

Heaven's Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults - Part 1

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Predictions And False Prophecies Leading Up To The Year 2000, Failed Year 2000 Second Coming And Harold Camping's Blunders, The New Hype: 2012 And Mayan Calendar, Rise Of The Internet And The World Wide Web, Prognosticators Of The Future, The Gullible Public, Proper Research, Inner Desires, Pressures Of Modern Living, Aliens To Each Other And To God, Escaping Our Pain, Our Personal Oasis, Modern Fringe Groups, Jim Jones And The Peoples Temple Mass Suicide, Congressman Leo Ryan And The Reporters Killed, Jim Jones Was An Atheist And A Bible Hater, David Koresh, Branch Davidians And The Waco Siege & Massacre, Timothy McVeigh, Oklahoma City Bombing & Ruby Ridge Incident, Order Of The Solar Temple Suicides And Murders, Vilifying The Cults & Sects, Deception Led To Death, Heaven's Gate Tragedy, Similarities In Cult Suicides, Comet Hale-Bopp And The "SLO", Zecharia Sitchin And Nibiru, Beware Of The Internet Rumor Mill

Over fourteen years ago, I noted in my 1997 four-part series entitled "Age Of Deception, Age Of Delusion", that as we drew closer to the year 2,000, we would more than likely see an increasing interest in the ideas, doctrines, philosophies and predictions that were being promoted by a variety of people, such as economic forecasters, political analysts, members of the scientific community, concerned environmentalists, New Age advocates, self-styled prophets and holy men, and the leaders of churches and other organizations across the religious spectrum.

This certainly proved to be the case. Sadly, as I explain in the five-part series "Sorry . . . Jesus Is Not Coming At Any Moment!", towards the end of the decade of the 1990's, many American Christians allowed themselves to become convinced by their misguided leaders that Jesus would return in the year 2,000. Some of those foolish leaders even went so far as to try to interpret certain political events in the Middle East, so that said events would support their predictions regarding Christ's Return that year. Tragically -- and to our shame -- it turned out that they were all just as deceived as the more recent followers of Harold Camping, who foolishly predicted that the day of judgment would fall on May 21, 2011. Mister Camping has since revised his prediction to October 21, 2011, being as nothing happening on May 21st.

While the year 2,000 obviously came and went without much of a fuss -- other than the inconveniences that resulted from the Y2K threat -- it seems that the new hoopla surrounds the year 2012, and the alleged end-of-the-world prophecies that are connected to the Mayan Calendar. I address this latest hype in the three-part series "2012: New Age Deception And Psychobabble". Either people have very short memories, or else they just never seem to learn from their past mistakes.

One of the problems is that with the advent of the so-called "Information Society", the Internet, and the now widespread availability of the World Wide Web, the dissemination of all kinds of information -- even information which has not been

properly tested and verified -- is faster than ever. All one has to do is connect to his local ISP -- or Internet Service Provider -- in order to experience the mind-boggling number of websites, message forums, newsgroups, mailing lists, etc., which are now available to the casual Internet user. Add to this mix social networks such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, Tumblr, etc., as well as the iTunes Store, YouTube, video conferencing, text chatting, etc., and one can easily become totally immersed in the online world.

Regardless of the subject, by simply using one of the many popular search engines, such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc., a person can easily and quickly find the information which he or she seeks; whether it is the latest version of a popular software program, job availability information, national or local news, the latest scientific discoveries, developments in the world of politics, celeb gossip, or even information regarding your neighbor down the street. While we sometimes hear how computers can experience data overload, it seems to me that humans can very easily experience sensory overload when browsing the World Wide Web.

But concerning prognosticators of the future, depending upon the orientation and background of the particular supplier of the information, we'll either be given a positive, optimistic view of the world's future, or we could be told that we must accept a darker, more pessimistic picture of things to come. Of course, there will also be others who will say that, yes, things are going to become worse, but ultimately, there is a light at the end of the tunnel if we just endure the storm until it passes. In the case of the negative scenarios, the purpose of the information is not only to educate and inform us, but also to hopefully motivate us to do something about it so that we can either avoid it, neutralize it, or perhaps better prepare ourselves for the events which await us; that is, assuming that the bearer of the information is correct in their assertions.

As I mentioned a moment ago, one problem is that the world is full of naive, gullible people who sometimes innocently accept certain things, without taking the time to properly research the matter for themselves as they should. Failure to personally investigate a matter may be due to spiritual or mental laziness, to a lack of sufficient time to conduct the research, or simply to not having the proper resources or know-how to verify whatever the information may happen to be.

However, it has occurred to me that there may be a deeper, more personal reason why we sometimes lack the diligence to properly investigate a matter. If we are truly honest with ourselves, then we must be willing to admit that deep down inside, many of us yearn for something better; something more than what this physical, materialistic world offers us; and the older that we become, the stronger this desire seems to grow. I would even dare say that it is a natural part of our maturation process, and a product of our becoming wiser to the unsatisfying ways of the world. As a result, because of this inner yearning for something better, we sometimes blow caution to the wind, we unwisely let our guard down, and we choose to accept and embrace certain things without proper validation.

The truth of the matter is that in spite of the fact that a growing number of people live in relative affluence due to scientific and technological developments which enhance and

prolong their lives, nevertheless, many of them still feel spiritually destitute and quite empty inside. This feeling of hopelessness and futility is magnified by the fact that people are stressed out due to the pressures and demands of modern-day living, where holding a job, and just trying to earn enough money to pay the bills, is an ever-increasing challenge. So as I said, as they grow older, and the beauty and strength of youth flees, many begin to question if this is all that there is to life. They are looking for anything to remove the hidden pain and loneliness which they often feel inside, and this makes them vulnerable.

Ironically, despite the fact that rapid transportation, and international communication systems have greatly reduced the physical barriers which have long existed between different countries around the world, we humans have still become an alienated society. We have become alienated from ourselves; -- that is, we've lost our sense of identity and purpose -- we have become alienated from our neighbors; and some people have likewise alienated themselves from God as well. Thus, many people are attempting to find their own small oasis in the vast spiritual deserts of this world. Tragically, when they are unable to find what they are searching for, in a moment of desperation, or utter hopelessness, some people contemplate or even opt for more drastic measures as a way to resolve their personal problems; or at least to relieve the pressure on their lives. We'll discuss various examples of this in a moment.

For some people, the answer, or at least what they believe to be the answer, is found in the consumption of alcohol. Others choose to indulge in a variety of drugs, legal or otherwise. And yet other people embrace one form of religion or another. Still others resort to anarchy and acts of rebellion against established norms and authority, as their way of expressing their dissatisfaction with life. Then there are those people who fall into unbridled lifestyles where sex and rock 'n roll is the outlet for their frustrations in life.

For at least the past five decades, another alternative, and a new kind of release has been offered in the form of groups and organizations of various sizes, which embrace everything from Eastern religions, to aliens, UFO's and the paranormal, to occult practices, to more ancient forms of Christianity, to a variety of socio-political ideologies. As a result, it is even more important to recognize that, regardless of our reasons for choosing them, failure on our part to adequately research the reliability and the veracity of the information that is provided by these groups before fully embracing them and their particular dogma as truth, can sometimes lead to very tragic results. Sadly, during the past several decades, this has particularly proven to be true with what have now been labeled as so-called "fringe groups" by the rest of the "sane" world.

Take, for example, the tragic 1978 case of the Reverend Jim Jones and the followers of the Peoples Temple. Most of us had never even heard of Jim Jones or the Peoples Temple until the day that their bloated, decaying bodies were discovered in a remote compound, known as Jonestown, in the steamy jungles of Guyana, South America. According to carefully meted out news reports that were published at the time, those foolish people were convinced by Jim Jones to take their lives by drinking a lethal mixture of cyanide-laced grape-flavored Flavor Aid and a sedative. Following this tragedy, a forty-five-minutes-long tape recording was recovered by the American FBI. On it, Jim

Jones can be heard telling everyone such things as "Stop this hysterics. This is not the way for people who are Socialists or Communists to die. No way for us to die. We must die with some dignity . . . Don't be afraid to die . . . [death is] just stepping over into another plane . . . [death is] a friend . . . We didn't commit suicide; we committed an act of revolutionary suicide, protesting the conditions of an inhumane world."

According to certain news reports, the Peoples Temple members who refused to go along with what is now alleged to have been a planned mass suicide, were shot in the head. Jones himself was later found dead in a deck chair with a gunshot wound to his head. According to the Guyanese coroner, Cyrill Mootoo, it was a self-inflicted wound; but one of Jim Jones' sons by the name of Stephan has stated that he believes that someone else shot Jones by Jones' order. What makes this incident all the more bizarre, is the fact that some online sources state that simulated drills of the planned mass suicide, which they called "White Nights", were conducted on a regular basis by Jim Jones, in preparation for what Jones apparently viewed as the inevitable outcome of their clashes with the System.

In all, 909 people took their lives that day at the Jonestown compound, 276 of which were children. In addition to the 909, nine other people were killed by Peoples Temple members at a nearby airstrip as they tried to escape in two planes. This included U.S. Congressman Leo Ryan, and four members of the American mass media.

Concerning what motivated those people to take such drastic measures, we may never know in full. One thing that is clear, is that Jim Jones and his followers believed that they were being harassed by the U.S. Government. Jim Jones didn't like being scrutinized by the mass media or by the US Government; which is one reason why he moved part of the Peoples Temple from California to their so-called "Agricultural Project" in Guyana. In fact, it was allegations of human rights abuses, which had been made by former members of the Peoples Temple, that motivated Congressman Ryan and the mass media to travel to Jonestown in the first place. They wanted to determine for themselves whether or not the allegations were true.

It is reasonable to assume that once Congressman Ryan and the reporters had been killed, Jim Jones and his followers became convinced that it wouldn't be long before the U.S. Government would send down the troops to find out what was going on. So, rather than face that eventuality, they chose to take their own lives. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that on the tape recording, one can hear Jim Jones saying such things as "parachute in here on us", "shoot some of our innocent babies" and "they'll torture our children, they'll torture some of our people here, they'll torture our seniors."

One point I wish to make here is that, in my view, their name, "Peoples Temple", is somewhat of a deceptive misnomer. I say this because, while it is true that their organization in the United States did have trappings of Christianity, and while they apparently did help a lot of disadvantaged people through their social outreach programs, nevertheless, it is also true, that as the years progressed, Jim Jones revealed that he was really a dedicated communist, and an atheist who hated the Bible. For example, he mocked Christianity as just being a "fly away religion". He also said that the Bible was just a tool that was used by white people to justify keeping women in submission, and subjugating people of color. Jones

also mocked the God of the Bible by referring to Him as just a "Sky God" who was no God at all. He also wrote a booklet entitled "The Letter Killeth" in which he criticized the Bible.

But there is other evidence which exposes Jim Jones' atheism. In an interview with the New York Times in 1977, even Jones' own wife, Marceline Jones, revealed that as early as the age of eighteen, when Jones watched his idol Mao Zedong overthrow the Chinese government, he realized that the best way for him to achieve socialist/Marxist change in the United States, was by using religion to mobilize people. During the interview, Marceline Jones stated that "Jim used religion to try to get some people out of the opiate of religion". She also added that on one occasion, her husband had slammed the Bible down on the table and yelled "I've got to destroy this paper idol!" Marceline Jones obviously agreed with Jim Jones, because her dead body was found amongst all of the others in Jonestown.

According to online sources, Jones' ultimate goal in moving to Guyana, aside from wanting to escape from the scrutiny of the U.S. Government and the American mass media, was so that he could establish a so-called "socialist paradise", but one without God in the equation. In a tape recording which was made the day before the mass suicide occurred, Jim Jones can be heard saying "I believe we're the purest communists there are". So as you can clearly see, Jim Jones was definitely no Christian in any sense of the word, and he used Christianity to mask his real intentions, and his deceived followers fell for the ruse.

So no matter how we choose to look at this tragic incident, the untimely death of over nine hundred people, that included two hundred and seventy-six innocent children, is something which should never have happened for any reason whatsoever. Had those people taken the time to more carefully scrutinize the teachings of their deranged, drug-taking leader, before they decided to sell their possessions and fly off to South America with him, perhaps they would still be alive today. As I pointed out earlier, these poor people were apparently not satisfied with their lives, or with their country. They were looking for something better; and it seems that the Reverend Jim Jones, with his charismatic personality and fast-talking style, offered them what they sought for, or at least they thought he did. Now, either through an act of desperation, or due to other reasons, they are all dead.

The shock of the 1978 Jonestown mass suicide lingered with us for a while; but being the humans that we are, we all tend to prioritize things in our lives; and with the passage of time, issues which are not important to our immediate survival are eventually pushed into the back of our minds, where they are either ignored or forgotten; that is, until something else happens to dredge them up again.

Our reality was again shaken fifteen years later, in 1993, by the live, televised confrontation which occurred between David Koresh and his followers -- the Branch Davidians, who were a quasi-Christian cult, and an offshoot of the Seventh Day Adventist church -- and the BATF; that is, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, not far from the central Texas city of Waco. The questionable siege against David Koresh and the Branch Davidians by the BATF -- which was later handed over to the FBI, and which was given the code name of "Operation Trojan Horse" -- began on the 28th of February when BATF agents attempted to execute search and

arrest warrants at the Branch Davidian's compound, which was known as Mount Carmel Center. This confrontation resulted in the death of six Branch Davidians, and four BATF agents; but it was only the tip of the ice berg. More dire consequences would occur in the days and weeks ahead.

Here again, the picture of what really happened during this incident was intentionally muddled for us, so that we were only allowed to see what the mass media was permitted to show us. For almost two months the tense standoff continued between the FBI and the Branch Davidians, while David Koresh -- whose real name was Vernon Wayne Howell, and who was the Branch Davidian's fourth "prophet" -- locked up in the Mount Carmel Center compound with his faithful followers, worked on his personal interpretation regarding the meaning of the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation. Then, just as Easter approached, the tragedy occurred as a mysterious fire broke out in the compound on the final day of the conflict.

By the time that the drawn-out siege came to an end fifty-one days later, on April 19th, about eighty-two Branch Davidians were dead, including Vernon Wayne Howell, twenty-one children and two pregnant women, as well as the four BATF agents. This tragic incident would eventually become known by the name of the Waco Massacre, or the Waco Siege, or simply Waco, and it has continued to fuel controversy to this very day. In fact, as I point out in the article "Bloody But Unbowed: Timothy McVeigh And The Death Penalty", it was two years later to the very day that Timothy J. McVeigh and Terry Nichols detonated a massive truck bomb outside of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, which resulted in the death of one hundred and sixty-eight people. McVeigh claimed that his actions were his personal revenge for the attacks at the Branch Davidian compound, as well as the government-led attack against Randy Weaver and his family at Ruby Ridge, ID.

As with the Jonestown incident, I suspect that we'll probably never be told the whole truth regarding exactly what occurred at the Branch Davidian compound on that fateful day. Did the BATF jump the gun, and unwisely initiate an armed conflict against the Branch Davidians, instead of relying upon a more diplomatic approach? Did their aggression against the Branch Davidians only serve to convince the cultists that they were under serious attack and thus motivate them to retaliate with force; or did the Branch Davidians fire first, as the U.S. Government claims?

Is there any truth to the American Government's claim that David Koresh and his followers were storing up and selling firearms, as was reported by the news media at the time? The BATF stated that their agents had discovered that the Branch Davidians were in possession of over one hundred and fifty weapons of various types, as well as eight thousand rounds of ammunition. According to online sources, it was allegedly the sound of noise coming from some of these weapons, which eventually led to the BATF obtaining search and arrest warrants for certain members of the Branch Davidians cult.

The fact that the Branch Davidians were able to fire back at and kill some of the BATF agents, certainly seems to confirm that they were in possession of some weapons. Precisely how many I obviously do not know. If the Branch Davidians truly were a group that was founded upon Christian principles, then I can only conclude that at some point they became terribly misguided by their leader; because nowhere in the pages of the New Testament does Jesus Christ, or His Apostles, teach

us that we are to store or sell weapons, or to take up arms and fight against the American Government, or against any government or individual. For example, consider the following verses which were spoken by Jesus in the Gospels:

"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

Matthew 26:52, KJV

"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

John 18:36, KJV

For a more in-depth look at my personal views regarding the topics of violence, killing and war, please consider reading such articles as "Killing And The Phinehas Priesthood" and "Killing, Murder, War And Military Duty".

There is also the unanswered question regarding how the three fires were started, which eventually resulted in the death of seventy-four of the cult members. Did the Branch Davidians actually start the fires themselves, or were the three fires the result of US Government forces using pyrotechnic devices and flamethrowers as some people have alleged?

But one thing remains certain in my mind: Whether it was due to the unnecessary use of deadly force by agents of the U.S. Government -- as some people claim also occurred during the Ruby Ridge incident -- or due to David Koresh and the Branch Davidians choosing to take their own lives after determining the futility of their situation, or because of a messianic delusion which they embraced -- as has been claimed by the American Government -- absolutely no one should have died that day at the Mount Carmel Center outside of Waco, Texas. That the U.S. Government would have allowed, or even caused those men, women and children to die in such a horrible way, is totally indefensible in my view, and a reproach to the authorities. In light of these events, it is no wonder that many people continue to mistrust the U.S. Government to this very day.

It seems to me that, as had occurred fifteen years earlier with the followers of Jim Jones at Jonestown, the members of the Branch Davidians made the mistake of putting their faith in the teachings of one man -- Vernon Wayne Howell, a.k.a., David Koresh -- instead of relying upon God's Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to them directly through personal study of His Word, the Bible. They surrendered their will to a man, when they should have only surrendered it to God. According to some sources, at one point, while the negotiations were underway, David Koresh is claimed to have told the federal agents that he was the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. While I honestly don't know whether or not Koresh truly said this, it should be obvious to all Bible-believing Christians that if Koresh did make this claim, it demonstrates very serious delusion on his part. However, Koresh is most certainly not the first or the last person to make such a boastful claim.

In the previous two cases, as well as in other incidents that have occurred before, and since then, such as the well-known 1994 tragedy involving the suicide and/or murder of over one hundred members of the Order of the Solar Temple, also known as the Ordre du Temple Solaire in Canada and Switzerland, the

words "cult" and "sect" have been freely used by governments and the mass media to conveniently vilify and cast a negative shadow upon anyone who adheres to some form of belief or way of life which falls outside the norm of what is deemed to be acceptable human behavior and practice. Were these people really cult members?

In the aforementioned incidents -- Jonestown and the Peoples Temple, Waco and the Branch Davidians, and Joseph Di Mambro, Luc Jouret and the Order of the Solar Temple -- all three parties believed that they were simply following a pure form of Christianity, led by their inspired "prophet" of God who received revelations from God. Whether or not they actually were cults really isn't the focus of this article; although I have pretty much stated my position concerning them. However, please feel free to conduct your own research, and then make your own determination. The main point that I would like to emphasize here, is that in each case, they blindly followed the spiritual teachings of one man without really conducting their own personal research; and that is what eventually led to their deaths. For whatever reasons, they became deceived.

After the Jonestown, Waco and Solar Temple incidents, nobody would have guessed that in March of 1997 we would witness the most bizarre mass suicide case ever recorded in the history of the continental United States. The neat, calculated death of thirty-nine members of a small group of web page designers known as "Heaven's Gate", situated in San Diego, California, left many people shocked and stunned. What is unbelievable, is the fact that prior to taking their lives, members of the Heaven's Gate cult used their web site to make their plan of self-destruction publicly known.

What I also find disturbing is the similarities which exist between these tragedies. In the case of Jonestown, the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate, drugs were used to either murder people, or else to numb them to the pain of death, or maybe both. With the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate murders and suicides, plastic bags were placed on many of the victim's heads, and their bodies were neatly arranged. In the case of the Solar Temple incident, the dead bodies were arranged in a circle with their feet in the innermost part of the circle, perhaps symbolic of a radiating sun; while with the Heaven's Gate cult members, each individual was found laying dead in their bed, covered with a purple shroud, wearing their dark clothes and black and white Nike tennis shoes. Even stranger still, each member was in possession of a five dollar bill, and had three quarters in their pocket. Each member also wore an arm band which stated "Heaven's Gate Away Team".

Similar to the members of the Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians and the Order of the Solar Temple, the members of the Heaven's Gate cult also claimed to follow a unique form of Christianity. However, in addition, they were also New Age and UFO adherents who were convinced that the arrival of the comet Hale-Bopp signified the time of their deliverance from this earthly life, into an ascended existence in the Kingdom of God. Their leader, Marshall Applewhite, had deceived them into believing that all that was required of them in order to achieve this ascension was to voluntarily leave their shells, -- that is, their physical bodies -- behind, by taking their lives; and that is precisely what they did. Their misguided belief was that upon experiencing physical death, they would be immediately transported to a huge spacecraft, which they had become convinced was concealed in the tail of the comet, Hale-Bopp.

While the Heaven's Gate cult suicide incident came as a shock to many people, those of us who have been following events in the New Age and UFOlogy circles for some time now, were less surprised. For quite a few years now, the Ascension Movement, of which the Heaven's Gate cult was merely one manifestation, has been advocating -- and anticipating -- the transformation of planet Earth, along with her inhabitants, into a higher plane of existence. New Age advocates refer to this process as the "Ascension". As I explain in some of my other articles which delve into this topic, discussions concerning UFO's and encounters with extraterrestrial beings, channeling alleged entities from Outer Space, the alleged arrival of the Photon Belt, the "Space Brothers" and the "Great White Brotherhood", etc., is the norm for the people who adhere to these beliefs. It is as common as talking about the weather. It elicits no unusual response amongst such people.

The arrival of comet Hale-Bopp during the early part of 1997, along with its perceived "odd" behavior, caused an immediate uproar within the New Age community; particularly after the purported discovery by amateur astronomer Chuck Shramek, of a large and self-illuminated object trailing the history-making comet. Within days of Mr. Shramek publishing an image of the purported object on the controversial Art Bell web site, as was to be expected, the Internet was abuzz with all kinds of rumors and theories regarding the precise nature and purpose of the mysterious object, which later was dubbed the SLO, or "Saturn-Like Object". In fact, after an Internet-wide contest was carried out, the purported companion object was given the name "Hail Mary".

As I mentioned earlier, within UFO and New Age circles, the SLO was believed to be either a large UFO, -- that is, an alien spacecraft -- or possibly the fabled planet Nibiru. The planet Nibiru craze finds its origin in the writings of controversial author Zecharia Sitchin, who has studied the ancient Sumerian culture, including the many clay tablets which have been found in Iraq. I discuss Nibiru in detail in such articles as "Alien Intervention, Raelians, Pyramids And Nazca Geoglyphs", "Nature Of The Alien : ET's, Demons Or A Government Plot?", "2012: New Age Deception And Psychobabble" and "The Nibiru, Planet X, Wormwood Controversy".

To conclude part one, allow me to reiterate a point which I made at the beginning of this series. If there is one very important lesson which all newcomers to the Internet need to learn, it is to take everything with a grain of salt, a huge grain of salt. While I have clearly encouraged you to conduct your own personal research, you also need to remember that while there is a lot of good, useful information to be found on the web if one goes to the right places, the Internet is also the largest electronic rumor mill in the world. Whether something is true or false has little bearing. Information travels so fast across the Internet, that half the world is already talking about it, before it has even been properly verified or refuted. So the point is, be judicious regarding what you choose to believe.

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

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Heaven's Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults - Part 2

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Heaven's Gate Was A Small, Unnoticed Speck On The Internet, Heaven's Gate Members Fit A Psychological Mold, Disaster Just Waiting To Happen, Marshall Applewhite Was A Self-Proclaimed Prophet, False Messiah, Antichrist And A Death Cult Leader, Rejecting The Truth Of God's Word Results In Strong Delusion Being Sent By God, Twisting The Meaning Of The Scriptures To Their Own Destruction, Deceptive Endtime False Christs And False Prophets, Satan-Inspired False God Sitting In Temple, Lying Wonders Of The Endtime, Heaven's Gate Was Not A Gate To Heaven, Jesus Is The Door The Only Way To Heaven And The Only Mediator Between God And Man, Next Level?, Loss Of Free Will, The Borg Race's Hive Mind And Process Of Assimilation, Cult Manipulation And Indoctrination, Gaining Trust And Doubting Self Worth, Brainwashing, Instilling Loyalty, Submissiveness, Backsliding, Power Of Indoctrination, Challenges Experienced By Ex-Cult Members, Member Richard Ford, a.k.a. Rio D'Angelo, Older Brothers & Promotions, Cult Fanaticism, Sexual Favors, Dying For The Cause Or The Cult Leader, Dying For Mullahs, Religious Dedication And Devotion vs. Extremism & Fanaticism, Manipulation At Every Level Of Society, Low Self Esteem And Thoughts Of Suicide, Heaven's Gate Cultists Desired To Die, Biblical Truth Or New Age Lies?, Suicide Contrary To Bible, King Saul And Abimelech Commit Suicide, Price Of Christian Discipleship, Surrendering Our Wills And Lives To The Lord

Amidst this vast, online, electronic world of the Internet, the Heaven's Gate web site was just a small speck. Prior to the tragic story being disseminated by the mass media, very few people had even heard of the Heaven's Gate cult, outside of their New Age and UFO followers. Maybe if more attention had been drawn to the cult sooner, the mind-boggling events which occurred that day at Rancho Santa Fe, could have been avoided. What is alarming about the Heaven's Gate tragedy is that what motivated them to take their lives is symptomatic of our world society. The victims of the Heaven's Gate cult fit perfectly into the psychological mold that I described for you in the opening paragraphs of this series. They were a disaster just waiting to happen; and yet sadly, no one saw it coming, in spite of the clear signs which they purposely left on their web site.

In the case of Heaven's Gate, their pattern was pretty much the same as with the Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians, and the Order of the Solar Temple. Their untimely deaths were a collective action which resulted from embracing an illusion. The misguided members of the Heaven's Gate cult thought that they had found "salvation", and solace, in a man by the name of Marshall Applewhite, who was a self-proclaimed "prophet", who for some twenty years had promised deliverance to those who would put utter faith in his words, and ultimately accept his foolish invitation to the stars. Like others before him,

Applewhite preyed upon the weaknesses and private yearnings of those who followed him. When he told his followers that it was time to go, as far as we know, his flock blindly followed him to death without question or hesitation.

Today, Marshall Applewhite and thirty-eight of his followers -- as well as two more cult members who took their lives in less than a year's time -- are dead; poisoned and suffocated by their very own hands. Furthermore, I seriously doubt that any of them are now buzzing around on a spaceship, enjoying their new-found spiritual freedom in the Kingdom of God, as Marshall Applewhite claimed would occur.

Having personally read quite a bit of material that was found on the Heaven's Gate web site, I can say without hesitation that Marshall Applewhite was more than just a false prophet. He was a false messiah and an antichrist. Similar to a number of other modern-day false prophets, through his own writings and video tapes, Applewhite claimed that he was Jesus Christ returned in the flesh. In his delusion, he convinced his cult that he was a second incarnation of the Son of God.

As you can probably imagine, for a Christian such as myself, these kinds of delusional remarks amount to nothing less than blasphemy. Applewhite and his followers were obviously under some extremely strong delusion. As I explain in other articles, this is precisely what the Bible tells us happens when people reject the truth of God's Word and embrace false doctrines and false messiahs. The Apostle Paul wrote the following in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians:

". . . because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:"
2 Thessalonians 2:10b-11, KJV

Please notice that Paul says that it is God who purposely sends the delusion, because people have knowingly rejected His Word. In fact, in reading the Old Testament, we discover that the Lord even says that He will choose their delusions, as we see here:

"I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not."
Isaiah 66:4, KJV

From reading the Heaven's Gate material, it is quite evident that Marshall Applewhite took verses from the Bible, and gave them his own New Age meaning, in order to try to support his false doctrines. The Bible refers to this dangerous practice as wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction, and this is exactly what the members of the Heaven's Gate cult did. For those of you who are not familiar with the terminology of the Authorized King James Bible, the word "wrest" is an Old English word which means to twist, distort or change a word's meaning. Through their misinterpretation of the Scriptures, the sad members of the Heaven's Gate cult in fact destroyed their very own lives. In writing about how some people were perverting the meaning of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter wrote the following in his first Epistle:

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also

the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

2 Peter 3:16, KJV

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus clearly warned us that in the Last Days, there would come many false prophets and false messiahs who would deceive many. He said that they would be so subtle in their doctrine, that if it were possible, they would even deceive God's very Elect. Consider what Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew:

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not."
Matthew 24:23-26, KJV

So as you can see, Marshall Applewhite fulfilled the Lord's words very precisely, because Applewhite actually claimed to be Jesus Christ reincarnated, and not just merely a prophet, which he most certainly was not. The Lord's warning was very clear, and we would do well to remember it. As we've already seen, Marshall Applewhite is only one of many false prophets which have already come, and we haven't seen the end of them yet. In fact, according to the previous set of verses, as we draw closer to the end of this current age and man's corrupt rule upon the Earth, some of these false prophets may even manifest amazing abilities which even Marshall Applewhite was not able to perform.

For example, as I point out in other articles, such as in the series "Lying Wonders Of The Endtime", the Apostle Paul wrote the following regarding the demonic deceiver who would sit in the temple in Jerusalem, and claim to be "God":

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,"

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9, KJV

But one thing of which I am absolutely certain, is that the Heaven's Gate UFO cult was not what it claimed to be. That is to say, it was not really the gate to Heaven. The Bible clearly informs us that there is only one way to Heaven, and it most certainly was not through a deceiver, false prophet and antichrist like Marshall Applewhite. As all Christians realize, that way is through Jesus Christ alone, who is the only true Door of the sheep. Consider what Jesus had to say in the Gospels of Matthew and John:

"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

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

John 6:37, KJV

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto

you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture . . . And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 10:7-9, 28, KJV

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

John 14:6, KJV

Other writers of the New Testament likewise confirm that it is only through Jesus Christ that we gain access to Heaven, and to the Father, because He alone is the Mediator of the New Covenant between God and man, because He alone shed His Blood for our sins. Consider the following verses:

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Acts 4:12, KJV

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"

1 Timothy 2:5, KJV

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

Hebrews 8:6, KJV

"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Hebrews 9:15, KJV

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Hebrews 12:24, KJV

Clearly then, the Heaven's Gate cult was by no means a gate to Heaven as they claimed. If anything, it was a gate to Hell which was guarded by one of Satan's many deceivers and false prophets. While the Heaven's Gate cult preached and believed that they were going to a higher plane of existence, which they referred to as the "Next Level", I can only wonder where their so-called Next Level actually took them. Furthermore, they were thieves and robbers, just like Jesus said, because they robbed people of their very lives, and perhaps even of their chance of finding true Salvation through Jesus Christ; that is, the real Jesus Christ, and not some impostor.

Many of you reading this have probably asked yourselves, "How could this have happened? What could possibly cause people to so blindly follow a man and his doctrine, whether it is Jim Jones, David Koresh, Marshall Applewhite, Joseph Di Mambro and Luc Jouret, or any other cult leader, to the point where they are willing to give up their very lives at his behest?" For most people, the idea of dying or killing themselves because someone tells them to is totally inconceivable. The natural reaction is to view such a request as complete lunacy; and if a person does follow through on such a request, we assume that

they must have found themselves in a desperate situation. We assume that such a person must have lost all sense of reason, reality and free will. That, my friends, is partially what is at the heart of the matter, and is a central point of this series.

It is an established fact that in order for an individual to become a happy, successful and productive member of any type of regimented society, group or organization, such as the aforementioned cults, he must first be willing, or perhaps be induced, to surrender his free will for the supposed good of the whole. In other words, he must be transformed into an obedient member of the collective whole. If you happen to be a fan of the Star Trek franchise, then you will no doubt be familiar with the half-human half-cyborg race known as the Borg. When the Borg subdued another race, they were guided by only one directive; and that was either to destroy them, or else to assimilate them. To assimilate them meant to make them just another part of the hive mind where all thoughts were shared, and everyone robotically obeyed as one. So it is with dangerous cults.

One of the initial stages in this process of assimilation is to convince the new recruit that his former value system and or frame of reference is wrong. To accomplish this, the new recruit is first made to doubt the validity of his old way of thinking by showing him its inherent flaws and weaknesses. To prove this particular point, the recruiter may point to the current dismal state of society, and attribute it to following the old way of thinking. Much of what the recruiter says will indeed be true, and the new member will find himself readily agreeing with much of the recruiter's words. At this point in the process of assimilation, a bridge of trust has begun to form.

At the same time, the new member is made to question his own self worth. He will be constantly reminded of his own human imperfections in order to further weaken his resistance. The recruiter will paint himself as a friend whose only interest is to save the new member from the error of his old ways of thinking and doing things. Through doing this, he or she will invoke a sense of appreciation from the new member. In short, a power struggle is underway in which the recruiter is slowly seeking to dominate the will of the new member.

While all of this is occurring, the new recruit is likewise being slowly bombarded with the new doctrine, so that the old frame of reference is forgotten, and replaced by the new. It is similar to a form of mental rewiring, or brainwashing, if you prefer. Any manifestation of doubt, or resistance, by the new recruit is looked upon as potential disobedience and even disloyalty, and is immediately brought to the attention of the new recruit, usually in a very subtle, intimidating manner.

Being as the new recruit wants to please and impress his new spiritual masters, and show his worthiness, he will usually amend his ways, thus further diminishing his ability to think on his own. Of course, so that the new member doesn't become overly discouraged by the constant reprimands that he may face during these initial stages of the assimilation process, he is also constantly reminded that he is chosen and special, and a part of a small elite group that's been called either by God, his country, or the superiors of his organization. In short, the recruit's desire to belong to something, and to be accepted, is fulfilled, and he acquires a true sense of loyalty.

Eventually, after days, weeks or possibly months, depending upon the strength of the recruit's personality and character, the process of assimilation is complete. The member loses his free will, and becomes totally dependent on the recruiter for both his spiritual and material needs. He becomes a part of the hive mind, and begins to think and act just like the rest of the members of the cult. He has acknowledged his own lowly state, and is thankful to even be a member of the movement, society or organization. He is also aware that his continued participation and membership in the cult is conditional upon his willingness to remain submissive.

At the same time, a double-psychology is brought into play, whereby the new member is made to feel that in spite of the physical privations or psychological hardships which he may have to endure -- even though the leaders may actually live quite well off in some cases -- to leave the group would be equivalent to total failure on his part.

In the case of religious cults and organizations, quite often the new member is made to feel that to fail the organization, or the group leader, is equivalent to failing God; and living with the conscience of having failed God, or at least with the belief of having failed God, is difficult for anyone to bear. Religious organizations and churches refer to this "betrayal" of the faith as backsliding. A person who has been a victim of heavy indoctrination by a religious cult, and then chooses to leave, or manages to escape, can sometimes take many years to completely overcome the influence of the group; and sometimes they never do. Cult indoctrination is just that powerful; and unless you have actually been a part of a cult yourself, you may never be able to fully understand what an cult member goes through once they leave the cult.

As I noted earlier, while most people have the impression that thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate UFO cult died as a result of their death pact, the truth is that forty-one members actually died. Two of them chose to take their lives later -- in less than a year's time -- apparently believing that they had failed their leader, and missed the boat on March 26, 1997; which is the day that the thirty-nine bodies were discovered in the San Diego County community of Rancho Santa Fe. Even though the cult leader was gone, and most of the cult members were gone, those two obviously still felt a very strong attachment to them, and to their belief system. In fact, as I explain in the article entitled "Heaven's Gate: Subliminal Message Concealed In Their Logo?", even though it has been over thirteen years now since those events occurred, one surviving member -- Richard Ford, a.k.a. Rio D'Angelo -- continues to defend the cult, and to propagate their message.

So as I was saying, the new member becomes just another part of the collective whole, and would never doubt that his older brothers, elders, superiors or whatever they call themselves, have his best interests at heart. From this moment forward, and once the indoctrination and brainwashing process has been completed, the new recruit's entire objective will be to do as he is told, and to simply be an obedient submissive member who will do his best to please his new masters, and carry on the work of the organization. After all, he doesn't want to acquire the reputation of being a troublemaker, and face the danger of excommunication. If he proves himself, with time, he may even find himself moving up in the ranks and becoming responsible for other members below him. He may acquire the status of being an "older brother", or possibly a leader.

Given enough time, the desire to please and impress the cult leader can become excessive and reach dangerous levels. Cult fanaticism reveals itself in different ways. For example, it may involve performing special deeds, such as engaging in a sexual relationship with the cult leader -- as occurred with David Koresh -- or engaging in heroic acts, such as being willing to die for the belief system of the group. In extreme cases, it may even involve dying in the line of duty in order to protect the cult leader himself.

This willingness to die for a cause, or for a person, as a means of demonstrating one's worthiness, or perhaps even to convince oneself of one's own worthiness, is known as the "martyr syndrome". In some cases, as we have seen, it stems from self-doubt, and an inferiority complex which has been slowly instilled in the new recruit over the years by those who are seeking to dominate him.

On a related note, allow me to ask you a question. While the mass media is fond of bombarding us with stories concerning Muslim suicide bombers who blindly follow their mullahs, and who are willing to die for their faith, are the modern death cults that I have described for you in this series really that much different? Quite frankly, my view is that religious fanaticism is still religious fanaticism, no matter which faith is involved. While we may admire religious dedication and devotion, religious fanaticism and extremism should most certainly be condemned. Separating the two isn't always an easy task.

While I have described the previous indoctrination process to you from the perspective of one who joins a dangerous cult, it is important that you recognize that this very same method of recruitment, indoctrination and mind control, is likewise employed by main-line churches, by political organizations, by school systems, by companies and other organizations, etc. Whether you are shouting "Hallelujah!" in your local church, or cheering your favorite politician at a rally, or being spoon-fed by a school teacher and spitting back the results like a parrot, or mouthing popular company's slogans, it is all the same thing. It is all about demonstrating loyalty in one form or another.

Let's be honest with ourselves. We're all manipulated puppets who exist in a controlled environment where only limited freedom, contrary views, and dissent is allowed. Every time we turn on the TV set, or the radio, or surf the Internet, or read a newspaper or magazine, we are being manipulated, and being told what to think and believe, what to wear, what to eat, who to vote for, etc. So we are all manipulated in one way or another in our daily lives, whether we realize it or not.

This even applies to entire nations. The freedoms of speech and expression are allowed only to a certain point. Attempt to go beyond that point, and see what happens. Democracy has its limits. Even in the USA, which claims to be the bastion of these liberties, and the defender of freedom, democracy and human rights, we saw a clear example of the hypocrisy that exists when the administration of former US president George W. Bush attempted to promote the false belief that anyone who disagreed with the war in Iraq was unpatriotic. While some level of dissent is allowed, modern protests are so controlled now, that for the most part, they remain quite ineffective.

But returning to our main topic concerning how certain cults intimidate their members, and make them feel inferior, sad to say, even some dominating parents, either knowingly or maybe unknowingly, do this very same thing with their children, and some children never manage to get over it, even after they've reached adulthood. These individuals live their entire lives feeling inferior and inadequate, as a result of being put down so often when they were children, and constantly being told that they never did anything right, and that they were a failure. Tragically, when a person acquires such a negative attitude regarding oneself, it can often lead to thoughts of suicide.

In the case of the Heaven's Gate cult members, their suicide pact wasn't a result of feeling inferior; rather, it was born of the belief that they would acquire something better, or at least so they were erroneously led to believe by their crazed leader, Marshall Applewhite. A number of videos which were shown on nationwide television clearly indicated that those people had passed the point of no return, and that they had taken their own lives joyfully, in the belief that they would be ascending to the "Next Level".

As bizarre as that may seem to some people, those thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate cult wanted to die. Furthermore, they anticipated death, and yearned for it, with each passing day. They were firmly convinced that it was God's will, and that this was the way in which He had chosen for them to exit the world for a better place; that is, aboard a nonexistent UFO which was supposedly hidden within the tail of the comet Hale-Bopp.

As a Christian who has earnestly studied the Bible for four decades, it's quite obvious to me that the misguided members of the Heaven's Gate cult seriously erred in their personal understanding of the Word and Will of God. For whatever their reasons, they abandoned the genuine teachings of the Bible, and foolishly embraced the warped beliefs of a man whom they allowed to totally dominate their lives. They surrendered their God-given free will, in order to become the servants of Satan through their charismatic leader, Marshall Applewhite, who, according to some news reports, even lied about his own health condition.

Had those people taken the time to study the Word of God on their own, instead of relying upon the New Age interpretation which was taught to them by Marshall Applewhite, they would have known that what he was teaching was totally contrary to the Bible. The very same thing can be said of the other cults which we have examined in this series. Those people made the same mistake when they trusted in the words of Jim Jones, David Koresh, Joseph Di Mambro and Luc Jouret.

If there is one thing of which I am certain from my studies, it is that committing suicide is not condoned or encouraged anywhere in the entire Bible. If anything, suicide was viewed as an act of pride and cowardice. For example, consider how after being rejected by the Lord, rebellious King Saul was wounded in battle, and then asked his servant to kill him so that his enemies wouldn't have the pleasure of taking his life. To make matters worse, after Saul had killed himself, his armourbearer followed his example and killed himself as well, as we see here:

"And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit

him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together."

1 Samuel 31:3-6, KJV

We discover a similar cowardly act of suicide, or to say it more accurately, suicide by proxy, in the classic example of Abimelech, the man who wanted to be the first king of Israel. To his shame, proud Abimelech was defeated by a certain woman who dropped a piece of millstone upon his head. Abimelech was so concerned about his reputation, that like King Saul, he asked his armourbearer to kill him, lest word spread that he had been slain by a woman. In the Book of Judges we find the following account:

"And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died."

Judges 9:52-54, KJV

In the New Testament, we find some very interesting verses which could easily be misconstrued by those people who are not well-grounded in their knowledge of God's Word, and who may lack the understanding of God's Spirit. Please consider what Jesus taught in the Gospel of Luke regarding the price of discipleship:

"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

Let me clarify that in the above verses, Jesus is not telling His Disciples that they must die for Him in a physical sense, or that they must purposely kill themselves -- commit suicide -- in order to reap the benefits of Eternal Life. The Lord is referring to surrendering their own wills and plans for their lives in order to do the Will of God. This is in fact the very same thing that God requires of Christians today. Notice that the Lord very clearly says that we must take up our cross on a daily basis in order to follow Him. Obviously, we can't do this if we are dead. In the case of His immediate Disciples, that meant leaving their earthly professions, and becoming fishers of men, preaching the Gospel, and winning souls to the Kingdom of God. This point is clearly verified for us by the following verses where we witness the calling of Simon Peter and Andrew his brother in the Gospel of Matthew:

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."

Matthew 4:19-20, KJV

As you can see, the previous verses clarify for us exactly

what the Lord meant by His words in the Gospel of Luke. This is what it means to take up our cross daily. It doesn't mean to kill ourselves physically by committing suicide.

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

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End Of File

Heaven's Gate, Suicide And Other Death Cults - Part 3

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There Is No Fast Train To Heaven, Jesus Announces His Coming Death, Jesus Never Ever Encouraged Anyone To Commit Suicide, Jesus Is Our Only Means Of Salvation, Peter Denies The Lord, God Needs Us Alive To Preach The Gospel, Our Human Weakness, Endtime Ministry And Persecution, God Will Never Forsake Us, Empowered By The Holy Spirit, Failure Of The Deceptive Cults, Brevity Of Human Life Span, God Chooses When And How We Die, Second Coming Of Jesus Christ And The Rapture, Modern False Christs, No Secret Return Of Jesus Christ, Resurrection Of The Dead In Christ, Transformed And Clothed In Our Heavenly Bodies, Christ's Ascension And Promise Of Return, Heavenly Saucers?, Every Eye Shall See Jesus Coming In The Clouds Of Heaven, A Wonderful Future In Heaven, God Didn't Promise Us A Bed Or Roses, Our Daily Challenges, God Sees Our Trials And Wants To Help Us, Cast Your Burden Upon The Lord, Don't Try To Usurp God's Authority Over Your Life, Conclusion

While Jesus obviously knew that most of His Disciples would someday die a martyr's death, not once did He ever ask them to kill themselves on the spot in order to prove their faith or their loyalty to Him. Neither did the Lord ever teach His followers that committing suicide was a fast train to Heaven. Quite to the contrary. Consider what He said to the Jews in the Gospel of John:

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come."
John 8:21-22, KJV

Obviously, the reason why those Jews couldn't follow Him into Eternal Life, is because they didn't even believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah to begin with. Furthermore, because they lacked the understanding of God's Spirit, some of those thick-headed Jews apparently thought that Jesus was going to commit suicide; but obviously, this is not what He meant whatsoever. Jesus was in fact referring to His imminent Death on the Cross; not by His own hands, but rather by the Jewish Elders and the Roman government. Later on, Jesus said

the very same thing to His chosen Disciples in the Gospel of John, as we see here:

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you."

John 13:33, KJV

Please notice that in the previous sets of verses, nowhere do we find the Lord encouraging anyone to commit suicide so that they can go to Heaven quicker, ahead of everyone else. It is plain to see that committing suicide in order to somehow gain our Heavenly Reward is not a part of God's current plan, and never has been. As I said earlier, there is no fast train to Heaven, as those poor cult members erroneously believed. God does not need dead Christians; He needs live Christians who are willing to boldly preach the Gospel to those who are not yet saved. By prematurely taking our lives through an act of suicide, we are cutting our Christian ministry short, and at the same time, denying others the opportunity of hearing the Gospel. Of course, God can, and probably will, send someone else in our stead, but we will be denied the blessing of having won more souls to Jesus Christ. The previous verses are followed a chapter later by Jesus saying the following:

"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 14:4-6, KJV

So as I pointed out earlier, believing in Jesus Christ, and accepting His Sacrifice on the Cross as the only means of Atonement for our sins, is the only way in which we can ever hope to obtain Eternal Life; and not by killing ourselves in order to board some fictitious spaceship trailing a comet, as the misguided members of the Heaven's Gate UFO cult foolishly believed. This applies to those other cults as well. Killing yourself will not gain you a quick seat in Heaven.

After the Lord had informed His closest Disciples that one of them would soon betray Him, Peter, perhaps in his own pride, exclaimed that he would never deny Jesus; and that he in fact would even be willing to die with the Lord. The rest of the Disciples also agreed with Peter. To Peter's surprise, Jesus quickly corrected him, and told Peter that he would deny Him three times before the cock crowed, as we see by these verses that are found in the Gospel of Matthew:

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."

Matthew 26:31-35, KJV

Even though His Disciples displayed a willingness to die with Jesus, this wasn't what the Lord expected or required of them at that time. As I said earlier, He already knew that most of them would eventually die a martyr's death anyway; but in the

meantime, He wanted them to remain alive as long as possible, so that Christianity could be built upon a strong foundation. To reiterate, this same point also applies to Christians who are living today. God needs for us to remain alive, in order that we might preach the Gospel to the lost. Later that same night, Jesus said the following to the Disciples:

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
Matthew 26:41, KJV

Even though the Disciples thought themselves strong enough to stand up and defend Jesus even in the face of death, to their bitter disappointment, Jesus soon revealed their weaker side to them, when they fled from the Garden of Gethsemane at the time of His arrest. It wouldn't be until later, following the Lord's Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven, that the Apostles would receive the precious Gift of the Holy Ghost; and with it the boldness to preach the Gospel, loving their lives not unto the death, as we see here:

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."
Revelation 12:11, KJV

For a related article which discusses at length the Apostle Peter's miraculous transformation from being a coward to a pillar of the Early Church, please consider reading "Peter: Faith Tried In The Fire".

Thus far, through Scriptural research, I have shown that it is not God's Will for any of us to try to hasten our deaths, so that we can reap the benefits of Eternal Life. If we are God-fearing Christians, the Lord needs us here for as long as possible in order to get the job done; and the closer we come to the end of all things, the more difficult it will become to accomplish this task. However, according to the prophecies of the Prophet Daniel, in the final years of the reign of the Beast and the False Prophet, some people will have a great ministry, as many of the world's lost will seek the truth in the last, dark, dying days of the current worldly systems. Daniel wrote the following:

"And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed."
Daniel 11:33-35, KJV

The above verses are just one example to show what God will require of people who know the truth. Some Believers shall indeed fall, and like the first Disciples, we may possibly even deny our faith due to our own human frailties; but as with them, the Lord will not cast us aside; for we have the promises of His Word, as we see by these verses:

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."
John 6:37, 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

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

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

As I noted a moment ago, when Peter and the other Disciples abandoned Jesus, and then cowardly hid from their Jewish and Roman persecutors, it was no doubt a sobering lesson to them regarding how weak they really were in the flesh, and how much they really had to depend upon God's Spirit for their faith and strength. Once they learned this lesson, the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit upon them in Acts chapter two, and they became bold witnesses for the Lord. Perhaps they too felt abandoned by the Lord for a time, but in the end, they realized that He had been with them all the while, just as He is now with us during these increasingly dark days.

In the beginning of this series, I pointed out that one of the primary reasons why people in these obscure groups are so easily led astray, is because they depend upon others to tell them what the truth is, instead of looking for it themselves. Of course, if from the very beginning they reject the Bible as the true frame of reference in their lives, then they will be even worse off. The leaders of these groups will have an even easier time in deceiving them, because these lost sheep don't even know what the truth is to begin with.

In the case of New Age and UFO groups like the Heaven's Gate UFO cult, people have been deluded by a false religion which is an odd blend of Christianity, New Age thought and Eastern religions. This is indeed a deadly and very deceptive mixture. For their part, Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple apparently attempted to mix Christianity with atheistic communism. With their stockpile of weapons, Koresh and his Branch Davidians seemed to mix an apocalyptic form of Christianity with some of their political ideologies. The members of the Order of the Solar Temple followed a belief system that mixed ancient Christianity with mysticism. All of these groups failed and ended in violent tragedy, because they weren't truly centered upon God's Word, or at least not a proper understanding of God's Word.

It is an inevitable, foregone conclusion that we will all die one of these days, just as the Moon is sure to rise, and the Sun is sure to set. As the Bible clearly informs us, our time on this planet is very brief. It is like the grass that fades and dies each year, or like a cloud which briefly appears in the sky, and is then gone. Furthermore, our death can arrive at any moment when we least expect it. Consider the truth of the following verses:

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."
Psalms 90:10, KJV

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God

shall stand for ever."

Isaiah 40:7-8, KJV

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Luke 12:20, KJV

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

James 4:14, KJV

By God's Grace, some of us will die peaceful, natural deaths. Others may face tragic deaths, either through chronic health problems, accidents, acts of violence, or by whatever means the Lord allows in our lives. As evil times progress, some of us may possibly experience martyrs' deaths, as we saw with the verses which are found in the Book of Daniel.

Regardless of how we die, we all need to recognize that God is in control of our lives, and we should leave it at that. The Lord put us here, and He knows exactly when -- as well as how -- He wants us to leave this place. For us to interfere with His plans in any way is both foolish and selfish; and if we really stop and think about it, it is in fact attempting to usurp His Authority over our lives. That God is fully aware of each of our existences is clearly made evident by verses such as the following:

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;"

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, KJV

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Matthew 10:29-31, KJV

So to reiterate, God is not only aware of each of our lives, but He has likewise chosen a specific time, place and method for our eventual departure from this world. Therefore, we have absolutely no right to interfere with His plans, and to attempt to do so is foolish.

Well then; if we shouldn't expect to hitchhike a ride on some fictitious flying saucer that is supposedly trailing behind a comet; and if drinking a lethal brew is likewise out of the question, as well as any other ghastly methods of suicide and self-destruction, exactly what can we expect then?

While I obviously cannot answer that question for any person, as I explain in such series as "The Great Tribulation And The Rapture", "Chariots Of Fire: A Voluntary Voyage Home?", "The Triumphant Touchdown Of Jesus Christ", etc., the Bible does offer us a very exciting picture regarding what lies ahead for Bible-believing Christians. For example, consider these verses that are found in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens shall be shaken: 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. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Matthew 24:29-31, KJV

As the previous verses clearly indicate, the Second Coming of Christ is going to be an Earth-shaking, Heaven-shaking event. It is not going to be some man like Marshall Applewhite, who for the most part, secretly and quietly trained a small group of followers for twenty years, and then suddenly resurfaced, only to kill themselves by eating poison and drinking vodka.

The idea of Jesus secretly returning and making Himself known only to a select group of followers is a false doctrine which has apparently pervaded a number of these modern cults, and it seems even certain Christian churches and organizations. If we stop to consider how many of these cult leaders have claimed to be Jesus Christ incarnate, it is easy to see how ludicrous such a claim really is. Obviously, these deceivers are lying, because they cannot all be Jesus Christ; unless we foolishly choose to believe that Jesus Christ has decided to inhabit multiple human bodies simultaneously.

But returning to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the blessed future of the Saints, the Bible clearly informs us what is going to happen Christian believers at His Return. As an example, please consider the following verses which are found in the Apostle Paul's first Epistle to Corinth:

"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 15:51-52, KJV

If you are interested in learning more about Paul's in-depth description of the Resurrection of the Dead, please consider reading the entire fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. However, for now, please notice that the previous verses inform us that the dead in Christ shall be resurrected and transformed first; and then those of us who are still alive upon the Earth at the time of Jesus' Return will likewise be transformed and given our Heavenly Bodies as well. This fact is confirmed for us by the following verses as well, which are found in the Apostle Paul's first Epistle to the brethren at Thessalonika. Please notice that in these verses, the Old English word "prevent" actually means to precede, or to go before:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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 4:13-18, KJV

Notice that these verses state that all living believers in Christ will be caught up into the clouds, and not just some small hidden group of believers, like the misguided members of the Heaven's Gate cult believed. Exactly how the Lord is going to accomplish this task, I am not really certain. What I do know is that when Jesus ascended into Heaven following His Resurrection, after a period during which He revealed Himself to His Disciples, a similar event occurred. Consider what we find in the first chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles:

"Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 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 1:2-11, KJV

Whether or not the event which is described in the previous verses is implying some kind of celestial craft, such as appears to be described in the visions of Ezekiel and other Old Testament Prophets, I am not certain. I have given some serious thought to this matter, and you will find my current musings expressed in the three-part series called "Chariots Of Fire: A Voluntary Voyage To Heaven?". I encourage you to read it. It may challenge your thinking.

Just as Jesus Christ ascended into the clouds when He made His last departure from the planet Earth, as with the verses we just read in the Book of Acts, the following verses also confirm that the Lord will return at the end of the world in the same manner. What I find particularly interesting in the following verses, is that they don't state that He will come IN the clouds, but rather they say that He will come WITH clouds. Could this possibly be implying something even more dramatic than what we have come to believe? Again, please refer to the aforementioned series, as well as the rather challenging series "Under The Cloud: UFO's And The Holy Bible":

"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

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Revelation 22:20, KJV

In light of all of these exciting events which are going to happen in the future, possibly even during our lifetimes, is it truly wise to even consider committing an act of suicide? I think not. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have so much to look forward to; so please don't throw it all away by listening to a deceptive, misguided cult leader. I'm reminded of another verse which is found in the Apostle Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. It says:

"But as it is written, 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

On a more personal note, please understand that God never promised any of us a "bed of roses" in this life. Let's face it. The fact is that every single one of us has problems and faces different challenges throughout our lives, some people more than others. Sometimes our problems may seem like they are more than we are able to handle, and we may be tempted to give up and end it all through suicide; but this is not what the Lord desires for us. As I point out in such articles as "The Battle Is Not Yours Alone" and "The Lord Will Lift You Up", God is always there to help us when we reach out to Him. His ear is always turned to us when we are trying to please Him. As King David and the Prophet Isaiah once declared:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Psalms 46:1, KJV

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"

Isaiah 59:1, KJV

So rather than throw our lives away through suicide, isn't it much better to turn them over to God and let Him use them for His Glory? The Bible tells us to cast our burdens upon the Lord, and He will sustain us. Consider these verses:

"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Psalms 55:22, KJV

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30, KJV

Jesus can not only take upon Himself the burden of our sins, as He did almost two thousand years ago, but He can also help us with the burden of our daily problems in this life; so please give Him a chance. Call out to Him and He will hear, and He will answer.

In conclusion, as you should be able to see by now, there is absolutely no indication in the Scriptures whatsoever, that we are supposed to prematurely terminate our lives by our own

hand through an act of suicide, so that we can be promoted to the Heavenly Realm, as the misguided members of the Heaven's Gate cult, the Peoples Temple, the Order of the Solar Temple, and possibly the Branch Davidians, erroneously believed. The Lord knows the time and the means that He has chosen for each of us to return to Him. As Christians, and representatives of our faith, it is His Will for us to remain on the Earth for as long as possible; because His Word seems to indicate that a Great Harvest may occur in the final years of the Earth's history.

Someone is going to have to be here in order to tell people the truth in the midst of Satan's deception. By cowardly taking your own life through an act of suicide, you may in fact be cutting short the very ministry that the Lord has reserved for you, so please don't do it. Let God choose the time of your departure from this life. Don't try to usurp His Authority over your life, because you may regret it.

Please give serious consideration to my words. And if you are someone who is currently trapped in a cult of any kind, and if you have opportunity to read this series, I pray that your eyes will be opened, and that you will be able to find a way to escape your current situation soon. My hope is that this series has been a blessing and an inspiration to many.

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