

“Taken or Left”

If you asked a typical, modern “evangelical Christian,” “When Jesus returns do you want to be taken or left behind?” they are likely to say, “oh I don’t want to be left behind! Who would want to be left behind! I want to be taken!”

They might even add: “I wish we’d all been ready!”

So, to be clear, what we aren’t talking about for those who would confuse things together:

We **aren’t talking about** _____ to be with the Lord when we are absent from the body.

We **aren’t talking about** being forgotten or remembered.

This language of “taken and left” is found in two passages, which are what we call _____ passages (Matthew 24 & Luke 17).

Parallel passages are both from the _____, recorded in two different Gospel accounts.

This not only means that what we learn from one Gospel applies to the other Gospel in this and other parallel passages, but it also means that **if** what we find in one passage **is not** _____ by what we find in the other passage, we have the _____.

We should at least expect that a correct interpretation of one of the passages:

- (1) **will not be** _____ from one parallel passage to another and,
- (2) **will be** _____ by the added details from the other passage(s).

Matthew 24:37-51

As we look at this passage, we can divide it into four main discussions.

Noah, in verses _____.

The “Taken or Left” passage in verse _____.

The “Thief in the Night” passage in verses _____.

And the “Illustration of the Servants and the Master,” in verses _____.

Nevertheless, each _____, _____, and _____ is revealed in the context, as we shall see.

Noah, verses 37 through 39.

In the days before the flood, verse 38, there are two groups of people. Those _____ and others _____
_____.

Others were eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until Noah went into the ark.

Is Noah or the world at large taken?

Verse 39. The flood came and did what to the wicked world?

This context informs us that _____
taken and _____ left,
for they, to use our Lord's Word, _____
_____. (_____)

Thief in the night passage, verses 42 through 44.

The point is simply about _____
and what is the result of being ready or not.

That if one knew that a thief was coming, he would not surrender his valuables so easily.

Thus, if one is _____, being taken is the result.

After all, if the goodman of verse 43 was ready, none of his valuables would _____!

The Servant/Master illustration, verses 45-51.

Who is taken at the end, in verse 51?

The _____, _____ and _____.

Does it say anything about the faithful servants _____?
_____?

Who is said to be taken? _____.

Just like the _____ of verses 42-44.

And the _____ of Noah's day are
_____, as in verse _____.

So what's the who, why, and where of the taken?

Who, _____.

Why, _____.

Where, _____

_____.

Luke 17:26-37

The first section is Noah, verses _____.

The second section is Lot, in verses _____.

And the third section is "taken or left," starting with verse _____,
with added detail, in verse _____.

Noah (26-27)

As with Matthew, Noah remains while the rest of the world is
"
_____."

Thus, you do not want to be “_____”
you want to be “_____”!

Indeed, when looking at the Bible as a whole, it doesn't talk about those who go through a flood as those that remain, but something which is “carried away” by a flood.^{1 2}

Now, concerning Lot, in verses 28-33.

Lot is Abraham's nephew. (Genesis 11:27) At one point, they divided land between themselves due to the size and needs of their flocks. (Genesis 13:7-9) Lot, however, chose the area wherein Sodom was located. (Genesis 13:10-11) Over time, he moved toward the city and into the city. (Genesis 13:12)

Meaning that Lot, like Noah, was the one _____
_____ after all the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain was over. (Genesis 19:23-25)

Where Lot's continued family settled shows us that they remained in the area.³

The narrative here indicates that the wicked were destroyed.
Not that they _____.

1 The Bible doesn't talk about those who go through a flood as those that remain, but something which is “carried away” by a flood. Thus the biblical illustration is apt. Psalm 90:1-5 (KJV (WS))

¹ A Prayer of Moses the man of God. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

² Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

³ Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

⁴ For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

⁵ Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

2 [Revelation 12:15 NKJV](#) So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

3 Even the place to which Lot fled was still in the area. (Genesis 19:30-38)

Taken or Left, verses 34-35/6⁴

Here, we see two general situations: _____.
_____.

Do any of these things make a difference concerning who is taken or left? _____.

Both men are _____, neither are both women taken for their distinct lack of _____.

In response to this, the disciples want to know where, in the first part of verse 37, “_____ are they taken?”

Explanation (37)

Of course, they are by no means asking, “where are those that remain?” That question answers itself.

They are where they _____. One man is _____ in his bed. One woman is _____ grinding at the mill.

They are asking about where those who are taken—to where did they go.

And Jesus tells us where those are taken go—at the end of the verse—

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

⁴ WPNT: Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have verse 36: “Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left”.

What Matthew passage does this match with that we've already reviewed? _____

What other details are present here? _____

This is emphasized by earlier context in the Matthew passage:

Matthew 24:28 KJV) For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

So this body is, as it says, a _____.
As such, this speaks of _____.

This happened at the consummation (the termination) of the _____.

But it also forecasts _____.

Revelation 19:17-21 KJV

17) And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

18) That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, [etc.]

21) And the [rest] were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Thus, when the disciples ask, where are they taken? In verse 37 of Luke 17, Jesus is telling us about _____. Not about being taken _____.

How being “Left Behind” became the wrong Default Position for Modern Christians

There was a “Christian” song called “I wish We’d all been ready,” which is a terrible song because it promotes false doctrine that being left is bad, but taken is good! The exact opposite of what Scripture teaches.

The following is from a book called: *Calling Evil Good - The Lie of Christian Rock and Roll*.

As a child, Larry Norman’s family attended a black Pentecostal church and a Southern Baptist Church. Norman, at a young age, became very dissatisfied with traditional Christianity and the church altogether.

[In fact, from another book we read:

When asked by Buzz magazine what church he attended, he refused to answer except to say, “I think it’s unimportant,” and, “I don’t like the question.” He said that he believes it is an “obsessive compulsion” to meet at regular times for church, which flies in the face of Hebrews 10:25 and the example of the early Christians (Acts 2:42; 20:7).⁵]

⁵ Directory of Contemporary Worship Musicians

In Michael McFadden's book, *The Jesus Revolution*, Norman is quoted as saying "Kids just don't want to listen to God's empty songs anymore." [He's talking about the Hymns that are infused with Scripture.]

In other words, Larry Norman believed that songs like AMAZING GRACE, IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL, HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION, HOW GREAT THOU ART, HOLY HOLY HOLY, BE THOU MY VISION, BLESSED ASSURANCE, WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS, JESUS PAID IT ALL, HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION, COME THOU FOUNT, WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD are nothing more than "God's empty songs."

[That is obviously unbiblical and satanic to say such songs, so in accord with Scripture are empty! But that's the lie the Devil wants to use to deceive others. He certainly deceived Larry Norman, whose life was not a good one.⁶]

[He was involved in many adulterous affairs, and many depraved music groups.⁷ To quote the book:]

No doubt he developed this rebellious heart in the late 60's when his band "People!" was opening for Van Morrison, The Doors, The Who, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix. His rebellion was apparent in his music, long hair, and loose lifestyle, but it also showed itself in his theology.

⁶ "I wanted to display the flexibility of the gospel and that there was no limitation to how God could be presented. I used abrasive humor and sarcasm as much as possible, which was also not a traditional aspect of Christian music. I chose negative imagery to attempt to deliver a positive message, like "I Don't Believe in Miracles" is actually about faith."

⁷ Directory of Contemporary Worship Musicians:

Both of his marriages ended in divorce. Norman had an improper relationship with [his band-mate] Randy Stonehill's first wife, Sarah, and he fathered a child out of wedlock with one of his backup singers, Jennifer Wallace (Mike Rimmer, "Larry Norman: The David Di Sabatino's Fallen Angel Documentary," *Cross Rhythms*, March 28, 2010).

Two other musicians in Norman's Solid Rock Records fold had divorces (Randy Stonehill and Tom Howard).

[In closing, I want you to listen to what Larry Norman said about the song he wrote, “I Wish We’d All Been Ready.”]

[He said the song] talked about something I had never heard preached from a pulpit as I grew up.

[Well, guess what! There was a reason it wasn’t preached from a pulpit! It was not in Scripture. But because of the perversion of Biblical Music, by men like Larry Norman, and Teaching, from perversions like Dispensationalism, now this has become the view of so many today, in contradiction of the clear teaching of Scripture.]

Extra material for Personal Consideration

Once again, Christ assures His disciples of the swiftness of the coming judgment, and of how only one's internal heart will save one. Merely being Jewish will be of no avail. **Two** people may share the same race, the same family—even the same **bed**, and inherit two different fates. The situation envisioned is that of a farmer and his wife sleeping in their bed just before dawn. **On that night** of judgment, **one** of them **will be taken** in the flood of judgment, being swept away even as Noah's flood took away the wicked of the earth (Matt. 24:39), while **the other will be left**, as Noah was left behind to inherit a cleansed world. **Two** women might have arisen in that early light to do their early morning chores. They might be **grinding** together, one pouring the grain and the other turning the millstone to grind their daily bread: **one will be taken** in judgment, **and the other will be left**, safe and untouched. Safety is not found in keeping righteous company; it is only found in being spiritually prepared oneself.

As Jews who were trained all their lives to think that Israel enjoyed some kind of immunity in the final Judgment, the disciples found this alarming, and so **they say** to Jesus, "**Where, Lord?**" That is, where will such judgment fall? Surely not on Israel too? The Lord answers, "**Where the dead body is, there also will the vultures be gathered together.**" Vultures inevitably find dead carrion to feed on, and sin will just as inevitably bring the judgment of God. Israel has no special immunity. If there is spiritual death, judgment will find them. Let the disciples not trust in their Jewishness to save them at the end, but even now renounce their rootedness in this world⁸

⁸ Lawrence R. Farley, *The Gospel of Luke: Good News for the Poor*, The Orthodox Bible Study Companion (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2010), 315.

Chrysostom (345-407), commenting on Matthew 24:40-41.

All these things are demonstrations that he knew what was to come. It would be like the days of Noah: “Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left,” so unexpected will it be. It is without thought that they will be taken. “Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.” This is not the employment of those who are contemplating such a calamity.

From both employees and employers some will be taken and some will be left. Among those who are at ease and those who labor, some will be taken, some left. Rank or station will not matter, as it says in the Old Testament: “From him that sits upon the throne to the captive woman who is at the mill.”⁹ Even though he had said earlier that it is hard for a rich man to be saved, here he shows that not even the rich are altogether lost, neither are all the poor saved, but out of both groups people are saved and lost.

And to me he seems to indicate that the advent will come at night, like a thief, as Luke also indicates. It is amazing how fully he knows all things.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, HOMILY 77.2.^{10 11}

⁹ Ex 11:5 (variation on SEPTUAGINT).

¹⁰ PG 58:704; NPNF 1 10:464.

¹¹ Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 14-28*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 208–209.