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The Odyssey THE SAME OLD STORY Part 16 By Rayola Kelley

I have been on my spiritual odyssey for almost 38 years. Admittedly, at times I feel like I have been out in the wilderness for almost 40 years. The reason I say this is because much of the Christian life seems like drudgery. The reason for this is because we are called to live extraordinary lives, but we do so in the midst of the ordinary, mundane activities and demands of the world.

The joy of living the extraordinary Christian life in the midst of the ordinary is a challenge, but it is possible. It is called the "abundant life." Sadly, many Christians have been bottle-fed on the world's sensationalism; therefore, they cannot imagine the Christian life to be anything more than dos and don'ts that prevent them from experiencing what they would consider exciting.

Much of our attitude towards the world is a matter of conditioning. Whatever we expose ourselves the most to will be what ultimately influences our attitude. Sadly, many Christians' attitudes are still being greatly influenced by the world, causing inconsistencies in their walk and a lean-ness in their spirit. One of the greatest examples of this problem can be found in the life of Lot.

For Lot, the world was greatly influencing him. Granted, he did not compromise what he knew, but he compromised his attitude about matters. Such compromise implies an unhealthy mixture. Hebrews 4:2 explains how this mixture hinders a person's decision-making towards the matters of God, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Faith towards God causes us to

obey what we know is right. However, when we simply console ourselves that we know a matter, but do not respond according to Scripture, we have failed to mix faith with the truth. Inactive faith is nothing more than the sin of unbelief (*Romans 14:23*). At the point of unbelief, truth will become stagnant, taking away its sharp edge to ensure liberty.

When Abraham gave Lot the choice between the lush valleys of Sodom and Gomorrah and the Promised Land, Lot chose with his eyes and not with his heart. He chose to be as close to the world as he could get rather than give up the world to be as close as he could be to the One who possessed the promise of a spiritual inheritance (*Genesis 13, 14, 18, 19*).

I realize that Lot was given a choice because the land could not hold the livestock that both he, and his uncle, Abraham owned. Lot, in his state, would not share in the promises of God. But, consider for a moment, is this not every Christian's dilemma? Daily, we are given the choice to choose between the influences of the world that often collide with the high calling upon our lives as Christians. Since our soul can only serve one master at a time, we must choose who or what we are going to serve; thereby exposing ourselves to the law and principles of the master and kingdom we begin to serve.

Like Lot our initial tendency is to choose the physical over the spiritual. The more we choose the worldly over the heavenly and the earthly over the spiritual, the more we stray further away from the center of our protection. We fail to see the traps of the world and find ourselves becoming "ho hum" towards its perverse ways. Even though we convince ourselves we are still tight with God, and our spiritual life is on track, we fail to see how entangled we are becoming with the world's attitude. Eventually, we will become captive to it.

Lot tasted the bitterness of such

captivity when he was taken prisoner by an opposing king. Abraham learned of his captivity and fought for and obtained his deliverance. Was this not so for you and me before we received Christ? We were captive to sin and tasted the dregs of its bitterness. It took the intervention of Jesus on the cross to save us. He fought for us, died for us, and rose again so we could be redeemed from the entanglements of the harsh taskmasters of the age in which we live.

Even though Abraham saved Lot from a lifetime service to an enemy, Lot still chose to stay on the other side of the Jordan, instead of the Promised Land. Even though all that Abraham personally owned in the Promised Land at the end of his life was a plot of land on which to bury Sarah and himself, it was still the designated place of God. This small inheritance was an earnest payment secured by the death of his wife, but Abraham knew that since it was promised by God, it would eventually be realized by his descendants. However, this inheritance would only come through Abraham.

For the Christian, the example of Abraham points to the earnest payment of the Holy Spirit, whose presence will identify believers to their eternal inheritance. This inheritance was secured by the death of Jesus and His empty grave testifies that the fullness of this inheritance will be fully realized in a future age and not in the present one.

As long as we live on the other side of God's promises, we cannot be assured of the blessings that are guaranteed from the throne. These blessings come through the ever living "faucet" of the person of Jesus Christ. The "faucet" is ready to be turned on by faith, which is expressed in obedience to the Word of God, to allow the rivers of Living Waters of His Holy Spirit to freely flow in, through, and from our lives.

I don't know about you, but in those times when I stayed as close to the world as I could, I found myself losing my edge in discernment. Eventually, what was just plain wrong according to Scripture, slid into the attitude, "It could be worse." From there it gradually digressed into a tolerant disagreement. In other words, I would not personally agree with it for myself, but who was I to judge those who seemed to have no real conviction about it?

Tolerant disagreement does not have to take any real stand when it comes to right and wrong, life and death, and heaven and hell. It can be smug in the idea that it would not personally be right to do what is wrong, but it is noble about not judging others for practicing it. However, the Bible is clear about what constitutes sin and that it already stands judged. If it stands judged in the eyes of God, it is not for Christians to downplay such judgments in the name of tolerant love or noble understanding. Love does not rejoice in iniquity and true honor does not agree with anything that dishonors God, His Word, or His people.

Lot's soul was vexed over the sin in the city, but he continued to remain in the midst of it (*2 Pete 2:7*). There was no indication that he was being an example or witness of what was right. As Jeannette, my co-laborer once said, "Most people just try to get by in this world, which causes boredom that leads to depression." Lot was vexed, but he was not trying to resolve it by separating from it. When we walk the fence between the world and heaven, we end up just getting by. Boredom and drudgery sets in, followed by leanness of spirit, vexation of soul, and depression. The Bible is clear that if we are not called into a place to be a Noah by raising a standard of righteousness, then we must separate from the influence of the world upon our lives and flee all youthful lusts. The reason we must emotionally and spiritually separate from the world is because God is going to eventually judge it.

The problem nowadays is that we mistake godly love for worldly tolerance, but they are on opposite poles. The world has done a good job of convincing some Christians that the definition of godly love is to be toler-

ant and understanding towards sin. Due to my own tendency to give in to my base, lustful ways, I understand why people sin, but it does not make such actions tolerable or justifiable. Granted, there are sins unto death and if a brother is erring in such a way but is converted towards the ways of righteousness, his soul will be saved (*James 5:19-20*). However, the world's tolerance makes a person feel good about him or herself, while he or she is on the way to hell. It is clearly a delusion.

As I study Lot's life, the one truth that keeps peeking around the edges has to do with possessions. Abraham's possession was both spiritual and earthly. He valued the heavenly over the earthy and knew both were secure. Lot's possessions were earthly. He started out with much material possessions, but what happened to them? First of all they were taken by a foreign king. Although Abraham regained all the possessions taken, it was clear that Lot lost his possessions for a short time to the world.

When we next see Lot, he is residing in the city. What happened to his flocks? Granted, he could have hired someone to take care of them outside the confines of the city, but it appears that the world somehow consumed what Lot had possessed. Finally, when the angels almost bodily carried Lot and his family out of the doomed city, he left with very few possessions, while God judged the two cities. How much of his possessions were left behind and burned up in the judgment fires of God? We know that there could have been other family members left behind besides Lot's wife and two daughters who were pulled out of the city by the angels. However, Lot even lost his wife when she turned around to see God's judgment.



Here was a man who possessed much, but when God delivered Lot, it

was for the sole purpose of keeping him from tasting His wrath. Lot barely got out of the doomed city with his soul. We are reminded that the payment to possess the world is a person's soul. Granted, God considered Lot because of his uncle's prayer to deliver the just, and Lot fit into that category because he agreed with God about sin, but in the end he had nothing to show for worldly accomplishments when he left the city. It appears that almost all of his worldly possessions were burned up or destroyed by God's wrath.

The world uses material things to take people captive. Once taken captive, it will rob them of worldly goods, kill incentive, and eventually consume what little remains to claim full ownership of a person's soul. When people sell their souls to taste the deadly fruits of the world, they are left with the emptiness of such possessions. Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, admitted that after pursuing the things of the world, what he discovered was that it was all vanity.

This brings us to the Bible's final record of Lot. It tells us that Lot went up to Zoar, rather than the mountain. In other words, Lot looked to the world for a dwelling place. He was clearly used to the world. He was no longer a sojourner in the world—now he was part of the world. However, Lot did not remain in Zoar for he feared to dwell in it. Zoar reminds us that nothing is sure when it comes to the world. It is already marked for judgment. From that point Lot dwelt in the mountain in a cave with his two daughters.

Remember what Jeannette said, "Just getting by in this world ends in boredom, and boredom ends in depression." How bored do you think Lot and his daughters were in the cave? How depressed were they because of the drastic changes that had occurred in their lives, from living in a city to hiding in a cave? That which is unusual can result in what is considered unnatural. It is in such a state that sin can take center stage.

Lot's daughters wanted to preserve the seed of their father. We know that they put him in a drunken state in order to seduce him. They both became pregnant by their father and produced offspring, the Moabites and Ammonites, who eventually op-

posed Israel. Although our beloved Ruth was a Moabite, she recognized her people's pagan, idolatrous ways and left them behind to serve the God of Naomi, the true God of Israel.

Today the name of "Lot" is attached to a popular saying that is associated to the idea of the same old stuff going on. It may not be really bad, but it is not really great because it is just mediocre, just getting by. I am sure you have heard the idiom, "This is just my lot in life."

As believers we have two choices, the way of Abraham that ultimately brings one into the Promised Land because of his faith towards God, or the way of Lot, living in the world on the plateaus of mediocrity. Like Abraham, we can possess a vision of promises that belong to another world, or we can be like Lot, where we may know there is something more, but we are not willing to leave behind what is useless, vain, and doomed to pursue it and become identified to it. Like Abraham, we may be a sojourner in the world, or we can be like Lot, stuck in a type of time warp that plays the same old record over and over again. We can be like the faithful Abraham who is looking for a city made by the hand of God, or we may be like Lot, just looking for the next city that is left standing after the judgment of God falls. And last, but not least, like Abraham we can be advancing towards our final destination, or we can be like Lot, getting by in the world, but barely escaping judgment upon our soul. †

PROPHETIC QUOTE

By Daniel Webster

"If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be; If God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; If the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; If the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end."

KNOCK KNOCK

By Jeannette Haley

Once upon a time, long ago in the distant past of American culture, the people enjoyed passing around clever little "riddle" jokes that always began with "knock knock." The other person would then ask, "Who's there?" To which the person "knocking" would give a silly answer such as this example: "Knock knock." "Who's there?" "Dozen." "Dozen who?" "Dozen anyone want to let me in?" Those were the days when most people had a good imagination, and enjoyed the simple pleasures of life—days before computers, ipods, ipads, cell phones, computer games, and all the technological *stuff* that kids just "have to have" today or else they will surely wither up and die.

There is another type of "knock knock" but, this knocking is of another dimension entirely for it has to do with the door to a person's heart. Jesus talked about this door when He said, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*" *Revelation 3:20*. Even though this verse is oft quoted to unbelievers, Jesus was actually talking to the Laodicean church—a church that undoubtedly was filled with people who had mentally "accepted" Christ, but then left Him standing on the doorstep having never fully opened the door of their hearts to receive Him in as LORD, be converted to the ways of righteousness, and commune with Him. Instead of opening the door to Christ, they opened the door to "Luke;" that is, "luke-warm" and they were about to pay the price for it. Jesus warned, "*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*" *Revelation 3:15, 16*.

The attitude of this church reveals the reason for being lukewarm. Jesus told them, "*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" *Revelation 3:17*. Undoubtedly, somewhere along the line they opened the door to

Phil. Phil who? Phil-osophy. Christians, both then and now, love to open the door to philosophy. Philosophy usually brings along his friends called pride, independence, and delusion. Once the door is opened to philosophy, he will spread like a cancer throughout the entire establishment, setting himself up as the final authority on all matters, especially anything that pertains to God's Word, and the issues of life. Of course even the highest form of prideful human philosophy is nothing but a bunch of hot air (delusion) when viewed from God's perspective, but it gives a person the heady feeling of independence. However, the Lord sets the record straight, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*" *Isaiah 55:8, 9*.

Based on Jesus' assessment, no doubt the worldly philosophy of the Laodicean church (and her modern counterparts), is fueled by pride, and fortified by delusion. To declare "*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*" demonstrates the attitude of the philosophically delusional, independent spirit. We see this dangerous philosophy all around us today. From the top down the governments, and nations of the world, as well as post-modern churches, are steeped in humanistic philosophy, pride, and delusion, all of which will end in destruction.

To declare that riches and goods ensure there is a need for nothing is idolatry, and is a declaration that riches and goods are all that is necessary for security, success, and salvation. Trusting in riches and goods only serves to empower those who are deluded into believing that they are self-sufficient, and infallible. Is it any wonder that Jesus told His disciples, "*Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*" *Matthew 19:23, 24*. The question then is, is it a sin to be rich? The answer is an emphatic no! Abraham, Job, King David, and other men of God were

blessed with great wealth, while maintaining their lives before the Lord in faith, uprightness, and fellowship with Him. *Psalm 62* holds the key to this question and makes it clear that it is only God, and God alone who is our salvation (deliverance), rock (security), defense (protection), strength (power), and refuge (safe hiding place). Verse 10b says, *“if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.”* It all goes back to where your heart is.

The self-sufficient attitude of the Laodicean church is reminiscent of Jesus’ parable of the rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully. *“And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 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? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* *Luke 12:16-21.*

The vain philosophy that the Laodicean church clung to brought such a strong delusion that they had no idea of how spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked they were. Jesus told them, *“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see”* *Revelation 3:18.* *“Gold tried in the fire”* points to paying the price through tribulation, persecution, and suffering that results in great spiritual riches. The Apostle Peter wrote, *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy”* *1 Peter 4:12, 13.* White raiment points to being cleansed from the shame of sin, and clothed in righteousness, and holiness without which no man shall see God. Anointing with eyesalve points to the

anointing of the Holy Spirit who reveals Jesus to us. *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come”* *John 16:13.*

Oh vain philosophy! Ever the product of man’s self-reliance, pride, and evil imaginations. Oh vain philosophy! The babbling impartation of demons to the undiscerning, and the so-called “wisdom” (psychology) of the god of this world. We are warned: *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”* *Colossians 2:8.* Think of all the vain philosophy that has knocked on the door of the post-modern churches in our time with *“doctrines of devils.”* The Apostle Paul warned, *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron”* *1 Timothy 4:1, 2.*

Satan comes as an “angel of light,” knocking on the door of the heart, luring with experiences of a spiritual or “other worldly” nature, which can appear, or feel, “real.” If given space to enter, he tempts the mind with unholy, perverted thoughts, and false promises; toys with pride and the intellect; causes confusion; mockingly stirs up unbelief towards God, His Word, and His ways. Satan is anything but the perfect house guest.

To the lukewarm Laodicean churches of today, Jesus declares, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent”* *Revelation 3:19.* To be rebuked and chastened by God is an assurance of His love. The only proper response is to be quick to repent for Jesus is standing at the door, knocking, and calling our name. He will not beat down the door, and barge in, nor will He force Himself upon us. It is up to us to open the door, and invite Him in when we hear Him calling. When He comes in, and sits in sweet fellowship and communion with us, we will hear Him promise, *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down*

with my Father in his throne” vs. 21. Can you think of anything more wonderful?

The question is, who or what is knocking on the door of your heart today? †



QUOTES & COMMENTS

“God will invade ... When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right, but ... this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side ... It will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side.” – C.S. Lewis

“What is wrong with our young people today is they think they deserve everything, so when they get something, they don’t appreciate it. They are spoiled.” - R. Kelley

“Indoctrination takes place when people tune out and don’t listen to what is really being said.” - R. Kelley

“If you think you are smart and have all the answers, but disobey the Word, you are only fooling yourself, and you know nothing.” - J. Haley

“When I read the bible, I see where God got angry at Israel and let them be overrun and murdered. Many were taken away as slaves. Israel couldn’t have been doing more bad things than we (U.S.) are doing right now.” - D. Heckel

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

UNNATURAL AFFECTIONS

Q: *What does it mean to be unnatural in your affections or relationship with others?*

A: The idea of a matter being considered unnatural has to do with something that works against the natural instinct of what has been clearly established according to the working of creation, or outside of what has been established as a natural production (*Romans 1:20-32*). Everything operates according to unseen laws and principles (*Romans 8:2; Galatians 6:7, 8*). Therefore, anything that operates from the center of what has been established as instinct or natural production of a matter is deemed unnatural.

This brings us to the concept of "natural." It has to do with "order." All of creation works within that which is instinctively natural to ensure the function of the whole, except man. Because of his inherent condition of sin, man is forever challenging the natural order of things, thereby, creating chaos within creation. For example, as Creator, God clearly established that marriage was to be between one man and one woman (*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25*). Regardless of how man tries to redefine what is natural by changing the law, meaning, and seasons of what God has ordained to be a proper order of propagation according to His Word, God's law will stand as the measuring stick for all relationships in this arena. We know the fruits of the unnatural can ruin a species when creation becomes unbalanced or extreme. Likewise, within mankind, the unnatural manifests itself in the tearing asunder of the family, the ruination of society, and the destruction of civilization.

This brings us to the reason that man is the only being who steps outside of the proper order established by the Creator of the universe. It has to do with inordinate affections. Man often allows his attractions to define his affections rather than him defining his affections in the right way (*Colossians 3:2-3*). It is easy for man to misread that which attracts him. Attractions that are not properly dis-

cerned and kept in the right perspective can become seductive and perverted by lust. Such individuals can begin to operate in the extremes of indifference and contempt to complete infatuation.

These fleshy, youthful lusts find their inspiration in wicked imaginations that are often created by unhealthy events and/or the indoctrination of a godless society. These lusts create a reality that is contrary to the natural. Lusts that run amuck will operate in extremes that swing from the branches of tormenting jealousies, overwhelming obsessions, and tyrannical possessiveness to the point where a person is completely consumed by them. In other words, the person can only think about the individual or relationship in which all the inordinate affections are being directed towards.

Since we are in our fallen condition, we all can experience these inordinate affections at some time in our lives. In fact, we often mistake them for "love". Needless to say, this type of environment can become very unhealthy if these passions are not brought into a proper perspective. It creates what I call "parasitic relationships", where people attach a very unhealthy dependency on the person or relationship. The person and relationship clearly replaces God in an individual's life as he or she becomes captive to an insane reality where eventually right will be considered wrong and wrong considered right.

People who operate in the insane world of the unnatural would like to believe that what they have allowed themselves to become is natural, but the Bible is clear, man has a say over his affections, appetites, and preferences. How man chooses to perceive the attractions of this present age will determine the directions of his affections, the appetites he develops, and preferences he adopts; therefore, he is responsible for who he allows himself to become. It is for this reason that Jesus stated, *"For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which seemeth to have"* (*Luke 8:17, 18*). †

DID YOU KNOW?

"A saint is not a person 'with' a saintly character. A saint is a saintly character. Character, not ecstatic moods, is the essence of saintliness.

"By the same token, you cannot have a change of 'the will' and be the same person two minutes later. If your will is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, all is changed.

"I feel confident that God is preparing you for that divine stamp of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. God wants to bring you to the place of being a true servant of His." - Oswald Chambers, *Devotions for a Deeper Life*, pg. 102

"Did all my beloved fellow disciples, who seek to work for God know the blessedness of looking truly to God alone, and trusting in Him alone, they would soon see how soul refreshing this way is, and how entirely beyond disappointment, so far as He is concerned." - George Mueller

"The urgent need for the Church is to come to grips with the fact that we are living at the twilight period of human history. We must plead with our Lord to light a biblical fire within the present lukewarm Church in America and enable it to understand that current world events are precursors to our King's second coming. And in the doing, we must ask the Lord to prepare us for the climactic battle with Satan, Antichrist, the false prophet, and counterfeit religion. And, of course, we must do all of this in Christ's omnipotent power and be willing to stand for truth no matter the cost—even unto martyrdom—if faithfulness to our Lord requires it. The last book of the Bible informs us if we are faithful unto death we will be given 'a crown of life' (*Revelation 2:10*)." - Marv Rosenthal, *Zion's Fire*

ARE YOU OVERCOMING?

"And they overcame him [Satan] 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*

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." - *Revelation 21:7*

Strange Fire and False Anointing

By Jeannette Haley

If someone were to ask you how to determine if we are in the last days, you might well answer, *"The Bible tells us there will be wars and rumors of wars; earthquakes in different places; famines; diseases and plagues; divorce and remarriage; lawlessness and hideous crimes."* All of these things are true. No one can deny we are most assuredly living in such times.

However, there is one vital sign of the end of the age missing in the above statement; that is, false prophets. Of all the topics Jesus warned His disciples about, this one thing, false prophets, was repeated three times in one discourse. (Matthew 24:4, 5; 11; 24.) Why do you suppose Jesus, Peter, John, Jude and Paul placed such a great emphasis on end-time deceivers?

The answer lies in the fact that Jesus and the apostles knew nothing could deceive, devastate and destroy the Body of Christ like the workings of false prophets. *"Well, Jeannette,"* you may say, *"there certainly are no false prophets in my church or circle of friends or life. Besides, I'd know one if I saw one."* Are you sure about that? Jesus said in Matthew 24:24: "if possible, they shall deceive the very elect." "If" in the Greek language in this context is used to speak of things not merely probable but, rather certain and dependent on no condition (See Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, page 504).

Volumes could be written about false prophets but at this time I feel strongly led to zero in on the Manifest Sons of God movement. Many of you have asked us about the Manifest Sons of God, so in this brief space, we will attempt to give you an overview of this occult presence in the church today. The MSG originated from the Latter Rain Movement of the 40's and 50's. In 1946 a major fasting and prayer daily revival center was established in San Diego, California under the leadership of Franklin Hall. Hall believed that the prayers of Christians would be hindered if they

did not fast, and the prayers of pagans would be answered when they fasted. His insistence on fasting was not for the purpose of coming into God's presence in order to determine the will of God, but rather for the purpose of getting his way with God—a fanatical zeal for power.

Hall believed in "Christian astrology." He also taught that all those who applied his teachings would become immortal while living in their present flesh-and-blood bodies. He claimed there was such a thing as an "immortal substance" which was seen on those who attended his meetings as a fine gold or silver, sparkling material. He claimed this phenomena was "Immortal Heavenly Objects" (IHO's), "Unusual Heavenly Objects" (UHO's), and "Unidentified Flying Objects" (UFO's). At this point, some of you may say, "Hey, this sounds familiar! Glory dust from heaven!" Really?

Nowhere in scripture do we find such a "manifestation." However, if you were to become involved in the occult, things such as "glory dust" would be no big deal. Think about it. Is Jesus being lifted up? Are people being convicted of their sin and born again? Can Satan really produce visible, material "miracles?" You better believe it! Who do you think is the power behind lying signs and wonders? But rather than discuss this further, we need to learn about another "founding father" of the MSG, William Branham. Branham was greatly influenced by Hall's teachings. Branham taught what he called "God's Seventh Church Age." Branham literally believed that he was the "angel" referred to in Revelation 3:14 and 10:7, the prophet to the Laodicean Age, the final era of time. Branham and his followers believed that the true evidence of possessing the Holy Spirit was whether or not you followed "God's prophet," which was Branham. This false prophet brought forth many heretical beliefs including his "serpent's seed doctrine" that claimed that Cain was born of an adulterous affair between Satan and Eve. He denied the Trinity and taught that the Word of God was given in three different forms: the Zodiac, the Egyptian pyramids, and the written scriptures. He claimed that his gift of healing was done by "his angel" (and not the Holy Spirit).

To quote from Roger Oakland's

excellent little book, *New Wine or Old Deception*, "A good indicator that a false doctrine in the church is underway is when a teaching projects that man can be big and powerful while God can be manipulated and made subject to man's plans and schemes. Clearly the 'Manifested Sons of God' idea fits into this category." The Manifest Sons of God emphasize a 'Kingdom Message' by proclaiming:

1. The offices of prophet and apostle will be restored in the latter days.

2. The prophets will call the Church to holiness and rejection of the world's influences found in the denominational churches. True sonship with God will come through stages of perfection: servant, friend, son, and, ultimately, godhood itself.

3. The apostles will rule the Church through the establishment of independent churches, unaffiliated with the corrupt denominations. The exception would be the denominational churches that leave their covering and join the movement.

4. Through signs and wonders wrought by the apostles and prophets, a world-wide revival will break out, and a majority of the world will be won to Christ. The signs and wonders will include blessings upon those whom the apostles and prophets bless, and curses upon whom they curse.

5. The revival will come as the result of the Church defeating demonic spirits through prayer, fasting and spiritual warfare, conducted through intense worship and praise, and by rebuking demonic powers and territorial spirits.

6. The restoration of praise and worship is known as the Tabernacle of David, and includes dancing, singing, and exuberant praise in tongues.

"Those who achieve a certain degree of holiness under the direction of the apostles and prophets will overcome all enemies, including death, and will become immortal. They will complete the conquest of the nations before Christ returns. The conquering is done as Joel's army—an army of immortal beings—bringing judgment upon the ungodly and all who will not accept the authority of the apostles and prophets.

"Some believe that the second coming of Jesus is in and through the Church. The Church will become the Christ on earth and rule the nations

with a rod of iron. Others believe that after the Church has taken dominion over the nations, the Church, glorious and triumphant, will call Jesus back to the earth and hand the nations over to Him. It is obvious that the majority of 'Latter Rain' theology cannot be supported by sound Biblical exegesis, and instead lines up with occult ideas and methodology. It is a noble idea to live a sinless life without 'spot and wrinkle' but, every Bible believer who has an understanding of the grace of God, knows that our hope lies totally in the finished work of the cross and not in any goodness of ourselves. This teaching seems to appeal to the human weakness of spiritual pride and the lust for power, which has always opened the door for false teachings connected with the occult."

Some of the more familiar terms the MSG uses frequently are as follows: Bride Company, Christ principle, people, Dominion, Elijah Company, Feast of Tabernacles, Five-fold ministries, Jezebel spirit, Joel's Army, Kingdom principles, Kingdom theology, Many-membered man child, New breed, New Covenant, New order, New Wine, New Zion, Overcomers, Reconstruction, Restoration, Serpent's seed, Signs and wonders, Sonship, Spoken word, Tabernacle of David, Unity in diversity.

This heretical theology now being proclaimed in thousands of churches throughout the world today, concerning a great outpouring of power in the last days upon an elite group of believers, has no foundation in Scripture. Jesus told us that the gospel would be proclaimed as a witness to all the nations and then the end would come. But nowhere in scripture does it declare that there shall be a great revival over the majority of the world with people coming to Christ as their Savior. Rather, the Word of God warns us that there shall first come a "falling away." We are definitely living in that time.

A "falling away" doesn't mean a departure from religion, but rather, a departure from the truth. This means a departure from the real Jesus (who is the Truth) and from the revealed, written Word of God. Remember that there will be a one-world religion, as prophesied in God's Word, but it will not be true Christianity.

Everywhere we turn we encounter

the heretical teachings of the MSG. And what's even more tragic, we see multitudes of people within the Christian ranks swallowing this poisonous heresy hook, line and sinker. Many even fiercely defend it against clear Biblical instruction indicating that they have been thoroughly brainwashed. The Manifest Sons of God are lacking in the fruit of the Spirit. Love is not a priority, neither is care for the poor and needy or giving to missions. Their goal is world domination at any cost, including shedding the blood of those standing in the way by the hard core element within its ranks, (Joel's Army).

The question is, how can a Christian be deceived? Answer: First of all, by not studying, knowing, understanding and memorizing the Word of God (See 2 Tim. 2:15). Christians need to be diligent, discerning and not leave it up to others to teach them everything they believe. Like the Bereans, they need to check everything they see, read and hear from Scripture (Acts 17:11, Heb. 5:14).

We continually see believers falling into deception because they do not know the character of God. Rather, they usually define God according to their own frame of reference. This is the result of the shameful failure of the church to disciple new believers, tolerate sin in the congregation, and compromise with the world. People are left to flounder in the dark and figure everything out on their own. That's one reason why we must never assume that just because a person attends church or says they are a Christian that they understand what true Christianity is.

Christians need to know what a wolf looks like. A wolf looks like—a sheep! (Matt. 7:15). A wolf appears to be a minister of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15). A wolf also "talks" like a sheep (Ro. 16:18). Christian beware—pride, arrogance, self-importance and a feeling of infallibility opens the door for major delusion.

Believers must have an intimate personal relationship with God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This not only comes through a personal study of the Word, but through prayer. Most believers, sad to say, do not have an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a Person, not a "force" or an

"it". He is not here to grant our every wish and whim, but rather to lift up Jesus, convict of sin, guide us into all truth and lead us to righteousness (John 16:8-11).

Learn how to test the spirit and the fruit. Who is being lifted up? Is it Jesus, or is it a person or doctrine, etc.? Is there liberty or bondage? Are you drawn closer to Jesus with a greater desire to live for Him and Him alone? Do you experience fear, uneasiness or confusion? Ask the Lord to show you why.

Learn how to recognize a leader's ultimate goal. Is it to acquire a following? Gain income? Or is their goal to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ alone? Some of the signs of a true prophet are as follows: 1. Their prophecies come to pass (John 1:29). 2. They lift up Jesus (John 1:7). 3. They do not encourage a following (John 3:30). 4. They make a straight way for the Lord, bearing witness that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:23).

Is the leader humble? True humility is one of the greatest tests of a true servant of God. Arrogance, vanity and pride reveals a carnal, unregenerate heart. Stick with "winners." If you find a church that still stands on the unadulterated Word of God, where the leaders love the truth and are teachable, stay with it. If you know of "good, old saints" who stand on the faith "once delivered to the saints," fellowship with them. Learn from their example. Toss out questionable books, and treasure biographies of missionaries, and the "classics" such as the wise words of Oswald Chambers, A.W. Tozer, C.H. Spurgeon, John Bunyon, William Law, Andrew Murray, and others. Purge your music collection of all hypnotic, repetitious choruses and words that do not line up with scripture. Study the lives of the old hymn writers, and study the hymns themselves. They were bought with a price.

Finally, ask the Lord to give you a love for the truth. Ask Him to give you a fixed heart. And pray you never, ever fall victim to any kind of delusion.

This article first appeared in GSM's monthly newsletters several years ago. Due to its popularity, it has been edited and reformatted for publication in this issue.

YOU DECIDE

*"...but as for me and my house,
we will serve the LORD."
Joshua 24:15b*

HEAVEN IS FOR REAL: A DANGEROUS MOVIE FOR AN APOSTATE AGE

(Friday Church News Notes, April 25, 2014, www.wayoflife.org fbns@wayoflife.org, 866-295-4143) - *Heaven Is For Real*, the account of a four-year-old boy's supposed visit to heaven, has sold over 2 million copies in book format and has been turned into a movie which grossed \$21.5 million when it opened on Easter weekend. One pastor told me that the book is circulating around many of our Independent Baptist camps; many are recommending it. It is about Colton Burpo, a Methodist pastor's son who allegedly visits heaven during emergency surgery. There he meets a dead sister and great grandfather, sees Jesus, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Satan, and learns things not revealed in Scripture. We don't doubt that the little boy is convinced that he visited heaven, but we don't believe for a minute that it actually happened. First, the apostle Paul said that when he had visited heaven, he heard things that he was not allowed to repeat (2 Cor. 12:4). Obviously, then, a person cannot visit heaven and then describe whatever he sees and hears there. Second, the book *Heaven Is for Real* is contrary to God's emphasis on the priority and sufficiency of faith and Scripture. The book contains testimonies of how people have believed in God and heaven because of Colton's alleged visitation, but the Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and faith comes by hearing God's Word, not by signs and wonders (Romans 10:17). In his account of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus taught that if someone does not hear the Scriptures, he will not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:31). All of the signs and revelation we need are found in the completed canon of Scripture (John 20:30-31). The Bible is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God has told us everything He wants us to know about

heaven at this time. Third, the book *Heaven Is for Real* is contrary to the Bible's plain teachings. For example, Colton says Jesus' horse is rainbow-colored (p. 63), whereas the Bible says it is white (Rev. 19:11). Colton says the Holy Spirit shoots down power from heaven (p. 125), whereas the Bible says the Holy Spirit came from heaven at Pentecost and He is the power (Acts 1:8). Colton says everyone has wings in heaven except Jesus (p. 72), that the angel Gabriel sits on the left hand of God's throne (p. 101), that the Holy Spirit is blue and sits in a chair near the throne of God (p. 102), and for our Catholic friends the book is happy to report that Mary stands in heaven beside Jesus (p. 152). Some might ask how Colton could learn secrets about his dead sister who died in the womb and facts about his great-grandfather that he had not been told. The answer is demons. Paul warned that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14-15). The book *Heaven Is for Real* also promotes the visions of child progeny Akiane Kramarik, who began seeing heaven at age four (pp. 141-144). Colton claims that the Jesus that he saw in heaven is the same Jesus that Akiane drew from her visions at age nine. But Akiane's religious faith is a New Age type faith in a vaguely defined God. It is religious mysticism rather than faith in an infallible Revelation from God and the blood atonement of Christ. SOURCE: http://www.wayoflife.org/database/friday_church_news/15_17.php

RICK WARREN CALLING FOR UNITY WITH ROME

(Friday Church News Notes, April 25, 2014, www.wayoflife.org fbns@wayoflife.org, 866-295-4143) - This month, Rick Warren of Saddleback Church gave an exclusive interview with Catholic television channel EWTN, complete with effusive praise for the Catholic Church and the popes and a call for unity with Rome. He praised the works of Catholic contemplative saints such as St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, calling their books great classic devotional works, ignoring the fact that they held to a false sacramental gospel and

venerated Mary as the Mother of God and the Queen of Heaven. Warren said that Saddleback uses Roman Catholic contemplative prayer methods such as the very dangerous centering prayer, and Saddleback's spiritual director was trained by a Roman Catholic named Jean Vanier. (See Silence vs. The Silence at www.wayoflife.org.) In fact, he said that when he was writing *The Purpose Drive Church* he would get up in the morning, *light candles*, and start writing. He called Pope Francis our pope and said, For authenticity, humility, Pope Francis is the perfect example. He is doing everything right. Warren said that Saddleback recently received a delegation from the Vatican consisting of about 30 Catholic bishops to study the church's style of evangelization. Warren said, I fully support the Catholic Church's New Evangelization, which is a program to regain lapsed Catholics to the false Catholic faith and which is centered around veneration of Mary. When asked by EWTN's Raymond Arroyo, What is keeping Christians apart from the unity that John Paul II and all the recent popes have called for? Warren replied: I think we need to go back to the words of St. Augustine. In the essentials we have unity; in the non-essentials we have liberty; in all things we show charity. I think this is really true. I think as the world, particularly the western culture, becomes more secular, more anti-Christian ... it is really incumbent on all Christians of every brand and stripe that we join together on the things that we share in common (Rick Warren, EWTN, World Today, Apr. 10-11, 2014). Rick Warren is one of the most influential Christians on earth and also one of the most dangerous. He is enthusiastically building the end-time, one-world church. SOURCE: http://www.wayoflife.org/database/friday_church_news/15_17.php

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." - Hebrews 4:12

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." - John 17:17