resurrection, the Apostle Peter in fact quotes directly from King David's Psalm. Consider the following verses:

"I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Psalms 16:8-11, KJV

"For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

Acts 2:25-32, KJV

Please notice that in the previous verses, Peter appears to be making a clear distinction between the words "soul" and "flesh". By using the word "neither", I believe that Peter is stating that they are actually two separate things. Some people believe that the word "soul" is simply referring to our physical body which acts as a container for our spirit, which is the unique life force that we each receive from God which in fact makes us alive. The Apostles also refer to our flesh bodies as earthen vessels, buildings, houses, lively stones, tabernacles and temples; as we can determine by the following verses:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

"But we have this treasure [the Holy Spirit] in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

2 Corinthians 4:7, KJV

"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

"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."
1 Peter 2:5, KJV

At any rate, this belief regarding the body and soul being one and the same thing is partially based on the following verse that is found in the Book of Genesis:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
Genesis 2:7, KJV

At first glance, the previous verse seems to be referring to the body as the soul; that is, the container which received the Breath of Life from God. In other words, after God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, Adam was just a dead soul. However, once God breathed into his nostrils, Adam became a living soul; in other words, a living body. This does make sense and is partially correct. The problem is that once we conduct additional Biblical research, we discover something very interesting, and that is this: In many places the word "souls" is used loosely to refer to people, such as in how many souls -- or people -- constitute a certain family. In other places, it is indeed referring to the physical body. Let me give you a clear example that is found in the Book of Genesis:

"These be the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padanaram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters were thirty and three. And the sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli. And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel. These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare unto Jacob, even sixteen souls. The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin. And unto Joseph in the

land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard. These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all the souls were fourteen. And the sons of Dan; Hushim. And the sons of Naphtali; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem. These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls were seven. All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten."

Genesis 46:15-27, KJV

As the previous verses demonstrate, people only give birth to other people, and not to actual spirits. Thus, it is very clear that in those verses, the word "soul" is referring to people who became a part of, or who were born into, Jacob's family.

However, if we keep searching further, we soon discover that in the strictest sense of the word, "soul" appears to refer to the spirit which dwells within that person or body, which is the actual essence of who and what that person is. Thus, when a new person is conceived or born, I am not really sure at what point a new life force -- or spiritual presence -- moves into that physical body in order to give it its own state of consciousness and self-awareness. Does a fetus have its own Breath of Life; or is it possible that it is really kept alive by its mother's life force, and does not receive its own spirit -- or life force -- until the moment in which it is actually born? Is this when God performs His miracle and makes that tiny body its own unique and separate being?

Who knows. I honestly cannot say that I know the answer to such a profound question as this. All I know for certain is that according to the Book of Genesis, while Adam's body was complete, it was not conscious or aware until God breathed the Breath of Life -- or perhaps sent a spirit? -- to dwell within him. When this happened, Adam became a living soul; which I interpret to mean that he became a living spirit, because that spirit entered into his body of flesh in order

to live within our physical world, and use Adam's body as its vehicle, so-to-speak. As we learned earlier, our body is in fact the temple of God's Spirit. Thus, when we die, in accordance with the Scriptures, our body of flesh will return to the dust of the ground from whence it came, and our spirit -- or Breath of Life -- will return to God who gave it. Consider these verses which confirm these points:

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Genesis 3:19, KJV

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

Psalms 103:13-14, KJV

"Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust."

Psalms 104:29, KJV

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Ecclesiastes 12:7, KJV

We have all heard the popular phrase which says that babies are made in Heaven. Looking at a newborn baby, we can only wonder if that spark of innocence shining through isn't the essence of their true spiritual being. It is indeed a shame how this issue of the moment of consciousness has been targeted by pro-choice groups who seek to justify their practice of sacrificing their babies on the moderns altars of their god Moloch, the abortion clinics. Perhaps they should consider the following verses which seem to indicate that, even before He formed us in the physical world, in our mother's womb, God knew exactly what we were to look like. Perhaps it is even saying that our spirits were with Him before our physical creation. You be the judge:

"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest

parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."

Psalms 139:13-16, KJV

There is a popular proverb which states that "the eyes are the windows to -- or of -- the soul." Could this be why making eye contact with someone is so interesting? When a person is lying or being dishonest about something, it is very difficult for them to look you straight in the eyes. Why? Because if they do, you may see the REAL them. You may sense what they are really thinking. You may see into their soul. Have you ever noticed how it has become a widespread habit to wear sunglasses, even when it isn't sunny? Odd indeed, isn't it? We all like to hide our real selves, our spiritual beings which peer out through the eyes of our physical bodies, the windows of our soul. How is that for a spooky story? Now watch some of you go start staring at yourselves in the mirror. Don't worry, the rest of us aren't watching. Maybe one of these days I will have time to do a study and write an article on light, darkness and the eyes. It would be quite interesting I am sure.

To further establish that the physical body is only a vehicle in which the real you, your spirit or soul resides, here are a few more verses. In this first verse Jesus shows us the separateness of soul and body, and that it is only God who can destroy both:

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Matthew 10:28, KJV

As I mention in the series entitled "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism", in the Bible there are three words which are all translated as "hell", even though they each mean something different in the Hebrew and Greek languages. These words are "hades", "sheol" and "g'henna". One refers to the underworld, the abode of the dead, the spirit world. One refers to the common grave where we are all buried. And one refers to an actual place of torment, which the Bible refers to as a lake burning with fire and brimstone.

In the previous verse, Jesus' use of the word "hell" seems to really be referring to the Lake of Fire that is mentioned in the Book of Revelation, being as this is where the Second Death occurs. In other words, both a person's body and spirit seem to be totally snuffed out of existence. The Lake of Fire is God's eternal scrap pile reserved for the very worst; that is, the incorrigibles. In fact, we are told that death and hell are cast into the Lake of Fire. Another example where Jesus appears to be referring to the Lake of Fire is in Luke 16:19-31, which discusses the story of the rich man and the poor beggar Lazarus.

In the following verse we see another example where the word "soul" is really used to mean the spirits of the departed. Here we view John's vision of the souls or spirits of those who have been martyred, under the altar near the Throne of the Almighty:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:"

Revelation 6:9, KJV

It would seem that these are spiritual beings; unless you accept that there are flesh and blood people in Heaven, which would be contrary to what was taught by both Jesus and the Apostle Paul. I am referring to the following verses:

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Luke 24:39, KJV

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

1 Corinthians 15:50, KJV

Following is yet another verse which is found in the Book of Revelation where the word "souls" appears to be describing spiritual beings, and not bodies of flesh and blood:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,

and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Revelation 20:4, KJV

Thinking back now on the words which were spoken by both King David and Peter regarding Jesus' resurrection, this distinction between "soul" and "flesh" or "soul" and "body" also becomes more apparent. Consider again:

". . . He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption . . ."

In this context, the word "hell" is translated from the Greek word "hades" which, as I explained earlier, represents the underworld, the abode of the dead, a spiritual holding place which the Bible and many other ancient texts seem to indicate is located within the bowels of the Earth. Hades is not the place of fire and brimstone which I described before.

At any rate, when Jesus died, what happened to his physical body? It was anointed/embalmed and placed in a sepulchre, which in those days usually meant a carved out or natural cave. As far back as Abraham's day we see the same practice being followed. People used caves for burial, if you wish to call it burial. In our modern day, when we say "burial", we think of digging a hole in the ground, placing a casket in it, covering it up with earth and placing some sort of tombstone on top of it. Not so in ancient days. If this were the case, Lazarus would have had a bit of a problem walking out after Jesus had raised him from the dead.

From where did Jesus raise Lazarus? From the world of the dead, from hell, from Hades. He reunited his spirit with his physical body which still lay embalmed in the sepulchre. So, in similar fashion, just as both King David and Peter said, Jesus' physical body remained in the sepulchre while His spirit descended to the netherworld, to hell, where Peter tells us Jesus preached to the spirits in prison. But this is not where Jesus' soul or spirit remained, for as David and Peter both said, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell . . ." As Jesus had prophesied concerning His death, following the example of Jonah spending three days in the

belly of the great fish, Jesus rose from the dead, and eventually returned to His Heavenly Abode at the right hand of His Father.

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

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GOD'S MERCY, JUDGMENT AND FALLEN ANGELS : PART 2

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Why Did Jesus Go To Hades?, Did Jesus Preach Salvation To The Spirits Imprisoned In Hades?, Jesus Came To Save This World And Not To Judge Or Condemn It, Jesus Was The Firstfruits Of The Resurrection, The Old Testament Saints Looked Forward In Faith To Their Salvation, Counted For Righteousness Through Faith, Abraham's Faith And Righteousness, Timeless Nature Of The Spirit Realm, Resurrection Of The Old Testament Saints, Judgment Of The Fallen Angels/Watchers/Ir, Genesis Flood And The Destruction Of The Nephilim, The Bottomless Pit Or Abyss, Did Jesus Preach To Antediluvian Humans?, How Far Will God Go To Save A Soul?, The Circle Of God's Righteousness And Mercy, Would God Condemn A Sinner Unfairly?, Righteous Punishment, Gospel Preached WorldWide: We Are Without Excuse, Not Everyone Is Going To Be Saved, The Second Death And The Lake Of Fire

Continuing our discussion from part one, this brings us back to our original question. If there's zero chance of Salvation for us after our death, why would Jesus even bother going to Hell, or Hades? Is it maybe because that is where all souls or departed spirits had to go first following physical death, and thus Jesus had to fulfill that same requirement as well?

Such a scenario reminds me of the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. Or is there another reason? Well, if we read again the previous verse I shared with you from the Apostle Peter's first Epistle, perhaps we can find a clue. Peter wrote:

"By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;"

1 Peter 3:19, KJV

In reading the verse, my impression is that Jesus voluntarily went to this prison, which I am assuming is a reference to Hell, or Hades. In my view, this leaves us with the distinct possibility that He may have gone there specifically to offer a chance of Salvation to those people who had perished, due to the violence and evil which filled the Earth just prior to the Genesis Flood. Notice that the verse says He "preached" to them. Now what would Jesus be preaching in such a terrible place if not Salvation? It doesn't seem likely that He would go there just to further rebuke them for being so evil. After all, as He plainly said in the Gospel of John:

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

John 3:17, KJV

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

John 12:47, KJV

Let us also not forget that in both the Hebrew and Greek languages, Jesus' name means "Jehovah is salvation". It seems to me that even though roughly twenty-five hundred years had passed since their physical deaths had occurred, these souls still required a fair chance at accepting Salvation. Let us not forget that, technically speaking, until Jesus died on the Cross, no one could fully receive the Gift of Eternal Life as far as I know. After all, we are told in a number of places in the Scriptures that Jesus was the FirstFruits of the Resurrection, and the Firstborn of the dead, as we see by the following verses:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Romans 8:29, KJV

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."
1 Corinthians 15:19-23, KJV

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature . . . And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."
Colossians 1:15, 18, KJV

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood . . . I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."
Revelation 1:5, 18, KJV

Now some people might possibly argue, "Well, what about the Old Testament Patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses? What about the other Old Testament Saints? Are you suggesting that they were not saved?" No, not at all. As I point out in a few other articles, it is my personal belief that the Old Testament Saints looked forward in faith to their Salvation, just as we modern Believers look backwards in faith to the events of two thousand years ago for our Salvation. Because they looked forward in faith believing -- even though Jesus Christ had not even been born yet -- God counted this as righteousness to them. In other words, they were acceptable to, and approved by God.

However, their Salvation was not perfected -- that is to say, it was not complete -- until Jesus came in the flesh and died on the Cross for the sins of the world. In a way, we can say that God kind of gave them credit, because they had invested their faith in a future event. We also need to remember that in the Spirit World, time does not appear to exist. So even though Jesus had not been physically born yet during the Old

Testament period, His entire life and His death on the Cross were already counted as being done by God the Father in the Spirit Realm. Consider the following verses:

"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past."

Ecclesiastes 3:14-15, KJV

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"

Isaiah 46:9-10, KJV

Thus, because of the timeless nature of the Spirit Realm, in my opinion, the Old Testament Saints could cash in on their investment in the future, so-to-speak. Just like the Patriarch Abraham, their faith counted to them for righteousness. Here are a few Scriptures to verify this particular point:

"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Genesis 15:6, KJV

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

Romans 4:3, KJV

As you may know, the story behind the above verses is that when as yet Sarah was still barren before Isaac was born, the Lord showed Abraham all of the stars in the night sky, and told him that his seed would multiply like the stars in heaven. Because Abraham believed, because he had faith in the Lord's word, God gave him credit for it, and Abraham was approved and accepted before God. This is what righteousness actually means in the Scriptures.

So as I said, in essence, the Old Testament Saints were saved by their faith in a future event; that is, Jesus' Sacrifice during the First Century. They looked forward in faith to the coming of the Messiah. However, as I noted previously, until

Jesus actually died on the Cross and rose from the dead, they could not fully experience their Salvation, or the Redemption of their bodies. And that, my friends, is one of the greatest mysteries of the Bible. For you see, as soon as Jesus rose from the dead, consider the amazing event which Matthew tells us about in the twenty-seventh chapter of his Gospel:

"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

Matthew 27:52-53, KJV

Please carefully notice that we are told that this event was a physical resurrection from the dead, whereby the bodies of the Old Testament Saints were raised from the earth, and then reunited with their spirits. This is precisely what happened with Jesus as well. Their investment of faith in the future Sacrifice of Jesus Christ had paid off. The previous verses describe how these Old Testament Saints finally -- and fully -- experienced their Salvation in every sense of the word. I am also reminded of the inspiring words of the Patriarch Job who said the following:

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

Job 19:25-27, KJV

There is one other possibility which we should consider in order to obtain the widest possible understanding regarding what Jesus going to prison may possibly mean. Those of you who are familiar with my work will know that in several other articles, I mention the "ir" -- that is, the "Watchers" -- who are mentioned in the Books of Genesis, Daniel, Jude and the Book of Enoch. There are a few other places in the Bible where possible references are made to these beings as well.

According to both Jude and Enoch, we know that after their rebellion, these Fallen Angels were imprisoned in an Abyss. Following is a passage from the Epistle of Jude, followed by some extensive quotes from the Book of Enoch. Keep in mind that in the Bible, in a number of places the word "star" is

symbolic of spiritual beings. If you are familiar with the Book of Revelation, you will also notice the similarities to the "Bottomless Pit", upon which a seal is set to lock in Satan. It appears that Enoch and John may be speaking of the same place:

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Jude 1:6, KJV

"Then said the Most High, the Holy and Great One spake, and sent Uriel to the son of Lamech, and said to him: 'Go to Noah and tell him in my name "Hide thyself!" and reveal to him the end that is approaching: that the whole earth will be destroyed, and a deluge is about to come upon the whole earth, and will destroy all that is on it. And now instruct him that he may escape and his seed may be preserved for all the generations of the world.'" And again the Lord said to Raphael: 'Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dudael, and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there for ever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the day of the great judgement he shall be cast into the fire. And heal the earth which the angels have corrupted, and proclaim the healing of the earth, that they may heal the plague, and that all the children of men may not perish through all the secret things that the Watchers have disclosed and have taught their sons. And the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin.' And to Gabriel said the Lord: 'Proceed against the bastards and the reprobates, and against the children of fornication: and destroy [the children of fornication and] the children of the Watchers from amongst men [and cause them to go forth]: send them one against the other that they may destroy each other in battle: for length of days shall they not have. And no request that they (i.e. their fathers) make of thee shall be granted unto their fathers on their behalf; for they hope to live an eternal life, and that each one of them will live five hundred years.' And the Lord said unto Michael: 'Go, bind Semjaza and his associates who have united themselves with women so as to have defiled themselves with them in all their uncleanness. And when their sons have slain one

another, and they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them fast for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth, till the day of their judgement and of their consummation, till the judgement that is for ever and ever is consummated. In those days they shall be led off to the abyss of fire: and to the torment and the prison in which they shall be confined for ever. And whosoever shall be condemned and destroyed will from thenceforth be bound together with them to the end of all generations. And destroy all the spirits of the reprobate and the children of the Watchers, because they have wronged mankind. Destroy all wrong from the face of the earth and let every evil work come to an end: and let the plant of righteousness and truth appear: and it shall prove a blessing; the works of righteousness and truth shall be planted in truth and joy for evermore."

Book of Enoch 10:1-16

"And I proceeded and saw a place which burns day and night, where there are seven mountains of magnificent stones, three towards the east, and three towards the south. And as for those towards the east, one was of coloured stone, and one of pearl, and one of jacinth, and those towards the south of red stone. But the middle one reached to heaven like the throne of God, of alabaster, and the summit of the throne was of sapphire. And I saw a flaming fire. And beyond these mountains is a region the end of the great earth: there the heavens were completed. And I saw a deep abyss, with columns of heavenly fire, and among them I saw columns of fire fall, which were beyond measure alike towards the height and towards the depth. And beyond that abyss I saw a place which had no firmament of the heaven above, and no firmly founded earth beneath it: there was no water upon it, and no birds, but it was a waste and horrible place. I saw there seven stars like great burning mountains, and to me, when I inquired regarding them, The angel said: 'This place is the end of heaven and earth: this has become a prison for the stars and the host of heaven. And the stars which roll over the fire are they which have transgressed the commandment of the Lord in the beginning of their rising, because they did not come forth at their appointed times. And He was wroth with them, and bound them till the time when their guilt should be consummated (even) for ten thousand years.' And Uriel said to me: 'Here shall stand the angels who have connected themselves with women, and their spirits assuming

many different forms are defiling mankind and shall lead them astray into sacrificing to demons as gods, (here shall they stand,) till the day of the great judgement in which they shall be judged till they are made an end of. And the women also of the angels who went astray shall become sirens.' And I, Enoch, alone saw the vision, the ends of all things: and no man shall see as I have seen."

Book of Enoch 18:6b-19:3

"And I proceeded to where things were chaotic. And I saw there something horrible: I saw neither a heaven above nor a firmly founded earth, but a place chaotic and horrible. And there I saw seven stars of the heaven bound together in it, like great mountains and burning with fire. Then I said: 'For what sin are they bound, and on what account have they been cast in hither?' Then said Uriel, one of the holy angels, who was with me, and was chief over them, and said: 'Enoch, why dost thou ask, and why art thou eager for the truth? These are of the number of the stars of heaven, which have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and are bound here till ten thousand years, the time entailed by their sins, are consummated.' And from thence I went to another place, which was still more horrible than the former, and I saw a horrible thing: a great fire there which burnt and blazed, and the place was cleft as far as the abyss, being full of great descending columns of fire: neither its extent or magnitude could I see, nor could I conjecture. Then I said: 'How fearful is the place and how terrible to look upon!' Then Uriel answered me, one of the holy angels who was with me, and said unto me: 'Enoch, why hast thou such fear and affright?' And I answered: 'Because of this fearful place, and because of the spectacle of the pain.' And he said unto me: 'This place is the prison of the angels, and here they will be imprisoned for ever.'"

Book of Enoch 21:1-10

"And I looked and turned to another part of the earth, and saw there a deep valley with burning fire. And they brought the kings and the mighty, and began to cast them into this deep valley. And there mine eyes saw how they made these their instruments, iron chains of immeasurable weight. And I asked the angel of peace who went with me, saying: 'For whom are these chains being prepared?' And he said unto me: 'These are being prepared for the hosts of Azazel, so that they may take them and cast them into the abyss of complete

condemnation, and they shall cover their jaws with rough stones as the Lord of Spirits commanded. And Michael, and Gabriel, and Raphael, and Phanuel shall take hold of them on that great day, and cast them on that day into the burning furnace, that the Lord of Spirits may take vengeance on them for their unrighteousness in becoming subject to Satan and leading astray those who dwell on the earth.' And in those days shall punishment come from the Lord of Spirits, and he will open all the chambers of waters which are above the heavens, and of the fountains which are beneath the earth. And all the waters shall be joined with the waters: that which is above the heavens is the masculine, and the water which is beneath the earth is the feminine. And they shall destroy all who dwell on the earth and those who dwell under the ends of the heaven. And when they have recognized their unrighteousness which they have wrought on the earth, then by these shall they perish.

Book of Enoch 54:1-10

Thus, from the previous quotes from the Book of Enoch, we arrive at a dreadful picture of the judgements which were to befall the Watchers -- that is, the Fallen Angels who led humankind astray through sexual perversion -- as well as befall their half-human offspring, the Nephilim giants. As many of you will know, this mighty judgment against these Nephilim occurred about one hundred and twenty years later at the time of the Flood, which occurred in the days of the Patriarch Noah. To balance out this picture, following are some verses from the Book of Revelation which also speak of the Abyss -- or Bottomless Pit -- and describe the fate of those unrepentant people who rebel against God:

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."

Revelation 9:1-2, KJV

"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon."

Revelation 9:11, KJV

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them."
Revelation 11:7, KJV

"The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."
Revelation 17:8, KJV

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."
Revelation 20:1-3, KJV

In light of the previous verses, it should be noted that the fate of Azazel, Semjaza and all of the rest of the rebellious Angels has already been decided. They have already been found guilty. The only remaining question is whether or not their sentence has already been carried out. In other words, if we adopt a Futurist point of view -- which is open to debate -- it appears that perhaps Azazel and his companions have been locked up since the time of the Flood, and are just waiting for the final Day of Judgment, during which their sentences will be fully carried out. However, it would seem that Satan -- who is over them all -- may possibly still be loose in this world. If you are wondering why I say "possibly", please consider reading the article entitled "Did the Devil Make You Do It?". It may challenge some of your current beliefs.

So then, based on this understanding, it does not seem very likely that Jesus would have any reason to go to said prison to preach to these particular spirits; that is, to the Fallen Angels. That leaves us with only one possibility in my view: He preached to the spirits -- or souls -- of the human beings who were destroyed during the Genesis Flood. This, of course, brings us right back to the basic question

with which this whole series began: Exactly how far will God extend His mercy to save a soul? From what we have now seen, and if my personal speculation is correct, quite far; even beyond the bounds of death. But is there even a limit to this? It appears that there is.

It seems to me that once Jesus died on the Cross and went to preach to the souls in Hades, or prison, He had bound up all of the loose ends. He had taken care of those people who had perished before the Flood. He had completed the circle of God's own Righteousness and Mercy. I would think that it is also safe to assume that Jesus took care of those people who were born following the Flood as well. We must remember that during the Post-Flood era, beginning with Abraham, the Lord manifested Himself to the people of the Earth in a variety of ways, as becomes evident by the many miracles He did for the children of Israel. In other words, the knowledge of the God of Israel was well known. Even the defeated enemies of the Israelites were aware of His great power.

In short, I suspect -- but cannot conclusively prove - that everyone who had lived prior to Jesus' time were probably given the message of Salvation when Jesus preached in Hades. Taking this a step further, perhaps those people who accepted and believed in Him may have been a part of the group who arose during Jesus' own Resurrection, as is described in the verses I shared with you earlier from the Gospel of Matthew. As I said, I cannot prove any of this beyond a shadow of a doubt. It is my personal speculation at best, which you can either accept or reject according to your own faith.

However, I do believe in the absolute Righteousness and Mercy of God. As such, I am not of the opinion that our God would condemn a sinner unfairly, any more than a good parent would punish their child for something which they did not know was wrong. As I explain in other articles, for any punishment or judgment to be righteous, children must first be made aware of the rules. I believe that God operates in the same fashion. While we as parents may sometimes fail in this regard due to our own anger or impatience with our children, our God is a perfect God, and I don't believe that He makes such mistakes.

Hence, if all previous bases are covered as I have described for you in the previous paragraphs, then that only leaves us with one group of people: those of us who have lived in the

two thousand years since Jesus walked the Earth. Clearly, we are all without excuse. Thanks to the faithfulness of the original Disciples who traveled far and wide, and the many faithful scribes who made a record of the amazing events which transpired during the First Century, and modern-day preachers who share the Message of Salvation in so very many different ways, people the world over who have reached the age of accountability, have had ample opportunity to either receive or reject God's precious Gift of Salvation.

Just as Jesus was willing to travel to the bowels of this Earth -- that is, to Hades -- in order to give those lost souls a chance at Salvation, this global preaching of the Gospel in so many different languages during the past two thousand years -- "in the ages to come", as the Apostle Paul referred to it -- again clearly demonstrates the degree of God's Mercy, Patience and Righteousness. He has made the rules known to us. He has set forth the conditions for our Salvation, so that we may know them and decide what we want to do about it. On a side note, you may also wish to refer to the article entitled "Dead to the Law: God's Laws Written on Our Hearts".

Those people who have knowingly rejected God's Mercy through Jesus Christ, and who have adopted other false religions -- and they number in the billions -- have done so of their own accord and volition. As such, they have absolutely no excuse, and they will have to answer for themselves. To reiterate my message, for the past two thousand years, humankind has been given ample opportunity to receive God's Love and Salvation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are given our whole lives to decide. If we haven't done so, whose fault is it but our own? Even staunch atheists who reject the Bible are also without excuse, because God has revealed Himself to them in other ways. I am reminded of the following verses:

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

Romans 1:20, KJV

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

Hebrews 9:27, KJV

In my original quote which began this series, I said that God will not be happy until He has saved as many people as He possibly can. Please notice that nowhere did I say that absolutely everyone will be saved. As I pointed out in other articles which are listed at the end of this series, we know from the Scriptures that the Beast, the False Prophet and their followers are cast into the Lake of Fire, which is the Second Death. We also know that even after the Millennial reign of Christ on Earth, there are those people who rebel against God's righteous rule. No matter how far God goes to extend His great Mercy, there are still people who choose to reject the Truth until the absolute, bitter end when both their bodies and their souls -- or spirits -- are completely destroyed in the Lake of Fire. Such people are reprobates and incorrigibles.

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

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GOD'S MERCY, JUDGMENT AND FALLEN ANGELS : PART 3

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Smart Sheep, Or Stubborn Goats, Learn From Past Mistakes, God Is Always Willing To Take Us Back, Matthew 7:13-14 Explained, Saved Nations And Population Of New Jerusalem, Millions Are Saved But Billions Are Also Lost, Global Christian Population, Few There Be That Find It, Reading The Scriptures From The Right Perspective, Jesus The Rejected Cornerstone, Fishes And Loaves Crowd, The Disciples Flee, A Great Multitude In Heaven, 144,000 And A Remnant, Abraham Pleads For Sodom And Gomorrah, Wicked America And Her Approaching Judgment, God's Righteous Judgments, Divine Chastisement Is A Sign Of God's Love, Let It

Be Healed, Every Creature And Every Knee Shall Bow, Universal Reconciliation, Accept The Light Of Christ, Suggested Reading

Now, concerning the context of Matthew 7:13-14 -- which I quoted at the beginning of this series -- I believe that the main point Jesus was endeavoring to emphasize is that as far as our humanity goes, we more often than not make the wrong decisions. This includes when it comes to the opportunity to receive Salvation. There is a reason that people are often referred to as being dumb sheep. In the case of Salvation, we are either smart sheep, or else we are stubborn goats, as Jesus makes perfectly clear in the closing verses of Matthew chapter twenty-five.

For those of us who are parents, sometimes we have to allow our children to make a few bad decisions, so that they will eventually come to see the light. As much as it may hurt us to watch them suffer, we have to let them learn from their own mistakes. In the end, they will be a lot wiser for it. In a larger context, the Bible informs us that we too must learn from the mistakes which were made in the past. In this case, we must learn from the mistakes which were made by the ancient Israelites. Consider the following verses:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:"

Romans 15:4 KJV

"NOW THESE THINGS WERE OUR EXAMPLES, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted . . . 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 10:6, 11, KJV

Insofar as making mistakes is concerned, I believe that God allows us to do the same. That is what free will and personal choice is all about. But just like human parents, He never gives up on us completely, as long as we have life. As the old saying goes, "As long as there is life, there is hope."

God is always willing to receive us back into His arms, once we have seen the error of our ways and repent. Consider the story of the Prodigal Son which is found in Luke chapter fifteen.

"Sure", you may say, "But what about this whole concept of a wide gate and a broad way that leads to destruction, and the many people who enter therein, and the straight gate and the narrow way which leads to Eternal Life, which very few people manage to find? How do you explain that? Doesn't your belief contradict those verses?"

Actually, no. Not in the least. I really have no problem with Matthew 7:13-14 whatsoever. Allow me to explain. It seems rather illogical to me that Jesus would construct a beautiful Heavenly City called New Jerusalem which is about fifteen hundred miles long on each side of its square base, just to have a "few" folks live in it. You see, I think the problem here is in our own understanding of what Jesus meant by "and few there be that find it". We are temporal creatures who for the most part do not expand our vision beyond our own time period and our private little worlds. Maybe some of us really need to broaden our vision and try to see things the way that God sees them. In the Book of Revelation we are told the following:

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the Earth do bring their glory and honour into it."

Revelation 21:4, KJV

This verse clearly reveals that there are entire nations of saved people, and that there are kings and nations living outside of the Heavenly City, New Jerusalem. Who are all of these people? Bear in mind that this verse is describing the New Heaven and the New Earth. These are all saved people. We really have no idea exactly how many people this is, but in comparison to how many billions of people have lived on the Earth since the time of Adam and Eve, it must be relatively "few". I suspect that it may be in the hundreds of millions, I really don't know with any degree of certainty. Following are two verses which offer us some clues:

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the

number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;"

Revelation 5:11, KJV

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;"

Revelation 7:9, KJV

"Ten thousand times ten thousand" equates to one hundred million inhabitants of the Heavenly City. Then we also have the additional "thousands of thousands". But then John also writes "a great multitude, which no man could number". As I said, we have no idea how many saved people that is. While it definitely seems like a lot, even if these saved people total in the hundreds of millions -- a mere speculation -- if we compare this number to the many billions of people who have ever lived on the Earth, and who have needed Salvation, it is still very "few". So millions may be saved, but billions are also lost, thus fulfilling Matthew 7:13-14.

But then we run into sort of a problem when we look at the state of the world today. According to the World Population Clock, as of December, 2017, the estimated world population stood at 7.6 billion people. The latest online figures I was able to find indicate that as of 2015, there were 2.3 billion professing Christians in the world, with over one billion of them being Roman Catholics. Furthermore, according to a study that was conducted by the Pew Research Center, the number of Christians in the world was estimated to grow to 2.9 billion people by 2050.

In other words, these figures indicate that about one third of the world's population is comprised of Christians. While that is not a very healthy figure, neither would I classify it as being "few". Of course, in all honesty, we really don't know how many of those individuals are truly Bible-believing, born-again Christians. I don't need to remind you of how much compromise has entered the modern Church. Sadly, many people are nominal Christians at best. They bear the name, but they live like the Devil and the children of the world. Only God knows their hearts, so it is not for me to judge the status of their Salvation.

Yet still, if we give these people the benefit of the doubt, and accept all 2.3 billion of them as being truly born-again, saved Christians, that doesn't seem like the "few there be that find it". After all, that is a lot of people. So what is going on? What are we missing?

As I continued to ponder this "few there be that find it" issue, I began to see what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14 from a whole different perspective. As I point out in the series "Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?", one of the problems with us modern-day Christians is that when we read the Scriptures, we tend to look at them, and understand them, from our modern perspective. However, this can be a mistake. What we really need to do is to understand what Jesus said from the perspective of one of His listeners who lived during that same time period. When we do this, we suddenly see and understand things very differently, without our modern-day filters in place.

Now, consider the time frame when Jesus said Matthew 7:13-14, and the general attitude of the people who surrounded Him at that time. To give you an idea of what I am talking about, all we have to do is to look at some of the things which are contained in the Scriptures. The following verses give us a very clear picture of the hostility which surrounded Jesus:

"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

"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

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

Psalms 118:22-23, 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 have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"

Mark 12:10-11, 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 [that is disapproved, rejected, repudiated] 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 confounded. 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

So while we all know that the multitudes thronged after the Lord because in their own selfish desires they wanted to be healed of their many afflictions, and because they wanted to be amazed by the miracles which Jesus performed, and because they wanted to fill their bellies with the fishes and the loaves which He provided, and because they desired a king who

would break the yoke of Roman bondage, in the end, where were they when Jesus was arrested, mocked, scourged and finally crucified? They were nowhere in sight.

You see, Jesus knew human nature. He knew what was in men's hearts. He knew who truly followed Him from their hearts, and they were indeed few in number. They were not the multitudes who just wanted the other things which I just mentioned. As a good example, you may recall that the minute Jesus started talking about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, many of His followers abandoned Him. Likewise, when Judas and the mob accosted Him that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, even His closest followers took flight and abandoned Him in fear and cowardice. Consider these verses:

"Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, [this being the flesh and blood sermon] said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?"

John 6:60-67, KJV

"In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."

Matthew 26:55-56, KJV

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. And they all forsook him, and fled."

Mark 14:48-50, KJV

So, when we look at what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14 from the perspective of someone who actually lived at that time, and who may have even heard Him say it, it really makes a lot of sense. Very few of the Jews were willing to accept Christ, and go through the strait gate and the narrow way, which was Himself.

In fact, if you require further proof of what I am saying, consider the following. Earlier, I shared with you Revelation 7:9 which describes the "great multitude, which no man could number" who stand before the Lamb of God. I lean towards the belief that this "great multitude" represents the Gentile nations who embrace Christ, and thus who are saved. This is the only way that we can arrive at a figure of at least one hundred million or more -- ten thousand times ten thousand, as per the verse. But in contrast, do you know what comes right before Revelation 7:9? It is a detailed description of how many Israelites embrace Christ. Guess what? It is only 144,000. Consider the following verses:

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand."

Revelation 7:2-8, KJV

Thus we see how Matthew 7:13-14 perfectly matches up with what is written in the Book of Revelation. Why? Because when Jesus said that during the First Century, He was addressing

His own people; that is, the people of Israel who were alive at that time. He already knew how few of them would actually accept Him, and thus be saved and sealed to Redemption, as we see in the Book of Revelation. At this current time, I believe that these 144,000 people represent "the remnant" of whom the Apostle Paul speaks in the following verses:

"Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:"

Romans 9:27, KJV

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Romans 11:5, KJV

Returning to our earlier discussion, I remain convinced that a righteous God would not be happy until the absolute minimum of people is cast into the Lake of Fire. If you would like to read another good example of how far God is willing to extend His Mercy, Grace and Patience in order to save the lost, even when they don't want to be saved, read the story of Abraham, Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis chapters eighteen and nineteen. It may surprise you to see how Abraham questioned the righteousness of the Lord, and pleaded for the lives of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham bargained down to the lowest number that he possibly could, and God was still willing to hear him out. Yet tragically, those people were just so terribly wicked with their sexual perversions, that it did no good. God still destroyed them all in the end, save for Lot and his two daughters.

How much the story of Sodom and Gomorrah reminds me of modern America. Once a more devout nation which feared the Lord, she has been transformed into a spiritual whore which entertains foreign religions, and which is filled with every manner of sexual perversion, not to mention other forms of wickedness. Her tragic fall into spiritual darkness has happened so fast, that it has left many God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians stunned. When I was a young boy growing up in America, never would I have imagined the things that we see today. The level of outright defiance against God and His holy Laws is simply mind-boggling. She has become an abomination in His sight. I am once again reminded of the following verse:

"And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination."

Jeremiah 2:7, KJV

But as I explain in "Don't Ever Underestimate Our Spiritual Enemy", given what I have seen, heard and read, I can't help but believe that America's day of judgment draws ever closer. Whenever that day does finally arrive, we must remember that our God is a righteous God, and His judgments and rulings are always just. They are certainly more fair than any judgment which is passed by any court on this Earth. Furthermore, we must all remember that whenever God is forced to chasten us, whether it is as individuals, or collectively as a nation, it is done out of love, in the hope that we will eventually come to our senses and repent. I am reminded of the following set of verses:

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons . . . Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

Hebrews 12:5-8, 11-13, KJV

So once again we see that God desires to heal, and not to destroy. His judgments, no matter how harsh, are meant to bring us to a point of repentance. I believe that God wants to heal America. His desire is to save her from herself and her destructive ways. So the question is this: will America let Him, or will she continue to rebel against Him until it is too late and His judgments begin to fall?

Earlier we discussed the many thousands -- indeed, the many millions -- who stand before the Lamb and the Throne of God.

Following is yet another verse that is found in Revelation chapter five which describes the Throne of God. Consider the usage of the word "every", and how it too demonstrates the extent of God's Mercy and Salvation:

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessings and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

Revelation 5:13, KJV

Allow me to share a few more related verses with you where the word "every" is also used to describe the full extent of God's Mercy, Salvation and Sovereignty. Please take notice of the fact that the second verse below uses the very same language as Revelation 5:13 above:

"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

Romans 14:11, KJV

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;"
Philippians 2:10, KJV

These verses seem to be all-inclusive. In other words, as I have stated a few times now, it appears that God will not be completely happy until He has reconciled as much of creation unto Himself as He possibly can, both human and spiritual beings. This doctrine is commonly referred to as "Universal Reconciliation". I also discuss it briefly in the in-depth series entitled "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism". While I have not yet arrived at a firm conclusion regarding the reliability of this doctrine, it does seem to make a lot of sense to me, and it does appear to have ample support in the Scriptures. In fact, I think God's inclusive nature can be encapsulated in the following verse, which was also written by the Apostle Paul. I have added a few words in brackets for the sake of clarification:

"And when all things shall be subdued unto him [unto Jesus], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [God the Father] that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

1 Corinthians 15:28, KJV

In light of everything I have shared with you in this series, I hope you can see why I have adopted this position regarding God's desire to reconcile as much of creation to Himself as He possibly can. Let me reiterate that while this is God's desire, it does not necessarily mean that it will actually happen, because God does not usually overrule free will and personal choice. In His Love and Mercy, He will gently lead us to the Light, but then we must decide whether or not we want to embrace it. If you have not yet received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I pray that you will do it today.

With these thoughts, I will bring this series to a close. I trust that you have enjoyed it, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Google+, or any other social network, I would really appreciate if you would take the time to click on the link that you find on this page. Thank you so very much for your consideration! May God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this series, or which contain topics which are related to this series. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

A Biblical Cafeteria, or the Whole Course?
A Treasure in Earthen Vessels
Abortion: The Slaughter of the Innocent
All Are Given a Chance, But . . .
Child of the Lamb or Child of the Goat?
Dead to the Law: God's Laws Written on Our Hearts
Did the Devil Make You Do It?
Don't Ever Underestimate Our Spiritual Enemy
Free Will and Personal Choice
Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism
In Defense of the KJV Bible
In the Ages to Come
Is the KJV Bible the Inerrant Word of God?
Is the Message of Salvation Meant for All Men?
Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?
Judgment of Azazel: Scapegoat of the High Priest
Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen
Nephilim: The Giants of Genesis

Not Everyone is a Child of God
The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?
The Judgment of Angels, Demons and Men
The Woman in the Wilderness and the 144,000

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