

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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## Discernment 8 READY OR NOT

By Rayola Kelley

Jesus in *Matthew 16:2-4* rebuked the Pharisees for being able to discern the sky but not the times in which they lived. *Galatians 4:4* tells us that when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son. It was clear that the times and the signs pointed to the Messiah's first advent, but the Pharisees refused to discern the times and recognize the signs. They supposedly had been waiting for the Messiah, but when He stood before them, clearly identified by the miraculous signs that followed Him, they became scoffers and not believers. *John 1:11* reveals the results of their unbelief, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

We are waiting for Jesus' second coming and there is a similar attitude today permeating the religious sector. It is hard to know how many are discerning the times they live in and recognizing the signs that are laid out in Scripture concerning Jesus' coming. First of all I want to state that Jesus is coming back and the reason I know He is, is because the Word of God says so, and I believe His Word. I realize that even though Jesus came the first time and fulfilled many prophecies, there are those today who do not believe He is literally coming back as clearly pointed out by the angels in *Acts 1:9-12*, or they are scoffing at the prospect that His coming could be soon.

I became a Christian in 1976



when eschatology was popular. I learned about the pre-trib rapture and was greatly exposed to other beliefs surrounding Jesus coming for His church. I was excited about the events that were happening in America and Israel at the time. People were looking up as they read Hal Lindsey's book, "The Late Great Planet, Earth" followed by many becoming disconcerted after watching the series of movies beginning with, "A Thief in the Night."

Imaginations flew high as many speculated what would happen to those left behind when the church was taken out in the rapture. The tribulation and the rapture were the buzz word among Christians. Pastors were preaching sermons on *Matthew 24*, *Mark 13*, and *Luke 21*. It was always the same question, "Are you ready?"

My friend, that excitement was over 40 years ago and we are still here. Sadly, there has been a metamorphosis that has taken place among Christians about this subject. The biggest evidence of change is many no longer live in expectation of Jesus coming. The truth is His saints have been waiting for over 2000 years. Every age and generation has had reasons to believe that Jesus was coming back in their day and time. Every New Year was a year closer to this great blessed hope. However, instead of expectation mounting on the wings of blessed hope, it has waned like the moon during its monthly cycle. What we see in the attitudes of many is an actual fulfillment of Scripture, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then

was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and earth, which are now by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:3-8).

We must take note of what Peter was saying that there shall be scoffers in the last days, walking after their own lusts. I have to admit I didn't hear many scoffers back in the late 1970s. Admittedly, I wondered where they were, but 40 years later I have been meeting them in churches and some are quite bold about their assertion, "Where is He?"

I can understand the attitude of the scoffers. Back in the late 1970s, I never would have dreamed I'd be seeing 2018. Through the years, there have been many who set dates and sold many books as to why they knew Jesus was coming at that time. I have forgotten all of the different times and days Jesus was to return. For example, in 1988, we were given 88 reasons why Jesus would return. One of them had to do with the planets lining up which was called the "Jupiter Effect". Then in 1996, it was the year of the beast. Surely Jesus would be coming that year and then we had the pending crisis of Y2K and the looming predictions of bank failures. One prediction after another have followed since the great eschatology fad took the Church by storm in the 1970's, with different individuals running around with their calculators and logical explanations about when Jesus was coming back. When it didn't happen, it caused a certain casual attitude that has put some to sleep in the pews and created scoffing in others. Both attitudes are dangerous and are prophetic signs that reveal the season we are spiritually in.

The Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul warned those who have lost their

expectation in regard to the blessed hope, and conveniently gone to sleep. Jesus made this statement, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman (occupier) of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" *Matthew 24:42-44.* (Parenthesis added.)

The Apostle Paul said this in *1 Thessalonians 5:6-9* about the day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

As believers of God's Word we should be living in expectation of seeing the Lord, whether it is by way of the door of physical death or the rapture. We walk by faith towards God in light of His promises and not by what we see happening in this world. Like the saints of old who left a cloud of witness, we may not see the fulfillment of His coming, but we are always looking forward beyond this world to the next, to a city whose maker is God, knowing that in due time we will receive the fullness of all of His promises (*Hebrews 11:10, 13; 12:1; 13:14*).

Saints who walk by faith are not caught up with whether they see a matter come to fruition in their lifetime nor are they considering God according to events, but according to His Word. His Word is clear that we cannot know the hour in which He will come, but the Bible is also clear we must not be ignorant of the times we live in; rather, we must discern them (*Matthew 24:36, 42*). *John 16:13* tells us that the Holy Spirit will tell us of things to come and by prophetic events we can get a sense of whether we are living in the season that signals His coming due to fulfillment of prophetic signs, especially where Isra-

el is concerned. It is important to note that what we as believers need to be caught up with is the Person of Jesus Christ. God is never going to bring a matter about according to man's calculations. He appoints the time, sets up the environment according to man's attitudes, and allows events to fall into place knowing that it will usher in the proper season followed by distinct prophetic signs being fulfilled.

We also need to note why these scoffers are running around making such a declaration, because they want to have the time to walk after their own lusts without paying dire consequences for their wickedness. Obviously, these individuals want to experience the world as much as possible before they get serious with God. Jesus gave this warning, "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming: And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (*Matthew 24:48-51*).

The Apostle Paul clearly described the attitude that would be prevalent in the last days in *2 Timothy 3:1-7*. People would be lovers of their own selves (selfish); covetous (greedy); boasters (self-importance); proud (haughty); blasphemers (towards God); disobedient to parents; unthankful; unholy (profane); without natural affection (abominable practices); trucebreakers (never keep their word); false accusers (slanders and murderers); incontinent (undisciplined); fierce (violent/aggressive); despisers of those that are good (hate righteousness); traitors (treacherous towards anyone who gets in their way); heady (pungent in their ways); high-minded (arrogant); and lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Does this sound familiar as far as the time we are living in? It doesn't stop with these signs. It goes on to say that some of these people will have a form of godliness (religious garb) but they are void of the power of the Spirit to be overcomers in this present world. Many will be led away by

their lusts and even though they are seeking to learn they are incapable of coming to any real knowledge of truth about Jesus because their sin blinds and separates them from Him.

The Apostle Paul also pointed out that such people, who operate within these wicked attitudes and practices, have resisted the truth (*2 Timothy 3:8*). The problem is, when people stand behind their own reasoning for not believing the Bible by using those who have unscripturally set dates or cemented the events into a particular time-frame, they do so at their own spiritual risk. Even though a person perceives that he or she is resisting man's narrative on Jesus coming back, what such individuals are really resisting is the Word of God. Man may be wrong about his calculations on such matters, but God's Word is never wrong about what is going to happen. **JESUS IS COMING BACK the same way as He left.** The Word is clear about what to avoid as far as date setting, what to look forward to in light of prominent prophetic events, what to beware of as to the false narratives that will exist, and what our attitude should be in regard to the Blessed Hope of Jesus coming again. The Apostle Paul is clear about what the right attitude should be in *2 Timothy 4:8*, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only, but unto **all them also that love his appearing.**" It is not up to Christians to convince others Jesus is coming at a certain time; rather, their responsibility is to warn people that He is coming and that they need to be ready when He does. They need to make it clear that today is the day of salvation, whether it is meeting Jesus in the air in the rapture as prophesied in *1 Corinthians 15:47-52* and *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18* or when the door of death opens to usher each of them into eternity. Clearly, this is true for all of us. We must be ready to meet the Judge of our soul. As our pastor reminds us, "Every man has an appointment with God, who is the great judge of our soul because it is appointed for man to die once, but after this is the judgment" (*Hebrews 9:27*).

When you consider the other

parts of Peter's exhortation about the end days in *2 Peter 3*, it is easy to see that he is describing the environment just before the great flood in Noah's day, but Jesus also gave a similar warning, "*But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*" (*Matthew 24:37-39*).

There were scoffers in Noah's day, just as there were in Jesus' day. They could not fathom the world being destroyed by the flood. They thought it foolish for Noah to build an ark. I am sure they said, "Where is the rain, where is this great flood you speak about?" These foolish people who were building their lives on the shifting sand of skepticism were so blindsided by their unbelief and mockery that they failed to realize that Noah's faith and preaching was a prelude to the great judgment to give each of them time to properly respond to what was about to follow, "*And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly*" (*2 Peter 2:5*).

The final remark I have to make to the scoffers is that one of the reasons Jesus has not come back yet is because He is giving you time to **REPENT**. Peter brought this out in *2 Peter 3:9*, "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" I know before I was saved, the Lord showed me a great deal of patience in order to give me time to repent and receive His salvation, but He was also longsuffering with me as I grew up in Him. Right now the Lord is showing His longsuffering to a stiff-necked, rebellious, self-centered, self-serving, godless, immoral world that is trying to work itself up to another Tower of Babel, where, like the days of Noah, every imagination will prove evil continually as to practices, but in the days of the Tower of Babel, the people took it one step further to attempt to declare their supremacy outside of

God, "*now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do*" (*Genesis 11:6c*). (*Genesis 6:5; 11:4*).

Genuine repentance will turn a person around from his or her destructive thinking and ways to face God in humility and brokenness so that the person can truly receive God's only solution for his or her sinful condition and practices. Once people face God in repentance then they can look up with expectation that if Jesus comes they will be ready to meet Him. In fact, every day is an opportunity to get ready to enter into the glory of eternity, to prepare to be with Jesus forever.

This is why the Apostle Paul instructs believers in *1 Thessalonians 5:6-8* to be sober in regard to the times they live in, and Peter gave this instruction in *1 Peter 5:8*, "*Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*" Sobriety is the opposite of being casual, flippant, jesting, silly, and foolish. It is not the same as being serious, meaning being humorless, or being pious as in rigidity. Being sober points to having your feet on the ground spiritually, being realistic about what is happening around you, and being practical and wise about what needs to be done to accomplish a feat or overcome a challenge.

Many people are looking for a sure deal in relationship to the timing of Christ's coming rather than living in assurance that He is coming back. People want to get as much as they can from the world before Jesus' coming instead of preparing themselves daily for His coming. People want to walk in skepticism towards His coming to justify their unbelief and immoral activities rather than walk by faith in obedience to His Word that confirms He is coming, and live every day as if He is coming today.

I realize the emphasis of eschatology was a fad in the 1970s, but Jesus coming back for a church without wrinkle and blemish is a truth. From the signs and prophetic events surrounding the state of Israel, I believe we are living in the last generation, but whether we see Jesus come in this generation is not going to cause me to let go of Christ in order

to adopt a scoffing attitude towards the promise of His coming, while playing religion and tacking Jesus on just in case He means what He says and says what He means. I want to faithfully live my life in light of the promise of the "Blessed Hope."

I also want to note that I am not looking for Jesus' coming because I see it as the great escape from this terrible world; rather, I am looking for His coming because I love Him and I want to see Him. The Apostle Peter made reference to this attitude when exhorting the leaders to take care of the flock in light of "*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*" (*1 Peter 5:4*).

Next month I plan to share with each of you what it means to be ready for Jesus' coming; that is, if I am still here and you are still here. Meanwhile, I want to ask you: If Jesus came for you today would you be ready, or are you dead in your sins, walking in skepticism because you refuse to believe what the Bible says, or are you striving to hold onto the world a bit longer and then you will think about getting real with the Lord? Remember, He will come when you least expect Him because you are not looking for Him in the first place, and He will be forced to judge you in whatever state you are in. Jesus clearly declared, "*Repent or perish,*" in *Luke 13:3 and 5*; and as the Apostle Paul clearly stated in *2 Corinthians 6:2*, "*(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.)*"

Let me pose the question to you again, "Are you ready?" †

"I want to be a more serious-minded Christian, more detached from this world, more ready for heaven than I have ever been in my whole life. I would rather stand and have everybody my enemy — than to go along with the crowd to destruction! Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it! Matthew 7:13-14."  
— **A. W. Tozer**

## WHAT'S NEW?

By Jeannette Haley

*"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" – Titus 3:5*

No doubt all of us have either asked or been asked "What's new?" and our answers may have varied from "Not much" to a list of what we got for Christmas, to additions or losses in the lives of family and friends, to any number of things. Of course, at this time we are celebrating another New Year. Considering the state of the world, the challenges that lie before us, and the fact that none of us are getting any younger, I have to admit that my greatest celebration of a New Year is the assurance that we are that much closer to the return of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.

You know, I must be real dense or something because I've never been able to fully comprehend why the whole world gets so excited and even hysterically happy about New Year's Eve. Maybe it's because of the party spirit and anticipation that this one night of revelry to celebrate a New Year will somehow make life better for our personal lives and the world. Reality, though, teaches us that the results of over-celebrating are either a week-long hangover, or major depression, because everything goes back to what it was. Nothing has really changed except the year. Even what was new at Christmas doesn't quite offer the initial thrill anymore because that thing called "time" has stepped in and is operating like "emotional gravity."

Of course, who doesn't like new things? Especially if you're like me; that is, a person who works hard to take care of things, such as clothes, so you end up wearing the same outfits for ten or twenty years. Being frugal is, to my way of thinking, being a good steward of what God gives you. However, there comes a time when the old just has to go so the new can come in—at least that is what my "wardrobe helper" (Carrie) tried to tell me the day I mustered up the courage to ask her to help me go through my formidable closet stuffed with a collection of "you-name-it". I just have to say that was a

freeing, and funny "adventure." Lesson learned: you have to get rid of the old in order to gain room for the new.

If only there was some way to get rid of this old body in exchange for a brand new one! But, wait. I'm getting ahead of myself because the promise and hope of such an event will be touched on later in this article.

So here it is, another New Year with new resolutions to do things better, to work harder, to redeem the time, to draw closer to the Lord, to come higher, to trust and obey in all things, to be a vessel that is available for the Master's use. All well and good, but what about the accumulation of the "old" that needs to go so the new can come in? You know those old mental ruts, old habits, old cycles in relationships, and old perspectives that don't line up with God's perspective? Are you ready to get rid of the old so you can take on the challenge of the new? That means being ready to get rid of the old way of thinking, the old way of doing, the old way of justifying ourselves, the old ways of the flesh, the old offences and influences, and any old bitterness and unforgiveness all of which serves to make us just a bunch of useless "sticks in the mud."

Jesus is calling us to follow Him, not to cling to the old traditions of men that choke out the Word of God; not to settle for the milk when He wants to feed us meat; not to hide behind old excuses and religious platitudes. Jesus wants us to be filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God so we can be strong and do exploits in these latter days. (*Daniel 11:32b.*) Do you feel like a "stick in the mud," but deep down in your heart you long to be strengthened with might by His Spirit? Do you want Christ to dwell in your heart by faith? Do you want true love? Do you want to really experience the love of Christ? Do you want to be filled with all the fullness of God? Do you want power? If you do, then read, study, believe and meditate on *Ephesians 3:16-21*, which says, "*That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the*

*breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."*

God has so much more for us than we can ever think, know, imagine or comprehend. When we invite Jesus to come in and commune with us one of the things He wants to do is "clean house." That means He wants to get rid of the old and replace it with the new. He wants to set us free from the old rags and grave clothes that sin and the devil wrap us up in, and clothe us in a new robe of righteousness. He wants to remove that old, filthy, corruptible "high hat" of pride from off of our head and replace it with an incorruptible crown. He wants to toss out our shoes that are mud-caked from the filth of the world and give us the footwear of the gospel of peace. Jesus wants to cleanse us inside and out from the stench of sin and death, and then renew us by the power of the Holy Spirit so we no longer reflect the fallen world, but reflect the image of God who created everything, and said "it was good."

When Jesus comes in to stay, it is "out with the old, and in with the new" in every area of our lives. "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" *2 Corinthians 5:17.* When Jesus comes in, He wants to go deep. He wants to go all the way down to the "bottom of the barrel" and clean out the dregs. Jesus wants to make us pure vessels, fit for the master's use. Concerning becoming a new creature in Christ, A. W. Tozer said, "Salvation must include a *judicial* change of status — but what is overlooked by most teachers is that it also includes a **practical change** in the life of the individual. And by this we mean more than a surface change; we mean a transformation as deep as the roots of his human life. If it does not go that deep, it does not go deep enough."

Oswald Chambers taught on the

relinquished life, “No one is ever united with Jesus Christ until he is willing to relinquish not sin only, but his whole way of looking at things. To be born from above of the Spirit of God means that we must let go before we lay hold, and in the first stages it is the relinquishing of all pretense. What Our Lord wants us to present to Him is not goodness, nor honesty, nor endeavor, but real solid sin; that is all He can take from us. And what does He give in exchange for our sin? Real solid righteousness. But we must relinquish all pretense of being anything, all claim of being worthy of God’s consideration.

“Then the Spirit of God will show us what further there is to relinquish. There will have to be the relinquishing of my claim to my right to myself in every phase. Am I willing to relinquish my hold on all I possess, my hold on my affections, and on everything, and to be identified with the death of Jesus Christ?

“There is always a sharp painful disillusionment to go through before we do relinquish. When a man really sees himself as the Lord sees him, it is not the abominable sins of the flesh that shock him, but the awful nature of the pride of his own heart against Jesus Christ. When he sees himself in the light of the Lord, the shame and the horror and the desperate conviction come home.

“If you are up against the question of relinquishing, go through the crisis, relinquish all, and God will make you fit for all that He requires of you.” (*My Utmost for His Highest*.)

We are all descendants of the first man, Adam, who was made of the dust of the earth. But, sometimes we get to thinking too much, and fool ourselves into believing we are made of angel dust; you know, we get to thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. We feel better about our “old man” if we can imagine him with some glitter sprinkled on top of the clay. The Bible tells us, “*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*” 2 Corinthians 4:7.

So, here we are: a bunch of earthen vessels, like the ones used in Jesus’ first public miracle at the wedding in Cana, “*six waterpots of stone,*

*after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece*” John 2:6. 9 (A firkin is about 9 gallons, and “stone” jars means baked clay.) And “*Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water, And they filled them up to the brim*” John 2:7. Without Christ, we can be compared to those empty vessels just sitting there. Worthless, unattractive, and unimportant clay pots in the scheme of things. Six clay vessels represent the number of man and imperfection, or incompleteness. Maybe there’s some hot air in those vessels, but nothing else. Unattractive, common, empty, and void of substance, they lack life and purpose.

Then comes Jesus, and everything changes. Just as He ordered His servants to fill up the dry waterpots with water, representing the living water of the Word of God, so too has He (to whom all “*power is given...in heaven and earth*”) commissioned His followers, both men and women, of every age to “*Go ye therefore, 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 28:18-20. Pure water symbolizes the pure water of the Word. Little by little we begin to be filled up with the fresh, clean water of the Word. “*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little*” Isaiah 28:10. Then, when we are filled to the full, and prepared for the Master’s use, we find that the more we pour the New Wine of the Spirit out to others, the more He refills us.

What a wonderful exchange! What a difference the new can make when we let go of the old! Here are a couple examples our Lord gives us as recorded in Luke 5:36-38, “*No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.*” We know that Jesus

was speaking to the Pharisees, but there are different applications that can be made, one of which is the fact that as Christians we cannot try to “patch” up the “holes in the garment” of our old life by adding Christ to it and trying to make Him fit. In other words, we can’t simply tack Jesus on to our old way of living, old habits, cycles, patterns, philosophies, petulantcies, policies, practices or personal hang-ups. When we believe and receive Christ, who is “the new,” all of these old things “*are passed away.*”

“But,” someone may lament, “I don’t want to give that thing up! I’m fond of my old filthy rags of self-righteousness that I cover myself with! I’m afraid of what might happen if I let go and lose control of my stinky garbage.” Well, if you want to be “good saved,” if you want to go on with God, if you want to be cleansed inside and out, if you want to be a vessel for God’s use, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, you better come into agreement with God quickly. “*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” 2 Corinthians 6:2b. Now is the time to get rid of the old, rotten garbage in your life and be cleansed through and through by the blood of the Lamb of God.

The same goes for the New Wine of the Holy Spirit. The “old spirits” of the world, the flesh and the devil have to go because such things cannot co-exist with the life of the Son of God within us. Smith Wigglesworth said, “God wants to purify our minds until we can bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things. God dwells in you, but you cannot have this divine power until you live and walk in the Holy Ghost, until the power of the new life is greater than the old life.” “You are in the right position when you allow the glory of the new life to cause you to act. Live in the Acts of the Apostles, and every day you will see some miracle worked by the power of the living God.” [Emphasis mine.]

When we allow the Lord to transplant us from a lukewarm, powerless, nominal Christian life into the new life of walking in the Spirit, we will discover that we are now living what should be the normal Christian life. The Apostle Paul summed up this new life

in *Galatians 2:20*, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." This new life in you, however, will cause different reactions in the people around you because they don't understand what has happened to you, and where the "old you" has gone. Some wonder when the "old you" will return, and most hope it's soon because the "new you" is making them uncomfortable. In fact, the Spirit of the Lord in you is bringing disruption and conviction. Thus, there is a price to pay in different relationships because you cannot drag others with you into this divine life anymore than the High Priest could bring his family and friends into the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Therefore, once we have put our hand to the plow and committed a sold out life to Jesus, we cannot look back. Where He goes we must follow. If others cling to us, trying to hold us back, we must let go of them and hold onto Christ, trusting that He will have His way with them.

Oswald Chambers, in writing of the cost to other people, explained, "If we obey God, it is going to cost other people more than it costs us, and that is where the pain begins. If we are in love with our Lord, obedience does not cost us anything—it is a delight. But to those who do not love Him, our obedience does cost a great deal. If we obey God, it will mean that other people's plans are upset. They will ridicule us as if to say, "You call this Christianity?" We could prevent the suffering, but not if we are obedient to God. We must let the cost be paid.

"When our obedience begins to cost others, our human pride entrenches itself and we say, "I will never accept anything from anyone." But we must, or disobey God. We have no right to think that the type of relationships we have with others should be any different from those the Lord Himself had (see [Luke 8:1-3](#)).

"A lack of progress in our spiritual life results when we try to bear all the costs ourselves. And actually, we cannot. Because we are so involved in the universal purposes of God, others are immediately affected by our obedience

to Him. Will we remain faithful in our obedience to God and be willing to suffer the humiliation of refusing to be independent? Or will we do just the opposite and say, "I will not cause other people to suffer"? We can disobey God if we choose, and it will bring immediate relief to the situation, but it will grieve our Lord. If, however, we obey God, He will care for those who have suffered the consequences of our obedience. We must simply obey and leave all the consequences with Him.

"Beware of the inclination to dictate to God what consequences you would allow as a condition of your obedience to Him."

As we watch biblical prophecies being fulfilled every day, there can be no doubt but that we are living in the latter days. These are the times of great expectation and hope for the Christian as we remember the promises of God involving the "new" things to come, such as: a new incorruptible body, (*1 Corinthians 15:42-58*); a new name (*Revelation 2:17*) and the New Jerusalem (*Revelation 3:12*). He will write on us His new name (*Revelation 3:12*); there will be a new heaven and a new earth (*Revelation 21:1*); and finally "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" *Revelation 21:4, 5a*. Surely, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD" *Psalms 40:3*.

Are you a vessel that is prepared, ready and open to receive the new wine of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God? †



## FROM A. W. TOZER

Fundamentalism has stood aloof from the liberal, in self-conscious superiority and has on its own part fallen into error, the error of textualism, which is simply orthodoxy without the Holy Spirit. Everywhere among conservatives, we find people who are Bible-taught, but not Spirit-taught. They grasp the truth with the mind, not the heart. If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference!

If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference!

Any objection to the evangelistic methods of our present *golden-calf* Christianity, is met with the triumphant reply, "But we are winning the lost!" And *what* are you winning them to? To true discipleship? To cross-carrying? To self-denial? To separation from the world? To crucifixion of the flesh? To holy living? To nobility of character? To a despising of the world's treasures? To total committal to Christ? Of course, the answer to all these questions is *NO!* "Then He said to them all: If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me!" *Luke 9:23*

Religion today is not transforming people; rather it is being transformed by the people. It is not raising the moral level of society; it is descending to society's own level, and congratulating itself that it has scored a victory, because society is smilingly accepting its surrender.

No Christian is where he ought to be spiritually, until the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ is being reproduced in his daily life! Yet even though a person has become like Christ, he will not know it — because *humility* and *meekness* are also a part of the transformation of true godliness! "Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did!" *1 John 2:6*

Promoting self under the guise of promoting Christ, is currently so common as to excite little notice!

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

**Q:** "The other day I was reading an article where the writer was quoting Exodus 34:6-7, "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." Does this mean that I and my children will be punished for my parents' sin?" This is very confusing to me because I never imagined God would punish me for another's sin."

**A:** I can see how this particular text would confuse you. It is important to first note who the Lord is speaking to: **the guilty**. Sins of the parents are often passed down to the children and can even accelerate in the following generations. A mother of one of my friends wisely pointed out to my friend, who had four children, "Whatever you do in moderation, your children will do in excess." This is because children are greatly influenced by their parents and can adopt the same selfish attitudes, idolatrous worship, and pagan practices of their parents. Clearly, if there is any inconsistency with a parent in religion or morality, children seem to swing like a pendulum into the opposite extreme as to their attitudes and conduct. When it comes to Israel, God often brought judgment down in either the third and fourth generations to bring correction or needed change as in the case of the High Priest Eli's house (4<sup>th</sup> generation when the last descendant was removed from the priesthood during Solomon's time due to grave sin), Solomon's son Rehoboam (3<sup>rd</sup> generation from David after David's inconsistencies in the case of his sons and Solomon's idolatry), and Jehu's dynasty which ceased from the throne the fourth generation due to blatant sin, while for the pagan societies some had to come to full bloom before being judged as in the case of the Amorites in the land of Canaan (*Genesis 15:16; 1 Samuel 3:30-36* refer to *1 Samuel 22:10-23; 1 Kings 2:26; 1 Kings 12:12-24; 2 Kings 12:30-31*).

It is also important to point out that Moses in *Exodus 34:8-9* was an intercessor between the people and God, and asked the Lord to pardon them for their iniquity and sin and to take them as His inheritance. We like-

wise have an intercessor between God and us, the Man, Christ Jesus who represents us to God in our sin, standing as our advocate and seeking forgiveness for us, and God to us so we can receive that forgiveness by faith (*1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1*). The Apostle John stated, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (*1 John 1:9*).

This brings us to a very important principle. It tells us in *Deuteronomy 23:3* that a Moabite could not enter into the congregation of the Lord to their tenth generation, and the Lord went on to say forever. The reason I bring this up is because David's grandmother, Ruth was a Moabite. If you consider this instruction, David, who planned the temple could not have gone to the tabernacle to worship, and Solomon who built the temple could not have entered into the congregation because of their Moabite roots. However, Ruth found a kinsman redeemer in Boaz that took full responsibility for her and made her, and her descendants, part of his household and his inheritance. Today Ruth is part of the lineage of our kinsman Redeemer, Jesus Christ, reminding us that we are part of the family and inheritance of God because of what Jesus did on the cross for us (*Matthew 1:5*). In Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (*Galatians 3:28*).

Finally we come to *Ezekiel 18:19-21*, which says, "Yet say ye, Why? Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and had done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. but if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die."

It is clear in these Scriptures that we are not responsible for our parents' sins, and that we are responsible for

our own godless attitudes and actions. Keep in mind that we were not responsible for Adam's sin, but because of it we all inherited a sin nature. However, being the just God that He is, we are told in *Romans 5:8*, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is not our fault we are in a fallen condition, but it is our responsibility to recognize the lost creature we are, and by faith receive the gift of eternal life that can only be found in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

I can tell you from my own experiences of being in a family that was in a cult, that I was greatly influenced by them. I assumed they were correct and presumed that all was well as far as my eternal destiny. It was clear I was in a cycle of sin, death, and spiritual destruction. However, the Lord penetrated the darkness of my soul with the glorious light of His Son. His Spirit convicted me of my sin and how lost I was, and in the midst of it, I heard Jesus' invitation to come to Him, to partake of His Living Water and live forever. I believed and was translated from the kingdom of darkness into the glorious light of His kingdom. It was then that the destructive cycle was broken not only for me but for some of my family members who also came out of the darkness of seduction, idolatry, and paganism to embrace the kingdom of light. Clearly, I was one of Jesus' lost sheep and He found me.

The truth is Jesus finds and saves one soul at a time. Upon salvation He separates that soul from the old claims of sin and death on their life to make them into a new creation where the old has passed away and everything becomes new (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). †

## SMITH WIGGLESWORTH

"There are four principles we need to maintain: First, read the Word of God. Second, consume the Word of God until it consumes you. Third believe the Word of God. Fourth, act on the Word."

"There is nothing impossible with God. All the impossibility is with us when we measure God by the limitations of our unbelief."

## AFRAID OF THE TERROR?

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night." - Psalm 91:5

What is this terror? It may be the cry of fire, or the noise of thieves, or fancied appearances, or the shriek of sudden sickness or death. We live in the world of death and sorrow, we may therefore look for ills as well in the night-watches as beneath the glare of the broiling sun. Nor should this alarm us, for be the terror what it may, the promise is that the believer shall not be afraid. Why should he? Let us put it more closely, why should we? God our Father is here, and will be here all through the lonely hours; he is an almighty Watcher, a sleepless Guardian, a faithful Friend. Nothing can happen without his direction, for even hell itself is under his control. Darkness is not dark to him. He has promised to be a wall of fire around his people-and who can break through such a barrier? Worldlings may well be afraid, for they have an angry God above them, a guilty conscience within them, and a yawning hell beneath them; but we who rest in Jesus are saved from all these through rich mercy. If we give way to foolish fear we shall dishonour our profession, and lead others to doubt the reality of godliness. We ought to be afraid of being afraid, lest we should vex the Holy Spirit by foolish distrust. Down, then, ye dismal forebodings and groundless apprehensions, God has not forgotten to be gracious, nor shut up his tender mercies; it may be night in the soul, but there need be no terror, for the God of love changes not. Children of light may walk in darkness, but they are not therefore cast away, nay, they are now enabled to prove their adoption by trusting in their heavenly Father as hypocrites cannot do. "Though the night be dark and dreary, Darkness cannot hide from thee; Thou art he, who, never weary, Watchest where thy people be."

"Tolerating the sinfulness of some in the church, without proper biblical confrontation, makes for a weak church."

"You can be sure that when God exalts a person, it is for the sole purpose of servanthood—of using that person for God's glory."— **Rayola Kelley**

## I NEVER THOUGHT...

By Jan Markell

Dr. David Jeremiah had a sermon series some years ago with this title. Like me, he noticed aberrations in the culture and in the church and stated *he just didn't think he would live to see them*. I've come up with my own list as 2017 winds down. *It has been an historic year to say the least*. Things aren't falling apart, they are falling into place.

I didn't think I would live to see:

The earth reeling in an apocalyptic manner, yet most going about business as usual -- eating, drinking, and enjoying life.

Every natural disaster preceded by words such as "unprecedented", "history-making", or "of biblical proportion."

A hurricane (Irma) so strong that it was measured on a device that tracks earthquakes.

**A major U.S. newspaper say** that someday "everyone will get willingly micro-chipped."

**Planned Parenthood team up with Satanists** and cooperate in their mutual evil.

Some people heed the warning signs of impending natural disasters but scoff at the ultimate warnings that *Jesus is returning soon and you must be ready*.

America seriously talk about the possibility of an EMP attack and Hawaii warn of a nuclear attack by North Korea. Over **40% of Americans say** they would prefer socialism over capitalism. Actors in Central Park simulate the assassination of a U.S. President. Satanic outfits be granted IRS tax-exempt status while Christians and conservatives are overlooked and ignored.

**A leader of the Catholic Church** in South America state that Pope Francis is paving the way for the Antichrist.

A major U.S. newspaper -- *The Washington Post* -- **call Satan good** and call him a great representation of secularism.

A discussion of womb transplants for men.

**Preschoolers being lectured** by a demonic horned creature that transgenderism is normal.

The "powertainment industry" (Hollywood) so weakened due to scandals that its influence is diminishing as people boycott films in disgust.

The Boy Scouts allowing girls to join the organization.

Word of a revival in North Korea.

The son of a Hamas leader, who is now a Christian, tell the United Nations that Palestinian leaders are a bunch of terrorists.

**Rick Warren state** that he hoped his partnership with a Catholic leader would become the ecumenical model for the entire world.

K - 12 U.S. educators demonizing Israel and lauding Islam.

A Democrat Party leader -- Donna Brazille -- blow the whistle on Democrat Party corruption. Politicians usually circle the wagons and protect their own.

**The return** of the bubonic plague.

A prominent secular talk show host said we live in interesting times - too interesting. *He longs to go back to the 1950s*. He doesn't understand that the last days would be characterized by a departure from the normal and an acceleration of the aberrant. He can't grasp the fact that *the Bible predicted a lot of what our headlines state today. It's all falling into place*.

"Unfortunately, the ten-cent-store Jesus being preached now by many, is not the Jesus who will come to judge the world. This plastic, painted Christ has no spine and no justice, but is a soft and pliant friend to everybody. If this is Christ, then we might as well close our Bibles, bar our doors — and make a bakery or garage out of our church buildings!

*"The popular Christ being preached now, is not the Christ of the Bible, nor the Christ we must deal with finally. For the Christ whom we deal with has eyes as a flame of fire. His feet are like burnished brass, and out of His mouth comes a sharp two-edged sword! Jesus Christ our Lord, the judge with the flaming eyes, is the one with whom we must deal. We cannot escape it!"*— **A. W. Tozer**

"They called to the mountains and the rocks: Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Rev. 6:16