

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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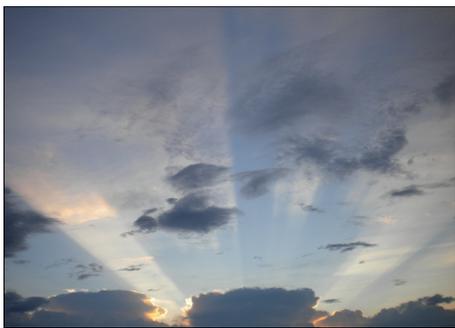
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## The Reality of God Part 1

By Rayola Kelley

Recently, I was watching a TV program about a religious group. I quickly discovered that I was personally acquainted with the religion, as well as some of their beliefs. As I watched these people, I could see that they were quite devoted to their take on getting to heaven. However sincere they were, it was obvious that they were indoctrinated, deluded, and completely out in left field when it came to God's truths, principles, and doctrines.

These people believe in the practice of polygamy. In fact, in their mind if a man does not have more than one wife, he will not make it to heaven. The men's goal in this cult is to be like their Father in heaven, but according to their belief, their Father in heaven has many wives; therefore, they likewise must have many if they are to be like him and make it to heaven.



We can shake our heads at such a concept, but these people are serious, just like the Islamic extremist whose mission is to rid the world of infidels such as you and me and bring the whole world under the teachings of the Quran and their prophet. People's idea of how to get to heaven varies, but the Bible is clear that there is only one way, and it admonishes the reader that few will find and enter into the kingdom of God (*Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24*).

As I watch the different societies of the world digress into the cesspool of delusion and immorality, at times it is hard for me to understand why people prefer blatant lies over the truth, but the harsh reality is many do prefer the darkness of their deception to the light of truth. Jesus stated in *John 3:19-21* that people hate the light and prefer darkness because they love their wicked deeds; and, because of the light of truth they have no cloak to hide their sin (*John 15:22*).

One of the reasons people prefer the darkness of delusion is the aversion that man's pride has towards being wrong about something. Pride is the last abyss of man that is usually confronted. Pride can be found in every layer of the fallen condition from perception (arrogance), emotions (haughtiness), personal standards (elitism), personal intelligence (skepticism), and moral rightness (judgmentalism), to religion (self-righteousness). It can cleverly disguise itself in the forms of fake nobility and self-pity. It represents the big empty dark space between the heart that must be humbled, convicted, and made anew and whole by God's Spirit, and the mind that must be reasoned with according to God's Word and transformed by the truth of His Spirit. It is pride that makes man unmanageable in his mind, undisciplined in his emotions, unyielding in his will, and unruly in his ways.

I realize because of our fallen condition, we are all prone to give way to some type of seduction, delusion, and false reality. Due to our tendency to justify ourselves in our own eyes, we can easily prefer the ways of darkness so we do not have to face the sharpness of truth when it cuts away the different layers of excuses to reveal the depth of our depravity and rebellion, revealing our desperate need for a Savior. Every time the cloak of delusion is removed by some truth it is not unusual for people to erect another

cloak, which is made up of excuses and justifications to cover their sins. It is for this reason the Bible is clear that we must choose to love the truth in order to avoid being taken away by the great tidal wave of delusion into damnation that is now moving through the present age (*1 Thessalonians 2:10-12*).

For me truth is not just a matter of what will ultimately stand in the end, but it also represents common sense. It will actually take the insanity out of the confusing realities that are constantly affronting us from every side. For example, the world with its humanistic philosophy would have us believe that there is no real right or wrong way to heaven. The New Age wants us to believe that Christianity is just one of many ways to heaven. The one world religious system that is coming together promotes a type of universalism where everyone in the end will be saved. There are the varieties of false gospels which put the burden on man to work his way to heaven by adjusting his thinking, reforming his ways, performing according to some religious code, and complying with the latest exalted "Christian guru" (false apostle or prophet). There are also those who believe if they live a decent enough life that they will get to heaven. And, for the people who were mentioned in the first paragraph of this article, they believe the good news is all about family and having many wives, and children.

As I listen to the numerous takes on what it means for one to get to heaven, I realize that to believe the Bible, which declares that there is only one way is precarious. If people do not want the truth, it only makes sense that they will vehemently reject it if it challenges their fragile reality, scoff at it because it does not allow for what they would consider a more tolerant, kinder, or better way, and rage against it if it points to any conse-

quences. When you are surrounded by the insane reality of others, you begin to wonder if you are not a bit tilt. It is for this reason I thank God for His unchanging Word.

The only source that can bring me back to center in a world that seems like it is going mad and is hell bent is God's Word. I find so much comfort and hope in His Word. I can edify myself with its truths, encourage myself with its many promises, and rest in the knowledge of God's abiding faithfulness. I can know that in the end it is God's truths that will stand while all other false ways will be cast into the pit of hell.

The question we must ask is how can a person know what he or she believes about God is correct? It is important to point out that most cults play off of the fact that even Christians cannot agree about what they should believe. There are many Christian denominations to prove their point. Even though the differences between many Christians come down to what I refer to as non-essential doctrines, these differences have been effectively utilized to undermine the credibility of the faith that was first delivered to the saints over two thousand years ago (*Jude 3*).

The answer as to whether we, as Christians, believe the right things does not come down to whether we belong to the right denomination, are associated with the right Christian leader, or that we hold to certain doctrines; rather, it comes down to what we believe and understand about God. People can belong to the most popular denomination, be associated with the most respected Christian leader, and hold to the most accepted doctrine, and still go to hell.

When Jesus was questioning Peter in *Matthew 16:15*, He did not ask him what Jewish sect he preferred, what rabbi he agreed with the most, or whether he agreed with the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Esenes. Rather, He asked Peter, "*But whom say ye that I am?*"

Through the years of teaching and writing articles, I have brought people back to this one issue many times, "Who do you say Jesus is?" The reason for bringing people back to this point is that it is easy to lose sight of what really determines the

destiny of a person. Christendom is clearly being inundated by the latest erroneous "revelations," the fanatical declarations of the newest "prophet," the heretical claims of the popular "apostles", and the latest fads created by new movements. Clearly, a person could easily get lost in all of it and lose sight of the simplicity found in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth of the matter is that if we do not get the reality of God right, we will ultimately find that we have not been right about anything.

The prophet, Daniel talked much about the events that would take place before the return of Jesus. There is one Scripture that has often stood out to me. In a way it serves as an exhortation to me, while giving me simple insight into what it would take to endure such challenging times. Consider what it says, "*And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.*"

Watching certain politicians in America, I have to admit I see nothing but empty flatteries coming from their lips. Sadly, because many people prefer their own realities, they are susceptible to following those who flatter them the most by tickling their ears with false promises. Obviously, in the last of the end days the deception will be great as the flatteries of the wicked fill the airwaves with propaganda, but those who know their God, shall stand strong in the midst of such deception and be party to exploits, such as miracles. Note again, Daniel was not talking about a certain religious affiliation, leader, or school of thought; rather, he was talking about the necessity for saints to personally know their God.

The problem is that most people believe there is some type of God; therefore, they are content to settle for a quasi-assurance about their religious status. For some He is a conceptual God based on intellectual understanding; for others He is a sentimental notion that creates certain emotional responses, and then there are those who hold to certain facts and traditions about God, keeping Him one-dimensional. In most cases people's inept ideas of God make him more human and controllable, and when God is brought down to man's level, man will automatically become more "divine" as

he ultimately judges the ways of God according to his own standards and codes. Such ideas can be compared to Greek Mythology where the gods were powerful, but they possessed human tendencies that caused them to not only abuse their power, which brought them into competition with each other and ended with the folktales of their different downfalls and eventual demise.

Today, I fear that many people's ideas of God have rendered Him into a lifeless, ineffective myth that will prove nothing more than a figment of their imagination (*2 Corinthians 10:3-5*). Granted, these individuals may come across as having much knowledge, but they have failed to come to the real knowledge of who God is. Their sentimental notions about Him may make them appear sincere in their devotion to Him, but they are in love with how their notions make them feel about God instead of being in love with the Person of God. They may cling to ideas or traditions about God which makes them appear honorable, but they will ultimately present God as being rigid and lifeless, devoid of any love, mercy, and grace (*2 Timothy 3:7; Matthew 15:6-9; 2 Corinthians 3:6*).

As I study the Bible, it becomes increasingly clearer that I must know God for myself. I cannot settle on what I have learned from others. I must avoid being content with the beliefs I hold to about God or fail to grow in my knowledge of Him. I must take all the precautions to seek, find, and know my God if I am going to stand and endure the great deception that is now taking hearts and minds captive.

It is for this reason that I feel the need to write a series on who God is. Granted, we have the written revelation of God in His Word, and there are no amount of words, thesis, or newsletters that can begin to describe the nature of God, explain the depths of His incredible works, or explore the heights of His ways better than His Word, but it is my responsibility to point people to God as their sole solution in the matters of heaven, life, and eternity, encourage them to grow in the knowledge of Him, and exhort them to walk in His ways. My desire is that people will get a small taste of the goodness of God, see glimpses of His

glory, and experience the sweetness of His presence. Once they taste, see, and experience Him, they will be inspired to seek Him in greater ways for themselves.

Admittedly, I feel a bit of trepidation because I know that in my limitations I cannot begin to do God justice, but I am also excited about doing this series because I always benefit from doing the research. I know that I will tread where I have been previously, but my spirit will once again be revived as I remember the simple but beautiful truths about God's attributes and ways. I also know that it takes the eyes of faith and the penetrating light of His Spirit to bring depths to the truths of God. This will be my prayer for each reader so that they will indeed come out knowing their God in a greater measure, enabling them to stand strong and unwavering in their faith towards God in these precarious times. †

## QUOTABLES

"As long as people are uninformed, they can believe anything, and justify anything." - Rayola Kelley

"Having a spiritual experience gives us an expectation, but it fails to inspire genuine faith towards God. If you have an experience without faith, the element of hope is not present. Therefore, if you start from the basis of experience and not faith this is where it leads you. A spiritual experience is not a confirmation [that a person is saved]. If you seek experience, you will get a delusion every time. People want experience to confirm they are all right with God and it fails to serve as a reliable stake. Experience without truth will just create delusion. A spiritual experience should never make you an exception to the rule. Truth is the same for everybody, but not experiences. You have to confess that He is Lord and repent of your sins to be saved, not arrogance without repentance (*Romans 10:9, 10*)." - Rayola Kelley

"The heart of the world is breaking under this load of pride and pretense. There is no release from our burden apart from the meekness of Christ." - A.W. Tozer

"Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified." - A. W.

## THE BIG QUESTION

### Part Two

By Jeannette Haley

In Part One of this article titled *The Big Question*, we examined the statement of a popular Hebrew and Greek scholar who stated that no man has ever, nor shall ever enter into heaven which is the abode of God and His angels. The belief of many in a state of "soul sleep" after physical death was also held up to scriptural inspection.

Continuing along the lines of this discussion, it is important to note that one of the heretical teachings gaining momentum today among certain professing Christians is the "Jesus Died Spiritually" (JDS) belief. A brief summary of this blasphemy can be found on line at Wikipedia that states: "Often referred to as JDS, there is a teaching that to atone for sins, Jesus had to die both physically and spiritually. As an outcome of his 'dying spiritually', the Word of Faith movement argues Jesus thus needed to be born again, as any other sinner, and that although Jesus Himself was never a sinner, Jesus was forsaken by God just as if He had committed every sin in human history.

"E.W. Kenyon, a founder of the doctrine that later became known as Word of Faith, was the first to explicitly articulate the doctrine in a number of his works, including *What Happened From The Cross To the Throne and Identification: A Romance In Redemption*. This doctrine was later supposedly taken up by Hagin, Copeland, and many of their followers. The doctrine asserts that Jesus' bodily sacrifice was but the beginning of atonement, which continued with Jesus' suffering in Hell. Copeland claimed that Jesus took on humanity's 'satanic nature' and was 'born again' in Hell. Hagin's teaching was featured in his book *The Name of Jesus* (1978 edition)" (although his son denied this.)

A helpful and informative excerpt on this subject is given to us from The Berean Call which states: "Confusion arises because 'Jesus Died Spiritually' (JDS) is the label attached to the heresy taught by Hagin, Copeland, and other 'word-faith teachers': That our redemption comes not from Christ's death upon the cross, but from His being tortured by Satan in hell for three

days and nights. Copeland, for example, says, 'He allowed the devil to drag Him into the depths of hell as if He were the most wicked sinner who ever lived. . . . Every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him . . . they tortured Him beyond anything that anybody has ever conceived. . . . In a thunder of spiritual force, the voice of God spoke to the death-whipped, broken, punished spirit of Jesus . . . [in] the pit of destruction and charged the spirit of Jesus with resurrection power! Suddenly His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life. . . . He was literally being reborn before the devil's very eyes. He began to flex His spiritual muscles. . . . Jesus Christ dragged Satan up and down the halls of hell. . . . Jesus . . . was raised up a born-again man. . . . The day I realized that a born-again man had defeated Satan, hell, and death, I got so excited . . . !' (*Believer's Voice of Victory*, Sep. 1991).

"It is both fanciful nonsense and heresy to teach that our redemption comes through Satan torturing Jesus in hell. That would make Satan our co-redeemer. If he didn't torture Jesus enough we wouldn't be saved—and if he did, do we thank him? Blasphemy! Satan isn't the proprietor of hell. He hasn't even been there yet. Nor will Satan torture the damned but will himself be tortured with 'everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41) when death and hell have been 'cast into the lake of fire' (Rev 20:14).

"Before He died, Jesus cried in triumph, 'It is finished' (Jn 19:30), indicating that our redemption had been accomplished *on the Cross*. Christ told the thief on the cross who believed in Him, '*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*' Lk 23:43), *not in hell!* He said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (Lk 23:46). Yet Hagin, Copeland, et al. say He ended up, instead, in the hands of Satan in the depths of hell!"

In these end times doctrinally correct, wise, godly, humble, Spirit-led teachers (and evangelists) are becoming hard to find. Thank God for those men and women of God who have gone on before us: those servants of the Lord whose writings and works remain faithful and true to the

spirit and intent of Scripture, and are a guiding light for us who follow. One such teacher, Oswald Chambers, was (in my opinion) one of the greatest thinkers and Bible teachers of all time. He is probably best known for his devotional book, *My Utmost for His Highest*. On the subject of death he wrote, and I quote, “We are dealing here with the spirit in its freedom from the flesh. We mean by ‘flesh,’ this body we are in, not the ‘mind of the flesh.’ It is possible for the spirit to exist apart altogether from man’s body.

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise’ (Luke 23:43; see also Luke 16:25; Hebrews 12:23). These passages refer to the place where the body is not—the unseen. The Bible points out that man’s spirit is immortal, whether or not he is energized by the Spirit of God; that is, spirit never sleeps. Instead of the spirit sleeping at what we call death, at the breaking away of spirit from the body, the spirit is ten thousand-fold more awake. With the majority of us our spirits are half-concealed while we are in this body. Remember, spirit and personality are synonymous, but as long as a man is in the body his personality is obscured. Immediately he dies his spirit is no more obscured, it is absolutely awake; no limitations now, man is face to face with everything else that is of spirit ‘Son, remember....’

“Soul and body depend upon each other, spirit does not, spirit is immortal. Soul is simply the spirit expressing itself in the body. Immediately the body goes, the soul is gone, but the moment the body is brought back, soul is brought back, and spirit, soul and body will again be together. Spirit has never died, can never die, in the sense in which the body dies; the spirit is immortal, either in immortal life or in immortal death. There is no such thing as annihilation taught in the Bible. The separation of spirit from body and soul is temporary. The resurrection is the resurrection of the body.

“Our Lord never speaks of the resurrection of spirit—the spirit does not need resurrecting; He speaks of a resurrection body for glorification and a resurrection body for damnation. ‘The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done

good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation’ (John 5:28-29). We know what the resurrection body for glorification will be like: it will be like ‘His glorious body’; but all we know about the resurrection of the bad is that Jesus Christ (Who ought to know what He is talking about) says that there will be a resurrection to damnation. The question of eternal punishment is a fearful one, but let no one say that Jesus Christ did not say anything about it. He did. He said it in language we cannot begin to understand and the least thing we can do is to be reverent with what we do not understand.”

Have you noticed that in nearly every Christian funeral or memorial service two passages of Scripture are usually present in the service, or in the little memorial pamphlet. They are *Psalms 23* and *John 14:1-3*. To quote Jesus in *John 14:2, 3*, “*In my Father’s house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*” We know that Jesus did not go to a place of “soul sleep,” but that He returned to heaven from whence He came. Heaven is where God’s “house” is—a place where no mortal, corruptible man can go at will and dwell. Paul explained, “*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption*” *1 Corinthians 15:50*. This is in reference to the body, not the soul or the spirit. The place that Jesus is preparing for the redeemed is a spiritual, “suitable” place, not a material, physical “mansion.” When Jesus returns for His people, then “*this corruptible [our physical bodies] shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality...*” *1 Corinthians 15:54a*. [Emphasis added.] Then we shall “*ever be with the Lord*” *1 Thessalonians 4:17b*. At His coming, when we are given a glorified body like unto His, then we shall be “like Him” and able to dwell wherever He dwells, be it on earth, or in heaven. It is interesting that what David wrote in *Psalms 23:6*, “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever*” ties in with *John 14:2*

which refers to “God’s house”. [Emphasis added.]

Concerning immortality, and being in heaven, *2 Corinthians 5:1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8* says, “*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, [our physical body] we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked...Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*” [Emphasis added.] The Apostle Paul’s exclamation in *2 Corinthians 5:8* “*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*” leaves no room for argument concerning where the saints will be when they are “absent from the body!” Paul wrote the Philippians, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain...For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better; Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*” *Philippians 1:21, 23, 24* [Emphasis added.] Concerning Paul’s departure, he wrote to Timothy, “*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*” *2 Timothy 4:6*. Paul said his soul was “departing,” not “going to sleep.” James wrote, “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*” *James 2:26*. Therefore, it is our physical bodies that die (sleep, if you will) while our spirit goes to abide with Christ if we are saved. If the souls of the dead are unconscious (“sleeping”) then why did Jesus go and preach to the spirits in prison; “*Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water*” *1 Peter 3:19, 20*? (See also *Ephesians 4:7-10*; *Zechariah 9:11*; *Psalms 16:10*).

Like Paul, the Apostle Peter

also wrote of his demise using the word “tabernacle” in relation to his physical body. “*Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me*” 2 Peter 1:14. John Gill writes concerning 1 Peter 1:14, “Which is another reason why the apostle was so pressing in this case, and so much urged the exhortation, and was so diligent in reminding the saints of it, and stirring them to observe it, because he knew he had but a little time to live, and which therefore he was willing to improve for their good. He sets forth his death in a very easy and familiar way, it being not at all terrible and distressing to him; it was but like the putting off of a garment, or unpinning of a tabernacle, or a removing from a tent to a palace. Saints are pilgrims here, they dwell in tents or tabernacles, at death they remove to their own country, and Father’s house. Death is not a destruction of man, an annihilation of him, neither of his soul nor body: the soul is not mortal, it dies not with the body; it only removes from this world to another, from a cottage to a kingdom; and the body though it dies, it is not reduced to nothing, it is only like a tabernacle put off, or taken down, which will be put together again in better order than now it is.” (John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible)

Jesus declared to the Sadducees that “*He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err*” Mark 12:27. He told the Jews, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death*” John 8:51. We know that Jesus was not talking about never seeing physical death, but spiritual death. To Martha Jesus declared, “*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*” John 11:25, 26. On the mount of transfiguration there appeared Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. (See *Matthew 17:1-7*.) How could they be “soul sleeping” until the resurrection if they plainly appeared with Jesus? In *2nd Kings 2:11* we read, “*And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted*

*them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*” [Emphasis added.] Elijah did not cease to be conscious, or fall “asleep!” In fact, what would the point be in God sending a chariot of fire to take Elijah up if he was only going to “soul sleep?” I can well imagine how some of those who cling to “soul sleep” might try to explain how, at some point on his way up in the whirlwind, Elijah went into “soul sleep” and fell out of the chariot to the earth—God knows where...!

Concerning the subject of there being no people in heaven, “past, present or future,” consider *Hebrews 12:22, 23*, “*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*” [Emphasis added.] Concerning “*the spirits of just men made perfect,*” Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Recollect that there are two kinds of perfection which the Christian needs--the perfection of justification in the person of Jesus, and the perfection of sanctification wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. At present, corruption yet remains even in the breasts of the regenerate--experience soon teaches us this.

“Within us are still lusts and evil imaginations. But I rejoice to know that the day is coming when God shall finish the work which he has begun; and he shall present my soul, not only perfect in Christ, but perfect through the Spirit, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. Can it be true that this poor sinful heart of mine is to become holy even as God is holy? Can it be that this spirit, which often cries, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?’

“Shall I get rid of sin and death--that I shall have no evil things to vex my ears, and no unholy thoughts to disturb my peace? Oh, happy hour! May it be hastened! When I cross the Jordan, the work of sanctification will be finished; but not till that moment shall I even claim perfection in myself. Then my spirit shall have its last baptism in the Holy Spirit’s fire.

“Methinks I long to die to receive that last and final purification which

shall usher me into heaven. Not an angel more pure than I shall be, for I shall be able to say, in a double sense, ‘I am clean,’ through Jesus’ blood, and through the Spirit’s work. Oh, how should we extol the power of the Holy Ghost in thus making us fit to stand before our Father in heaven!

“Yet let not the hope of perfection hereafter make us content with imperfection now. If it does this, our hope cannot be genuine; for a good hope is a purifying thing, even now. The work of grace must be abiding in us now or it cannot be perfected then. Let us pray to ‘be filled with the Spirit,’ that we may bring forth increasingly the fruits of righteousness.”

H. A. Ironside’s commentary on this portion of Scripture (*Hebrews 12:22, 23*) is unapologetically straightforward, and I quote: “... ‘Unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem’ This is not to be confounded with the earthly city of the great King, which will yet be the joy of the whole earth, for our portion is not to be in this world even when Christ Himself reigns, but we are to reign with Him from the heavenly Jerusalem above. This, of course, is the New Jerusalem, the bride, the Lamb’s wife of Revelation 19 and 21. It embraces all the heavenly saints, that is, all those who have died in faith throughout the centuries, all who in every dispensation believed God and were therefore quickened by His Spirit. The heavenly Jerusalem is preeminently the home of the church and therefore is designated as the bridal city; but saints of all other dispensations who have passed through death and entered into resurrection life will, as one has expressed it, be upon its ‘Burgess roll.’ This heavenly Jerusalem will be the throne seat of the entire universe of God.”

Concerning the “*general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,*” he wrote, “Firstborn here is in the plural in the original. The reference is not to Christ personally, but the entire church is called ‘the church of the firstborn ones,’ as distinguished from other saints to be called out and saved in a later day.” Touching on “*the spirits of just men made perfect*” Ironside said, “These of course are the conscious spirits of saints of former dispensa-

tions. They are not sleeping, as some have imagined; all live unto Him. But until Christ's death and resurrection they could not be spoken of as perfect, inasmuch as redemption had not yet been accomplished. They were saved, we may say, on credit, God having forgiven them on the basis of the work yet to be accomplished by His blessed Son. That work not having been completed, they with us are perfected in the sense that they rejoice in the complete settlement of the sin question." (*An Ironside Expository Commentary Hebrews*, H. A. Ironside, pgs. 120-121.)

Ask yourself, if the saints "soul sleep" and do not enter heaven when they die—in fact, if the saints will 'never go to heaven,' then who were the people John heard in *Revelation 19:1*, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God"? [Emphasis added.] If the souls of the saints never enter heaven, then who did John see in *Revelation 6:9-11*, "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled"? And, again in *Revelation 20:4* we read, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit

in the inner man..." *Ephesians 4:14-16*. [Emphasis added.]

Paul distinguished between the soul, the spirit, and the body when he wrote, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" *1 Thessalonians 5:23*. Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" *Matthew 10:28*. Quoting from <http://www.jesus-is-savior.com>, "Revelation 20:13 states, 'And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.' Carefully notice that the Bible differentiates between 'death' and 'hell' here. If soul sleep were true, then there would be no dead coming from hell, only from death. The fact that God differentiates between the sea, death, and hell, I think is further solid evidence that soul sleep is not a Biblical teaching. We read clearly that some of the dead came from hell."

Finally, *Revelation 7:9-12* once and for all settles the matter of "soul sleep" as we read this thrilling description of what John saw in heaven, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

The "Big Question" remains, will you be there? †

[NEXT MONTH we will take a closer look at the heretical JDS (Jesus Died Spiritually) belief, and compare it with what the Bible says concerning the price Jesus paid for our redemption.]

## LETTERS

"I stumbled into your website when I typed in Roy Sauzek's teaching. My country is exposed to a lot of heretical teaching and embraces American preachers who are not sound. Bill Hamon came 3 times to my country and spoke words of prophecy as well as Myles Munroe and others. I don't follow them because I read my Bible and ask questions a lot when it comes to prosperity gospel. Your website is really helpful. I copied the articles and shared them with my friends. Please if you have teachings on Israel and the Church, I would be forever be grateful. We have a big problem were everyone wants to be Jewish and is supporting Aliyah and Jewish people in order to be blessed which is not right. I also fear they are giving to Free Mason groups and organisations who are godless. I need teachings if you have." - Papua, New Guinea

"Scripture only tells us to 'bless Israel' . . . not to kowtow to them, nor to worship them, nor to go in their ways! I've never quite understood the whole Aliyah 'concept'....Israel is a very small state....tiny! How many people can fit in that place? Also, the word 'Aliyah' simply means TO GO UP....how about that! The Jews use it for *making aliyah* to the Bema seat in the synagogue to read from the Torah scrolls and also to go to Jerusalem [one always goes UP TO Jerusalem when speaking of the city.]" - FL

"The definition of this word head/ro'sh could be so simply explained if only the people had a heart after God and ears to hear!! Knowing the meaning of the word, I don't have ANY problem with a "man being the head of the woman"!!! Unfortunately, all of the pulpit pimps who slap women around with this, don't have a CLUE!!!! They degrade God's Holy Word, and denigrate women in one fell swoop!" - FL

"BAM!!!! What a SUPERB job you did on refuting his insidious article, ['Christians do not go to heaven']!!!! I can't wait to share this month's NL with those who also read his article. Thank you for showcasing this false doctrine, that others may be edified, exhorted and comforted by His TRUTH! Can't wait for Part 2." - FL

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### WHO DID JESUS CALL?

**Q:** *I am confused about Jesus' statement where he said that He did not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. Does it mean that there are actually people who are righteous enough that they do not need to be saved?*

**A:** Jesus' statement in *Matthew 9:13* would appear to be a contradiction, but put in the right context, it is easy to understand what He was saying. First of all Jesus was talking to the Pharisees. Most of these individuals perceived themselves as being righteous due to their heritage, rituals, and outward works. Individuals who perceive themselves as being righteous see no need for salvation. This was made obvious in the parable found in *Luke 18:9-14*. However, Scripture clearly refutes the concept that man can make himself righteous by personal piousness or works (*Ephesians 2:8-10*).

*Isaiah 64:6* reveals that man's best is as filthy rags to God. *Romans 3:10* tells us that there is none who are considered righteous to God. The Apostle Paul goes on to say in *Romans 3:23* that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In *Romans 7:18* we are told there is no good thing that can originate with the flesh. When you consider these verses along with many others that maintain the same theme, you will realize that everyone, including the Pharisees are sinners and need to be saved.

The idea of being acceptable to God based on outward piousness and works can also be seen in other arenas outside of religion. For example, those who think themselves to be decent enough do not see the need to be saved. Humanitarians see themselves as being in the role of savior, rather than needing one. There are those who are quite self-sufficient who also do not see the need to be saved.

As the great Shepherd of our souls, Jesus' call to repent goes out to everyone, including those who see no need for salvation. However, only those who humbly realize their spiritual plight will hear the call of Jesus and will repent of their sins.

It is important to keep in mind that righteousness in God's kingdom is not

about works; rather, it comes down to position, status, or standing in relationship to God. It is upon the born again experience that we are placed by God in the essence of all righteousness, Christ Jesus. Once we have been placed in Jesus' righteousness, we then will have right standing with God (*1 Corinthians 1:30*). Since there is no righteousness in us, God has to also count a matter as being righteous. Therefore, any act of honor or obedience that comes out of unfeigned faith is counted as being righteous; therefore, acceptable to God.

Sadly, since God called out to Adam and Eve, who were hiding from Him in the garden, His call continues to go forth through each generation, but often falls on ears of unbelief. Individuals with a spiritual hearing problem are those walking around in smug arrogance about their own code of righteousness, and those who are deluded about the worth of their personal decency, or are ignorant about God and the Gospel. †

### SIN IN THE CHURCH

"In my opinion, the greatest sin in the church of Jesus Christ in this generation is ignorance of the Word of God. Many times I have heard a church officer say, 'Well I don't know much about the Bible, but...' and then he gives his opinion, which often actually contradicts the Word of God! Why doesn't he know much about the Bible? These things were written aforetime for our learning. God wants you to know His Word." -- J. Vernon McGee

"Persons out of Christ often try to comfort themselves with the remembrance that they have never in their lives committed any really great sin. Little trifling acts of wrongdoing perhaps, but nothing of any consequence, so surely God will overlook their rather insignificant transgressions when He settles their accounts. In the first place, a man's status before God is decided not by the number and enormity of his sins but by whether those sins have or have not been forgiven, whether he is on God's side or the side of the devil."

- A.W. Tozer

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23*

### SIN, WHAT IS IT?

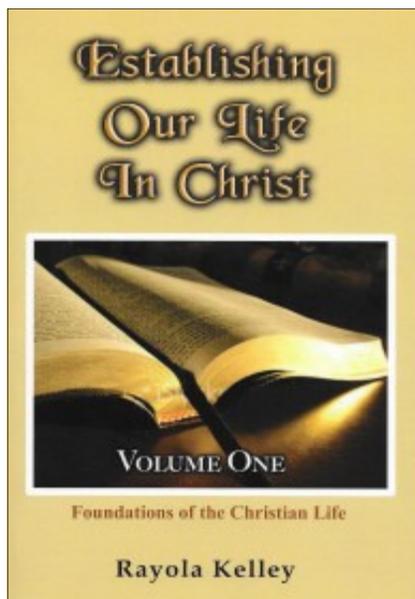
"For an act to be sinful the quality of voluntariness must also be present. Sin is the voluntary commission of an act known to be contrary to the will of God. Where there is no moral knowledge or where there is no voluntary choice, the act is not sinful; it cannot be, for sin is the transgression of the law and transgression must be voluntary. Lucifer became Satan when he made his fateful choice: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (*Isaiah 14:14*). Clearly here was a choice made against light. Both knowledge and will were present in the act. Conversely, Christ revealed His holiness when He cried in His agony, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (*Luke 22:42*). Here was a deliberate choice made with the full knowledge of the consequences. Here two wills were in temporary conflict, the lower will of the Man who was God and the higher will of the God who was Man, and the higher will prevailed. Here also was seen in glaring contrast the enormous difference between Christ and Satan; and that difference divides saint from sinner and heaven from hell." - A. W. Tozer

"The disposition of sin is not immorality and wrong-doing, but the disposition of self realization—I am my own god. This disposition may work out in decorous morality or in indecorous immorality, but it has the one basis, my claim to my right to myself. When Our Lord faced men with all the forces of evil in them, and men who were clean living and moral and upright, He did not pay any attention to the moral degradation of the one or to the moral attainment of the other; He looked at something we do not see, viz., the disposition." - Oswald Chambers

"The real destructive core of sin is not a matter of expressing itself in an outward response, but of an inward disposition. This disposition is influenced by prevailing inclinations and tendencies. Prevailing inclinations and tendencies establish the state of the person. This state, or inward environment that man walks in, came from Adam. *Romans 5:12* confirms this." - *Establishing Our Life in Christ*, pgs. 153-4 by Rayola Kelley

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## THINGS TO THINK UPON

"What will America be like if Christianity is cleansed from the land? The land of the free and the home of the brave will be a moral wasteland, a prison nation of men and women, boys and girls. Gone will be compassion for people, love for God and country, and love for family and those with special needs. Coercive paternalism—"Big Brother knows best"—will wage war on freedom of choice. Human creativity and hope for a better future will be but hazy recollections of a bygone era. America will resemble the Babylon of Revelation 18:2—"the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." These "hateful birds" will be roosting in the halls of academia and chirping their noxious tunes in the United States Congress." - Excerpt from Southwest Radio Church, *Prophetic Observer*, April 2013, Vol. 20, No. 4 by Larry Spargimino

"A believer who disregards prophecy that foretells future events removes himself from the discernment that God has provided in His Word. He may find himself supporting programs and agendas that seem 'right unto a man' but in fact are at odds with what the Scriptures tell us will take place. For example, if he supports a ministry that is attempting to transform or solve the problems of the world with the goal of ushering in the physical Kingdom of God, then he is unwittingly opposing the clear biblical teachings that tell us that the next kingdom to be manifested is the kingdom of the Antichrist." - Excerpted from *The Berean Call*, August 2014, *Prophecy Run Amok*, by T. A. McMahon

"But I do protest against the careless spirit of slumber which seems to seal the eyes of many in the church, and to blind them to the enormous perils in which we are placed by the rise and progress of false doctrine these days.

"I ask you to pay special attention to this point. Such is the simplicity and innocence of many in the church today, that they actually expect false doctrine to look false, and will not understand that, as a rule, the very essence of its ability to do harm is its resemblance to God's truth." J. C. Ryle, *Apostolic Fears*