

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

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## THE REALITY OF GOD

### Part 15

By Rayola Kelley

Every year I am surprised at how fast the Christmas season approaches. Perhaps it is coming up on us sooner because the media pushes to get people into the "Christmas spirit" the day after Halloween instead of the day after Thanksgiving. Hallmark is already showing their Christmas movies as a countdown to Christmas. Clearly, the promotion of Christmas is not always about celebrating something of importance; rather, it is about money.



As most people know, Christmas is a controversial holiday. The TV shows have a combination of Santa Claus and the Christmas Story intertwined together to try to cover all bases. The more you watch the juggling act of each institution in America towards the subject of God, the more insane the world appears to be. It is obvious that the world systematically wants to take Christ out of the celebration, while the schools hide behind a generic terminology to stay away from any religious connotations (except for Humanism, New Age, and Islam). It is also obvious that an increasing number of city officials across the nation are giving in to the pressure of a few that always call "foul," claiming that they are offended at the promotion of God in any arena, while continuing their push for separation of Church and state.

Those who understand the real language of separation of church and

state know that it cannot really be found in America's Constitution, but instead in the Russian communistic constitution. What our Constitution implied is that no one religion can be preferred by the government and dictated to the people. It advocates that one must be allowed to worship according to conscience, but sadly in this environment of political correctness, a minority are crying foul because they cannot afford to have their small-minded, weak psyches challenged by those who will not compromise their faith and bow down to their insanity.

If the battle over Christmas is not enough in the worldly arena, it also rages in the religious arena as well. There are those who state that Christmas is a pagan holiday and that Christ was not born on Christmas day. I tend to agree with this fact, but I also know that the eastern view is to celebrate the day of someone's conception as their birthday and not their actual birth. If this is so, there is a great reason for celebrating Jesus' birthday during the later part of December.

It is believed, that according to Daniel's prophecy in *Daniel 9:24-27* that Jesus was born in September. For example Daniel received the prophecy anywhere from 536 to 538 B.C. However, the actual clock as to the appearance of the Messiah would have not started on the 490 years prophesied in *Daniel 9* until the decree was issued by Persia to rebuild Jerusalem. Although there were several decrees issued permitting Jewish delegations to return to Israel to rebuild the temple, the actual decree permitting the rebuilding of the walls and the city did not come until 445 B.C., which is explained in *Nehe-miah 4*. The seven weeks in relationship to rebuilding the wall and streets represent 49 years, while the 62 weeks when the Messiah would be cut off (die) would represent 434 years. When you add 49 years to the 434 years, you have 483 years. Forward the calendar from 445 B.C. and it would bring you to the date of A.D. 38. Since the Jewish

calendar differs from the Roman calendar, (lunar—28 day cycle not 30/31) you would have to deduct 2,525.75 days, or seven years and two months, bringing a person back to A.D. 30.)

We know that Jesus began His ministry at age 30, and he ministered for three-a-half years before being cut off (crucified) which would be consistent with Daniel's prophecy. If you take the date of His crucifixion and count backwards, Jesus would have had to be born at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in late September, which would mean His miraculous conception would have been around December 25<sup>th</sup>. (The above information was taken from *God the Master Mathematician* by Dr. Noah Hutchings, pages 138-142.)

Personally, I get a bit tired of all the debates. My main reason for celebrating Christmas is not based on some technical correctness, but rather on the fact that the second Person of the Godhead, allowed Himself to be fashioned as a man, while being formed in the womb of a virgin, and born into this world as a baby in the midst of great darkness. He would grow into manhood, ever being prepared to be offered up as the Lamb of God on our behalf. The truth is there would have been no resurrection Sunday without Bethlehem. A celebration is about taking time out to remember what occurred, and in our busy world, it would behoove Christians to think about what they believe and know to be true about the incarnation of God in human form coming into this world with a mission.

This time of the year should remind us that the Bread of Heaven and Life came by way of Bethlehem (the House of Bread) as a pure, holy Lamb of God to allow His body to be broken like bread and His blood spilled out like wine so that life could be imparted to each of us by His Spirit. His birth was a miracle and His life a living, walking testimony of God's commit-

ment of redeeming love. Although, His death and burial seemed as the greatest recorded tragedy, it was clearly overshadowed by His resurrection which remains the greatest miracle to ever take place.

This brings us to the reason that God had to come in the flesh—it was because there was no one else who could satisfy the judgments of His holy, perfect Law. God could not even look on sin without judging it. It had to be addressed and there were none found among mankind who were righteous enough to satisfy the Law. The truth is all the best man could offer were filthy rags before a holy God (*Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10*).

Last month I talked about the distinguishing attributes of God that comprise the powerful light of His glory. First of all He is eternal, without beginning or end, and secondly, His majesty is beyond description. But, the other characteristic that walks hand in hand with His majesty is His holiness.

Man can perceive that he is good (moral) outside of God in light of a decadent world, but only someone who is truly deluded could advocate that there is some type of holiness present in his or her flesh. Religion may serve as a garb, but it only hides this great reality, that man apart from God has no source of holiness and no means by which he can be holy. Since God cannot look on sin without judging it, He had to provide the solution for it. He would first accept a covering (atonement) of the blood of innocent animals that simply pointed forward to His Son's sacrifice on the cross that would actually take sin away.

The extent God had to go to secure redemption gives us a glimpse into His attitude towards sin, and at the base of it all is the matter of His holiness. The question is what is holiness? The only way we can consider this subject is to realize only God is holy. His holiness means there is no deviance in His actions, no darkness in ways, and He has no self-serving agendas. In essence, God is pure in every way. Everything God does come from a state of purity and a premise of righteousness, which manifests itself in goodness. This goodness is complete moral uprightness,

which is honorable in all it does.

This brings us to the problem man is faced with. In *Hebrews 12:14* we are told, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is clear that we cannot see God without holiness. Jesus put it this way *Matthew 5:8*, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

The Apostle Peter made this statement in *1 Peter 1:15-16*, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." If man has no means within his flesh to be holy, how can he obey the above Scriptures?

"Holy" means set apart. There are two different types of holiness described in the Bible. There is *consecration* which is an *act* of setting oneself apart from something. It is man's responsibility to consecrate himself. In fact, the Apostle Paul gives us insight into this consecration in *Romans 12:1*, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The first and foremost action a man must take to consecrate himself is to offer all of himself to God. However, this also means he must deny himself of any right to live his life according to self, the world, or the devil. He must be serious about putting off the old by fleeing youthful lusts, separating himself from the influences of the world, mortifying the works of the flesh, and bringing bodily functions into subjection to the Spirit (*1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Colossian 3:5-9; 2 Timothy 2:22*).

Consecration, a separation from the profane, must first occur before the second type of holiness can take place. *Sanctification* is the actual *work* of holiness. The best example I had of the work of sanctification comes from the Old Testament. God gave clear instructions as to how the tabernacle in the Old Testament was to be erected, along with the priests' garments, the instruments, the anointing oil, and holy perfume. The problem is that once it was done the tabernacle sat silent. There was no sacrifice and service taking place. The question is why the silence? *Exodus 29:43-45* gives us the answer, "And there I will meet with the

*children of Israel and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar; I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God."*

It is clear that the only one who could and can do the work of sanctification is God. There are many Scriptures that declare that the Lord is the one who sanctifies. (See *Exodus 31:13* and *Leviticus 20:8*.) Consecration points to a type of purging oneself from the profane as pointed out in *2 Timothy 2:19-22*, but sanctification is a type of cleansing for the purpose of setting something apart for God's use. Granted, we can outwardly cleanse something, but only God can cleanse the inside.

The work of sanctification begins when God places us in Christ (born again upon salvation), who serves as our place of sanctification (*1 Corinthians 1:30*). This place in Christ positionally establishes us in a right standing before God. Now that we have been born again, the Holy Spirit begins to sanctify us by establishing the life of Christ in us (*1 Peter 1:2*). How much this new life is worked in us depends on how much of the old life (consecration) is being mortified daily and submitted to the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

It is clear that when it comes to setting ourselves apart from that which would defile us, it means ensuring a correct state in order to be separated unto God for His use. God always comes from a state of purity to ensure the integrity of all He does. For our conversation (behavior) to be holy means all matters must come from a heart that is pure before God. It ensures that we will be honorable in all we do. The Apostle Paul put it in this way in *2 Corinthians 7:1*, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The challenge for most Christians in America is to maintain a pure state before the Lord. Today our understanding of God has been greatly muddled by reducing certain aspects of His attributes to a worldly perception, such as His love or His grace

and mercy. In essence, it seems that many stop short of addressing His holiness. Perhaps there is fear to consider all matters from God's holiness. The concept of facing God in dread might take on a whole new meaning if we have to consider that all matters of God are an extension of His holiness and that all matters will be judged in light of His holiness.

In essence, maybe this is why most people avoid facing the holiness of God. They fear that it will completely undo them such as it did in the case of Jacob in *Genesis 28:11-17*; Job in *Job 42:4-6*; Isaiah in *Isaiah 6*, and the Apostle John in *Revelation 1:10-17*. There is no way that when you encounter the Lord in His holiness that you can escape not feeling undone by the penetrating light and the glory of its purity. The more you encounter the holiness of God, the more you are going to feel like a worm. Yet, there is wonderful cleansing and liberty that takes place at such times.

What most people fail to realize about God is that that all of His attributes prove to be trustworthy because they come from purity, from His state of holiness. If it was not for holiness, His love would prove to be temperamental, His grace fickle, and His mercy limited. If it was not for His holiness, His faithfulness would be questionable and His honorable intentions uncertain.

The other aspect about God's holiness is that He faithfully brings us to degrees or stages of sanctification as far as establishing us in a state of holiness. We could not handle the complete work of sanctification if we had to somehow have this state up front. Praise the Lord that Jesus is our place of sanctification as the Holy Spirit establishes us in the state of holiness.

I know for me it has been a process. When I first became aware that I was separated from a holy God, it was because I had a bad attitude. There was hate in my heart and I wished evil to fall upon my nemesis. I knew my heart attitude was wrong, but I did not know how to get rid of the darkness that was resting on my soul. Then I was introduced to Jesus. My, how He took the darkness off my heart as His salvation began to bathe my soul with His forgiveness!

However, I did not understand how fallen my inner man was. Jesus took care of my initial iniquity, but I failed to realize that I had not by any means arrived. The next revelation about those areas that had not been completely turned over to God came by way of actions.

If you try to clothe certain aspects of the "old man" with religious garb you can ignore wrong attitudes. In my initial Christian walk I clothed some of the moral deviance that was lurking in my character with religious activities. Eventually, they manifested in wrong actions, but instead of repenting and calling out to the Lord for His forgiveness and help, I tried to reform myself through different disciplines, but the wrong attitudes were still there.

Some of you might be relating to what I am saying. We are bent towards trying to right the wrongs in our life. However, the more we try in our own strength to make such wrongs right, the more we become entangled with the deviant ways of the old man. The Apostle Paul said it best in *Romans 7:19*, "*For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which would not, that I do.*"

I found myself being sucked down into a whirlpool that was taking me further away from the reality of God. It was then that I had to face that at the core of my wrong ways was the inner disposition of the first Adam. It was not always sitting on the throne of my heart, but it would raise its head when I least expected it to claim master over the situation.

It had to be daily crucified, while neglecting to listen to its rights to have life on its terms (pride) and claims that there is some good in it and that it could actually be salvaged through reformation. It was at that point in my life that the harsh reality of my plight in light of God's holiness completely broke me into many pieces. I was far from the mark and only the Lord could close the gap, only He could put me back together.

It is from a state of brokenness (humility) that God can meet us in our plight. It is then that He can revolutionize our life. In fact, the Lord will always meet us at the point of seeking forgiveness from a place of repentance. He will be able to restore us when we receive the pardon, and He will trans-

form us as we look up in gratitude for what He has done for us. It is from this premise that He will lead a person into sweet communion to receive greater healing.

As you can see, it is a process to come into deeper places with the Lord. We tend to look around or within to be established in a state of holiness, to walk in righteousness, and display godly conduct, but it is a work of the Spirit of God. We must submit to the work of the Spirit, while obeying what we know is right and correct before the Lord. The more we walk in righteousness by faith, the more we know that the inner bent of our old disposition will line up with the new disposition in righteousness. Each time we obey what we know is right, the Holy Spirit establishes the character of Christ in us and the Word cleanses us from impurities and hindrances, changing our attitudes towards God and the situation.

Most Christians mistakenly make the work of sanctification their responsibility. It puts too great of a burden on them and many have given up. Some continue trying to keep up the façade of having it all together, while others have walked away from the Christian faith in despair.

It is important to note that God does not ask us to do something we have no power to do and He will always empower us to do what He asks us to do, but we must first submit to the leading of His Spirit. Positionally in Christ we stand pure, and saints of the Most High God, but the Holy Spirit must do the work of sanctification that establishes us in a state of holiness. Meanwhile, we must separate from the profane, pursue what is right, and choose the ways of righteousness to ensure that our conversation (life) is holy.

As we consider this Christmas season, remember that Jesus not only came into this world pure (holy) as a baby, but He maintained that purity throughout His life. It is because He was pure that He was able to become the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

The next time you want to consider the greatness of God in a matter, remember you can trust every aspect of His attributes, not because He is love, grace, mercy, and etc., but

because He is holy. And, just how great is His holiness? We know it is consuming, but there is no way of describing it. We have this insight in Isaiah 6:2-3 when the prophet saw the Lord high and lifted up on His throne, "Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." If the seraphims cover their eyes in the presence of a Holy God, what should be our attitude concerning the Lord?

May you have a blessed Christmas! †

## THE INCARNATION

"The Cross of Jesus is the revelation of God's judgment on sin. Never tolerate the idea of martyrdom about the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Cross was a superb triumph in which the foundations of hell were shaken... The Cross did not *happen* to Jesus: He came on purpose for it. He is 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' The whole meaning of the Incarnation is the Cross. Beware of separating *God manifest in the flesh from the Son becoming sin*. The Incarnation was for the purpose of Redemption. God became incarnate for the purpose of putting away sin; not for the purpose of Self-realization... The centre of salvation is the Cross of Jesus, and the reason it is so easy to obtain salvation is because it cost God so much. The Cross is the point where God and sinful man merge with a crash and the way to life is opened – but the crash is on the heart of God." - Oswald Chambers

"A young virgin by the name of Mary was chosen by God to bring forth the promised Messiah and King. The promise she received was that He would save His people from their sins. What an incredible promise! Jesus, God Incarnate, would become identified with every individual to save him or her from his or her wretched condition of sin. Jesus would not only save His people, but He would be the living expression and representative of God in the midst of man. This is why He would also be called Emmanuel, 'God with us.'" - Rayola Kelley

## DARE TO DISCERN

### Part Five

By Jeannette Haley

*"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." - Luke 10:2, 3*

Even though it took place almost thirty years ago, the astonishment that someone had actually tried to do away with me (and a co-worker in ministry) while making it appear "accidental" remains tucked away in a corner of my memory. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before, so when it finally began to dawn on me just how really real it was, a succession of strange, new emotions began to creep through my mind. There were two attempts, and both were calculating and deliberate. The lesson learned was this: never trust dedicated and committed members of a cult with a cause. It is not only the Islamists who will shed blood to establish their "reign" and "rule," but many so-called "Christian" cults have no problem doing the same as well.

A friend and I had been traveling in ministry together, and after returning from wintering in Arizona where we spent time visiting her family, we rented an old rural farmhouse in central Idaho. One day our landlady introduced us to a "home fellowship" group. Ever since I was a little kid I loved meeting Christians, and this was no exception. How exciting! Meeting a group of Christians in such a sparsely populated place! My exuberance, however, was short-lived. It didn't take more than two minutes in their cramped house to realize that something was not quite right. In fact, something was very wrong. What I didn't know then is that we had stepped smack dab into the middle of a gathering of hard-core Manifest Sons of God. Everything inside of me was on "red alert," and all I could think of was fleeing as soon as we could "politely" manage to leave.

After our initial encounter with this cult, a subtle sort of "tug-of-war" began between us and the leaders (a married couple) over our "lamb-among-wolves"

landlady. She came from a well-established family of wheat farmers and ranchers in the area. She lived in a notable Victorian home that included a large barn, outbuildings and so forth on hundreds of acres. It later became clear to us that they were trying to lure her into their tangled web in order to gain control over her and her holdings. (The Manifest Sons are also part of the "camp" that believes if they lay claim to something, they will somehow get it, which is witchcraft.) We, on the other hand, were dedicated to strengthening her faith and walk in the Lord.

One day she invited my friend and me to travel with her to Montana to check out some quarter horses for sale. It would be a two-day trip, and we would go in her car which meant that my 77 Plymouth Fury and small motorhome would remain parked in an open shed at our place. No one knew about our little trip except for the leaders of the MSOG cult. A short time after returning from our little Montana jaunt, my friend and I had to travel to Washington for meetings. The weather was mild and the trip went well, until our return trip to Idaho. I began to become light-headed, nauseated, "headachy," and dizzy so I kept turning up the ventilation for fresh air. My friend, who did most of the driving, liked to drive with the side window open, and she seemed to be fine. Every time we stopped to walk around and get fresh air, I perked up, but when once again in the car a feeling of horrible sickness overcame me. By the time we got home, I figured I had the flu. However, the next morning I was fine. A few days later I had to drive the ten miles to the nearest town. By the time I pulled into the grocery store lot I was "sicker than a dog" but after shopping for a while, it had passed. At last it began to dawn on me that there must be something wrong with the car. Could it be carbon monoxide poisoning? But, how could such a thing be when the car had worked fine for years?

Thankfully, we had a Christian mechanic friend who was happy to check things out. After carefully examining everything under the hood, he looked at me with a puzzled expression. "I can't believe it" he said. Then he said something to the effect of,



“Somehow the fresh air intake hoses have been disconnected from the vents, and reconnected to the exhaust system.” In other words, somebody deliberately switched things around so we would be asphyxiated, or possibly pass out, or crash the car.

In our busyness, the situation was shoved to the back of our minds. Fall would soon give way to winter, and I needed to drive the little motorhome to town to have our Christian brother check it out before we returned to Arizona. Since my friend had mentioned that she thought there was something wrong with the brakes, I asked him to check them out, which he did. As he crawled out from underneath the RV, I noticed that his face was blanketed with a strange ashen color. Again, he looked puzzled as he slowly shook his head. In an intense tone he said, “Somebody cut the brake fluid hose so that it has been leaking out. It is a deliberate cut! So, you have had two deadly things happen to both of your vehicles!”

Afterwards, in town one day I saw the Sheriff on the street, I told him about our vehicles, and mentioned our suspicions that perhaps the cult leaders were involved. I was surprised when said, “I have no doubt whatsoever that he wouldn't do that. He knows how, being very mechanical.” He added that he regretted being related to them, and said something to the effect that they were “insane.” He told us that they were in the process of packing their belongings, and were relocating to northwestern Washington.

This was a bit shocking to mentally process, but the picture was becoming clearer. The only time anyone could mess with our vehicles was when we were gone on the short trip to Montana, and only two people knew about our absence—two people who saw us as a threat to their cleverly laid plans to beguile our landlady into their evil web. They knew the nearby route we would drive with our RV to return to Arizona—a route that has one of the steepest, winding grades in the country on our way south. They had no doubt but that the brakes would fail causing us to plummet over the precipice to certain death. But God had other plans for us that trumped those of the devil. Praise the Lord for His unfailing goodness and mercy to His lambs (innocent

and suspecting as they may be) who are among ravening wolves!

But, Satan: is he really real? Or is he an exaggerated figment of someone's imagination? Maybe Satan, Lucifer, the Serpent, Deceiver, Father of lies, angel of light, devil is merely a metaphor, or religious symbol. Many professing Christians do not believe that he is real; others consider him to be unimportant in this day and age. If they do believe Satan exists, they also believe that he isn't a big threat or has much influence or power. Sophisticated, upbeat churches find it embarrassing to talk about Satan, demons and his devices. But, one thing believers must always keep in mind is that the realm of Satan and demons is most certainly real, as well as bizarre. In fact, encountering this unseen and evil element can be so weird as to defy any rational (or scientific) explanation. After all, we are dealing with a powerful spiritual and unseen dimension that is every bit as real, if not more so, than the material, visible world we live in. Everything involving the kingdom of darkness is surrealistic, esoteric (obscure, mysterious, secret, impenetrable), abstruse (perplexing, complex), confusing, and dangerous. Satan's ministers are more than able to transform themselves into “ministers of light” who use beguilement and deception to entangle unwary victims, and that includes naïve and undiscerning Christians—especially post-modern Christians who are “too sophisticated,” “enlightened” and “positive” to give Satan and his devices much credence or thought. After all, we are living in the “civilized” west with all of our high-tech stuff, so why be concerned with such archaic subjects as Satan and demons anyway, right? Wrong! The Bible warns us, and we better believe it, to *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* 2 Peter 5:8.

An interesting little incident about how people view the devil occurred in this same small town one day getting a haircut. My beautician got into an animated conversation with another woman over the reality of Satan. They bantered back and forth about the subject while I sat be-

tween them hoping the distraction wasn't going to result in a far-out cut I'd have to live with for a number of months. Finally the beautician retorted, “Well, I don't think he exists. He's just a figment of people's imagination.” At this point my silence, “Can I ask you a question?” The startled look on her face made me think she had forgotten I was even there. She said, “Sure.” So I asked, “Tell me then, if Satan doesn't exist, who was Jesus talking to after His baptism when He was tempted in the wilderness?” The silence that followed was deafening. Finally, the other woman said, “Touché!” And, that, my friends, was the end of any conversation about the devil.



People, for our own souls' sake, we need to pull our heads out of the clouds and grab a hold of what God's Word has to say about Satan. To refuse to learn all we can about this archenemy of God and man is foolish and dangerous. We have a real enemy who is determined to undermine and destroy our faith. Ignoring him is not going to make him go away and leave us alone! But, that is just what he wants us to do. Therefore, let's put on our big boy or big girl pants, grab the bull by the horns, and become strong, seasoned soldiers of God. You can almost feel the passion of Paul's heart as he implored the Christians at Ephesus, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* Ephesians 6:10, 11. Power and might come by way of the Holy Spirit. *“But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord....”* Micah 3:8; *“Not by might nor*

by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" Zechariah 4:6b; "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...." Acts 1:8a.

The whole armour of God is what enables us to stand against the wiles of the devil—not our own wisdom, education, associations, accomplishments, church attendance, good works, or experiences—"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" Ephesians 6:12. Paul tells us a second time to "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." And again we see the word "stand" (which means to maintain) in verse 14, *Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.* "Without truth and righteousness we are exposed and vulnerable to lethal attack from the enemy. Too many Christians assume that they know all there is to know about the Bible, about God, about Jesus, about how to get to heaven when they die. Their heads are stuffed full of church tradition, creeds, doctrines, formulas along with a hodgepodge of religious ideas they have picked up along the way, but none of these things will stand when confronted with the wiles of the devil. Satan loves to get ahold of such a person and tie them into a pretzel.

The only way to stand, wrestle, withstand, and keep standing is to *know your God, know the Word of God, and the power of His might through the Holy Ghost.* You have to seek the Lord, draw nigh to Him, and worship Him "in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) You must have your own personal encounter with Him as Moses did on the mount when he cried out, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" Exodus 33:1. You must desire Him as did Isaiah when he said, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" Isaiah 26:9. You must hunger and thirst for Him as did David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? O God,

thou art my God: early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land; My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" Psalm 42:2, 63:1, 84:2, 143:6. Our hearts need to plea, "Draw me, we will run after thee....we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee" Song of Solomon 1:4a, c. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" Matthew 5:6. The question is are you hungry and thirsty for more of God, to know Him, to be filled with His Spirit, to be established in Christ through the power of the Living Word, or are you content to remain right where you are?

Then we read in Ephesians that our feet must be shod with the "preparation of the gospel of peace" Ephesians 6:15. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is what gives us sure footing in all things. Paul wrote, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. [Emphasis added.]

Having our feet shod with the "preparation of the gospel" means that we are not only maintaining, but advancing forward. This is not the time to sit back in our comfort zone and exchange our gospel footwear for a pair of fuzzy slippers. Jesus is still commanding us to "Go... and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" Matthew 28:19, 20. "Go" means "go." But, how can we "go?" Do we hop out of easy chair, grab

coat and hat, and run out the door? Not hardly! If we turn to the Book of Acts, we read a principle about "going" after the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the believers waiting for the promise from on high. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told His disciples to "wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost..." Acts 1:4b, 5. As His disciples, we are to likewise wait on God in obedience, faith and prayer for the Holy Spirit to endue us with power from on high, confirm our calling to us, reveal His will for us, and to guide us in all things. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, and He must prepare us to carry out the specific "go" He has for each of our lives. Now, here is the principle of "going" according to Jesus, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" Acts 1:8.

What this shows us is that there is a fourfold process involved. This process may be of a long duration, or a short one, depending on the will and purpose of the Lord of the harvest. The first mission field is right where you live. For these early disciples, that was Jerusalem. Preaching the Gospel among those who know you and witnessing to your neighbors is easier said than done, but that is where the Lord had them begin. Next they were to go out from their hometown to the surrounding countryside. After that they were to go to Samaria. The Jews were very prejudiced against the Samaritans, but now their Lord was telling them that He died for them as well, and that it was His will that they hear the Gospel. After that, they were to go into the whole world—a world of Gentile pagans. This was only made possible by the infilling, empowering, teaching, and leading of the Holy Ghost, and this is true for us as well. Nothing can be accomplished apart from the working of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives. Of course, much of our "going" can be accomplished by supporting missions, evangelists (hard to find a true evangelist these days, by the way), and trustworthy ministries who are able to "go." Be available, be pre-

pared, be “instant in season and out of season,” and with Paul declare, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” Romans 1:16a,b.

Concerning Satan and his work, we also need to consider what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” How many people do you know whose minds are blinded to the glorious gospel of Christ? Unbelieving and lost, they blindly stumble through great spiritual darkness that only the light of the glorious gospel of Christ can dispel. As soldiers of the cross, our warfare is not with these blinded souls, but is instead with the satanic powers of darkness. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5. How the church needs discernment in this area, and the power of the Spirit to wage spiritual warfare against the enemy of our souls!

Concerning the power of the Holy Spirit, A. W. Tozer wrote, “The Holy Spirit is not something we can argue about or somebody about whom we can say, ‘Well, you believe your way and I’ll believe mine.’ The Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity in the Church. There is a power in the Spirit, which can expose sin and revolutionize and convert and create holy men and women, and nothing else can do it. Words will not do it. Instructions will not do it. Line upon line and precept upon precept will not do it; it takes power to do it. This power is a persuasive power to convince, persuade and break down resistance. It is also a worship power creating reverence and ecstasy....the Holy Spirit brings the magnetic power to draw us to Christ, exalting Him above all else and above

all others. We must demand more than correct doctrine, though we dare not have less than correct doctrine. More than right living, though we dare not have less than right living; more than a friendly atmosphere, though we dare not have less than a friendly atmosphere. We must demand that the Word of God be preached in power, and that we hear it in power.” (Reclaiming Christianity, pgs. 114, 115)

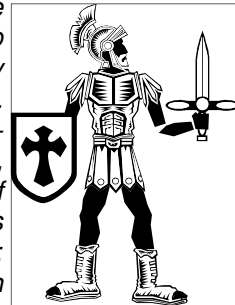
Finally, in Ephesians 6:16-18 we read, “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” The “fiery darts of the wicked” can come in the form of words, curses, claims, or psychic prayer. The latter occurs when someone visualizes what they want to see happen in the life of another. Here is a basic explanation of psychic prayer from Hegewisch Baptist Church: “Psychic prayer attempts to influence the Lord to cause someone to move in a certain direction. Whether or not the direction desired is God’s will for the person makes no difference. Praying with wrong motivations to pressure others to act, think or feel a certain way constitutes psychic prayer. Because this is a disguised form of witchcraft . . . manipulation, it is dangerous.

“Soulish prayer enlists the human spirit attempting to pressure the spirit and mind of the other person to come around to the desired way of thinking. Attempting to play God and force decisions on others is a form of manipulation which can have hurtful effect, especially when the parties are open to each other.” This is what the Manifest Sons of God cult mentioned in the beginning of this article was practicing on our landlady.

Are we to fear these “fiery darts?” The answer is no, but we do need discernment in order to know what we are up against. We must have the shield of faith, and our head covered with the

helmet of salvation. Someone may ask, “How do you know if someone is praying their will on you?” Our response: Does your head feel as if there is a tight band around it? Do you suddenly feel confused, or depressed? Do you feel “pushed” into some decision or form of action that is out of the norm for you? Has fear unexpectedly slammed against you? Do you sense that “something” is agitating you that you can’t explain, or that there is a “presence” coming against you? If so, it is time to stop and do spiritual warfare, commanding it to go back to where it came from in the Name of Jesus. Jesus said, “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, [demons, familiar spirits, etc.] and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” Luke 10:19, 20. [Addition mine.]

The importance of knowing God’s Word cannot be overemphasized. “The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17b) is our twoedged sword with which to defeat the attacks, lies, accusations, and wiles of the devil. Praise the Lord for giving us His Word—the written Word, and the Living Word, the LORD Jesus Christ! Amen. †



### **THE LORD IS COMING...**

“And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee” - Isaiah 12.



## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

### THE "DESIRE OF WOMEN?"

**Q:** "I recently read that because of what Daniel said in Daniel 11:37 that the Antichrist would not have the desire of women so that he will most likely be a homosexual, and that is why the world is being conditioned to accept it as normal. I was wondering if that is your understanding of that particular Scripture."

**A:** I have heard that conclusion a couple of times before, but my co-laborer, Jeannette reminded me of another possible meaning to it that I tend to agree with more. To understand this meaning, one would have to understand the Jewish beliefs. There are three things that are being said about this man in *Daniel 11:37*. The first is that he would not regard the God of his fathers. I realize the latest declaration is that the antichrist would be Arab. However, the Jews are not looking for the Arab's Messiah, but their own Messiah. The fact that the "g" is capitalized in this text means it is in reference to Elohim or God our creator. It is for this reason that some believe the antichrist will be Jewish in order to counterfeit the real Messiah.

This brings us to the fact that this imposter would not regard the desire of women. In the Jewish culture, it was every orthodox Jewish handmaiden's desire to be the mother of the Messiah. This goes back to *Genesis 3:15*, where it is clearly stated that the Promised Messiah would come from the seed of woman. It is for this reason there is a belief that the Jewishness of a person depends on his or her mother being Jewish as in the case of Timothy whose father was Gentile but his mother was Jewish (*Acts 16:1-3*). It was for this reason that the Jews expected Timothy to be circumcised.

We know that God chose a Jewish handmaiden by the name of Mary, who fit an important criteria brought out in *Isaiah 7:14*, that she would be a virgin. We know that no man had anything to do with Jesus' miraculous conception (*John 1:13*). His Jewishness came strictly from His mother's side. It is also interesting to note the statement that Mary made, "My soul

*doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name" (Luke 1:46-49). (Emphasis added.)*

It is clear that Mary understood that God was regarding her, but this imposter will not have any real regard towards the significance of this identification. Since Jewish women desire to have the Messiah, his attitude towards this matter could mean that even though his father may be Jewish, his mother may not be (an important criterion where the Messiah is concerned). Regardless of the implications, this man would not be desired by Jewish women because he is not the Promised Messiah, nor does he think it is important to have such an identification to complete his mission.

The third part of *Daniel 11:37* is that he would not regard any god. The word is spelled with a small "g" which points to an idol, judge, and ruler. The reason he will not regard any "god" is because he is going to exalt himself as god. This is what the last part of *Daniel 11:37* states, "for he shall magnify himself above all."

Since the first and last facts have to do with spiritual implications and not the physical, I would tend to believe that the second statement also has to do with criteria that will properly identify this counterfeit. It is clear that this man will do great signs and wonders to the point that many will follow him into complete delusion and destruction (*2 Thessalonians 2:1-12*). Jesus stated that if it were possible even the elect would be deceived. But, as believers we will not be deceived because God knows how to preserve those who are His, and we know the true Jesus and what the Word says about His next coming. The Jesus we proclaim fits all criteria established in the Word concerning His first, as well as His second coming, while the imposter may run a close parallel to Him, but he will ultimately fit the criteria of the counterfeit.

I realize that much of what is being spouted today about the end times is a matter of speculation on people's

part. There are so many opinions and points of speculation that are being taught as truth, but the truth is we really do not know how all of these prophecies will manifest themselves. However, the one thing we know is that the real Jesus is coming back the same way He left and He will have the scars (nail prints) to prove who He is (*Zechariah 12:9-11; Acts 1:6-11*).

As Christians we need to be careful about looking to the next elections to solve problems, or stubbornly stand on or behind our religious take of such matters instead of trusting Jesus with the outcome. We need to do what Jesus stated and begin to look up, knowing our solution is coming from above in the clouds, in glory, and in victory as King of kings, Lord of lords, and Righteous Judge. †

### A SPOTLESS ROSE (16TH CENTURY GERMAN HYMN)

Behold, a Branch is growing  
Of loveliest form and grace,  
as prophets sung, foreknowing;  
It springs from Jesse's race  
And bears one little Flow'r  
In midst of coldest winter,  
At deepest midnight hour.

Isaiah hath foretold it  
In words of promise sure,  
And Mary's arms enfold it,  
A virgin meek and pure.  
Thro' God's eternal will  
This Child to her is given  
At midnight calm and still.

The shepherds heard the story,  
Proclaimed by angels bright,  
How Christ, the Lord of Glory,  
Was born on earth this night.  
To Bethlehem they sped  
And in a manger found him,  
As angel heralds said.

This Flow'r whose fragrance tender  
With sweetness fills the air,  
Dispels with glorious splendor  
The darkness ev'rywhere.  
True Man, yet very God;  
From sin and death He saves us  
And lightens ev'ry load.

O Saviour, Child of Mary,  
Who felt our human woe;  
O Saviour, King of Glory,  
Who dost our weakness know,  
Bring us at length we pray,  
To the bright courts of Heaven  
And to the endless day.