

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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Discernment 11 THE DREAM By Rayola Kelley

We have been talking much about the end days. Jesus stated that many can read the signs in the sky, but they can't discern the days they are living in. The one thing I can tell



you is that the Lord will never leave His people in a state of ignorance. *Acts 17:30-31* states, "And times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained (Jesus), whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Parenthesis added.) The Apostle Paul also said that believers should not be ignorant of Satan's devices or the gifts of the Spirit, but on the other hand he also turned around and stated let the ignorant remain ignorant about such matters if they insist on their own conclusion about a matter (*1 Corinthians 12:1; 14:38; 2 Corinthians 2:11.*)

The Apostle Paul also made this statement about the end days, after warning that the Lord will come as a thief in the night to those who are spiritually asleep and unprepared for His coming, in *1 Thessalonians 5:4-8*, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are

not of the night, nor of darkness. 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."

Last month the Lord changed direction on me by clearly instructing me to write about what really ails the church in the day of great deception as many fall away from the truth to believe a lie (*2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9-12*). At the bottom of all sin is unbelief towards God and His Word. This unbelief exists because many will not choose to believe God's Word is true, final, and that it is for today, preventing them from coming to rest on His promises (*Hebrews 3:12-19*) People who fail to walk by faith according to who God is and walk in faith based on Scriptures will not be looking forward to a city made by God, as well as upward for redemption to be fully realized in their lives (*Hebrews 11:6; 13:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Luke 21:28*). We also know that genuine faith can only come by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (*Roman 10:17*).

Many do not love God and His Word. In fact, man has a warped understanding of love and believes that God's love is something to hide behind in order to justify compromising, worldly, fleshly ways rather than God's pure motive behind providing His Son as a means to deliver people from the entanglements, influence, ways, activities, and judgment of sin on their souls (*John 3:16-21*). As a result, the love of God is often being overemphasized to make the stark reality and attitude of God's holiness and judgment towards sin tolerable to the world; however, God has not changed His attitude towards sin in order to be "politically correct." He is holy and cannot look at sin without judging it (*Isaiah 59:2; 64:7*). In Christ

all sin has been judged according to the Law, but we must be hid in Christ because of being born again in the spirit by the Holy Spirit and the washing of His Word upon our souls to bring about cleansing. Clearly, the life of Christ must be in us to avoid the wrath of God that will be poured out on all disobedience at the end of this age (*Ephesians 5:6*).

Man's inept idea of love puts a worldly sentimental value on God's love. Sentiment is all about how one feels emotionally about something, but God's love is not sentimental. God sent His Son, not for sentimental reasons, but because He took the responsibility to do something about our sins and the fact that there was a separation between mankind and Him. Godly love cannot remain indifferent or inactive when a need is present and a way is available to address it. It will not rejoice in iniquity, nor will it allow unabated selfishness to rule in indifference. God's love will not be immoral in how it expresses and handles itself towards others. It is not arrogant or brazen, nor can it be easily offended when challenged (*1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 3:16-18*).

Unbelief, as well as godly love for God and His Word is a choice. Some might argue this point. You have those who say, show me a sign and miracle and I will believe, but Abraham stated in *Luke 16:29-31* to the rich man in hell who requested that he send Lazarus to warn his five brothers of hell, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

How right Abraham was. Jesus rose from the grave, but still many do not believe this reality in their hearts and the Bible is clear that you must believe that Jesus was raised from the grave in order to be saved (*Romans*

10:9,10).

In *Acts 2:17-18*, Peter quotes a scripture found in *Joel 2:28*, “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants and my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*”

The last days started on the day of Pentecost. In the Lord’s timetable the last two thousand years for us is a couple of days to Him (*2 Peter 3:8*). Peter goes on to say in *2 Peter 3:9*, “*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” The Lord has not changed His mind about pouring out His Spirit to prepare and equip His church. He has been doing it in these last days, but can those who call themselves Christians properly discern what the Spirit is saying in our time? There are many waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit in these days, but God is not going to pour out His Spirit on unprepared ground.

The other night I had a dream. In my Christian life of forty-two years I can count the dreams I have had on one hand that seem significant. One dream was a warning to a particular friend about the decisions she was making, while another was about Seattle having a major earthquake, but we were not going to be there. Another dream was the way for God to answer a question about grace, but this recent dream had instruction to it. It was disclosed to me that it is a message for the church.

Once again we must discern all dreams, messages, and visions. We must not just embrace such matters because it seems spiritual, but we must discern the message as to whether it is from God. I am going to simply share the dream with you because I feel there is something for the church. However, each person must discern if it is true and how it might be applicable to them.

The dream happened in a very formal church setting. I was to share some type of message but there was

a lot going on, causing mass confusion. Our God is not a God of confusion and if there is no order the first thing believers must conclude is that the Spirit of God is missing (*1 Corinthians 14:33*).

We also must beware of formalism. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were formal. They were bound by their traditions and when Christ came to challenge their dead religious exercises, they convinced themselves that they were doing God a service in protecting their formalism by crucifying Christ (*Matthew 15:6-9*).

It is important to point out that formalism in churches is often a big enemy of the Spirit of God. In many cases rituals and doctrines put God in a small religious box and serve as a deterrent against the Holy Spirit shaking up the controlled religious environment. I was also aware that since the church was very formal, it had its rituals, but the problem was that there were a couple of men fiercely arguing about how to conduct a certain ordinance. The Lord gave us two ordinances, water baptism and communion (*Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34*). Sadly, these two ordinances are points of contention among believers, and yet the instructions Jesus gave about both are not up for debate, nor are they hard to understand, but man has added his own take on them. The problem is not who is right about what: the problem is people fail to believe the simplicity behind the instructions already given and obey them. This brings us to the sad fact that the simplicity of Christ and His instructions and examples are missing or have been changed to cater to man’s emphasis, veering from the right spirit, while presenting a different Jesus and preaching another gospel (*2 Corinthians 11:3-5*).

If Christians are not arguing over church ordinances, they are debating over an array of other beliefs. How many Christians are arguing over doctrines and methods? When you listen to them debate non-essential matters, you realize it is a matter of pride and not truth. Pride tells us someone must come out on top, but the Bible talks about us submitting to one another out of fear of the Lord and that most arguments over non-essential doctrines that have nothing to do with

salvation are not profitable when it comes to the true edification of believers. (*Ephesians 5:21; Titus 3:9*) However, we continue to argue to try to get our point across. If we cannot learn to listen to others, even when it comes to opposing views, how do we expect to hear the Spirit of God when He might oppose our present reality?

I have learned a long time ago that I may know some things and understand certain things, but I do not know all things. I may be right at one point, but if I insist on pushing my particular take on something onto someone else, I can be sure of one thing, the Holy Spirit will be missing. He is a gentleman and will not step over someone’s will or insist on His way. Meanwhile, I must remember it is not up to me to convince people of my take on something. My responsibility is to speak the truth and let the Holy Spirit reveal a matter to someone’s spirit to bring heavenly agreement. Without the Spirit nothing will be accomplished.

The next aspect I encountered was prejudice. I was walking down the aisle and encountered an unhappy family. This family was made up of foreigners with a different culture and take on how they were being treated by others. They were upset because they felt that prejudice clearly reigned in the church. I could not argue that there was no prejudice, but what I noticed is that the family was harboring tremendous prejudice against those in the church. They felt they were being judged, but in reality they were judging everyone else. Sadly, their children were taking on the same attitude.

Prejudice produces a foul mood in us. We use our own prejudices to justify our unloving, condemning attitudes towards others who do not hold to the same biases. Prejudices are those judgmental boards in our eye that prevent us from seeing our own spiritual condition. I tried to encourage the family to look to Jesus, but they would have none of it. They were allowing their anger to have the final say.

The Bible is clear, that love for one another is what distinguishes true Christianity and discipleship. As in the case of Esau anger towards Jacob was akin to hatred. If people harbor

hate because of some personal offense, *1 John 4:20-21* brings this indictment against them, *"If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him. That he who loveth God love his brother also."*

The church is full of prejudices because many are harboring the right to be right about their particular denomination, doctrinal beliefs, and practices. There are many sitting on the pinnacle of judgment based on church affiliation, doctrinal differences, and cult-like practices and control. What many people forget is no denomination, doctrine, or practice can save you. None of these things died for them and that if a person has not truly become identified with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection, that individual is still dead in his or her sin and is still on his or her way to hell.

The next thing I noted is that the band left when I walked into the sanctuary. Apparently this band had finished its performance and was marching out the door. I realized that I had missed the worship time, but I had to wonder how much of the worship was entertainment, making it man-centered? The Father deserves and desires worship that is Spirit-led and leads to truth when it comes to Jesus Christ. After all, Jesus must be lifted up if man is going to be drawn to Him and be saved and set free (*John 4:23-24; 12:32*).

The next thing I remember is that I had lost my outline as to what I was going to share. As I bowed down before the pew to look at my Bible and collect my thoughts, I found the Word was in disarray. Some pages were right side up and others were upside down. Some parts of the Bible were loose. It seemed that God's Word was in a great upheaval.

Out of the whole dream this was the most disconcerting to me. *Amos 8:11-12* states, *"Behold the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the*

east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it."

I am seeing this famine. Besides the many corrupt versions of the Bible that remove certain fundamental truths, there are heretical teachings and cult emphasis. The Word of God is rarely being taught at "Bible studies." Sadly, few preachers really preach out of the Word. In many cases they preach according to personal opinions and agendas. Many people use other people's teachings and takes on the Bible, but few study the Bible itself. I even heard about a Bible study where people leave their Bibles at home. My question is how can you call a Bible study, a Bible Study when one is not studying the Bible? I personally don't care about other people's take on something; I want to know what God is saying about a matter. In the end, God's Word will have the final say and all of man's opinions will either be consumed in judgment, fall to the wayside, or collapse when the storms challenge people's faith (*Psalms 119:89; Isaiah 55:11*).

As I wrestled with the condition of the Word, I wanted to write down some thoughts but I couldn't find a pen that worked. There is only one ink that is capable of properly writing on our hearts and minds the Word of God and that is the Holy Spirit (*Roman 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:2-6*). It was clear that the ink was missing in the church as well as in all the religious activities taking place. In other words, the Holy Spirit was not behind any of it; therefore, there was no inspiration or anointing, revealing that without the ink the message will fall flat on hearts and minds.

As I stood up to share, half the church left because they were not there to hear a message; rather, they were there to be entertained and sent away feeling good because they had some type of religious experience. The Bible talks about those who have itching ears in *2 Timothy 4:3-4*, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."* We are living in the days

that fables are being promoted from different pulpits because people don't want to hear the truth about a matter. They don't want to hear about sin, repentance, and the Gospel that spells out how Jesus died for sins to deliver them from the claims and practices of it in their life, that He was buried with those sins, and that three days later He rose from the grave to prove victory over the judgment of death on sin.

As I turned to share my message with those remaining on the other side of the church, I went to mention the love of God in light of His great sacrifice to save mankind, and what I sense about those remaining is that they immediately went to sleep and slid into a comatose state. They had heard about God's love so much there was no need to stay alert or awake to listen to the rest of the message.

As I stated in this article, the Holy Spirit will not come down on unprepared ground. The question is what prepares the ground? There are only two ways to prepare the ground for God's Spirit. The first way is worship, but it must be the worship that God seeks, not what appeals to the flesh, which amounts to nothing more than idolatrous paganism. Worship is not about man experiencing some emotional high in church; rather, it is about lifting the Lord up who is on high in hearts and minds to bring deserved honor and glory to Him alone, thereby, encouraging His Spirit to honor us with His presence.

The second way to prepare the ground for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is by preaching inspired, anointed messages given by heaven itself. However, the dream revealed to me that besides man-centered worship, the church in the dream was void of the right message. The pure Word is missing and lacks the sharpness of truth to wake up the sleeping and to penetrate the great darkness that is upon the souls of the unsaved, the ink of heaven is not present to write upon hearts and minds, and sadly those in my dream were content in their present status and did not see any need to possess the reality and fullness of heaven. They were content to sleep on in the hull of their pews as the destructive storms raged without ready

to claim every soul it can for hell.

What is the message to the church that is described in the dream? It is the same message that has always been: REPENT and come out and be separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)! Cease your Laodicean ways of seeing yourself as being spiritually rich when you are wretched in your state, miserable in your deception, poor in faith, blind to truth, and naked in guilt and shame before the holy God (Revelation 3:14-18). Repent for showing contempt towards the Word of God because of unbelief and disobedience, promoting fables to mass numbers, for strange worship that honors base man, pushing legalistic, lifeless practices, fleshly ways and worldly methods on the vulnerable, for becoming a white-washed sepulcher harboring damnable lies, decaying works, and grave clothes of former glory.

Jesus is coming back for a church without spot and wrinkle (Ephesians 5:26-27). He wants to send the fire of His Spirit by pouring His Spirit out on the church to prepare it for His coming, but the ground must be prepared or the fire of the Spirit will scorch and purge instead of purify.

The fire is coming whether through His Spirit or some type of judgment. The question is are you ready for the bridegroom or are you part of the church in the dream that is content with business as usual regardless of the fact that God is not in any of it? †

QUOTES TO PONDER

"No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few pray-ers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere." - Leonard Ravenhill

"It is my opinion that the current Christian conception of God is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God, and actually to constitute something amounting to a moral calamity!" - A. W. Tozer

"Repent or perish." - Jesus

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: *When one dies the spirit goes back to God, but where does the soul go? I get so many different answers to that question.*

A: There is confusion about this subject and I will share what I understand about it. Granted, there may be those who would argue with me or provide a better understanding, but this is my simple conclusion to this matter. Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Since God is spirit, God put the breath of life, His Spirit, into Adam and made him a living soul that would be able to interact with Him on a spiritual level (Genesis 2:7). When Adam sinned, the Spirit of God lifted and as a result, man became a soulish person who could only interact with the material world, but not with God. For man to be restored spiritually, he had to be quickened once again in the spirit by the Spirit of God to be able to have a relationship with God and interact with Him. This quickening points to the "born again" experience.

The soul is made up of the will, mind, and emotions. It houses the spirit of man, which is also considered the most inner being or heart ("bowels") of man. The type of spirit that influences the soul of man will determine who influences his thinking, what motivates him, his heart attitude, and who or what he ends up serving. Spirit can only affect spirit, but soul is affected by both the spirit in operation and the interaction that is taking place in the body.

Man and the world have their own spirit (Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12-14). This brings us to the other point about spirit; it has to do with the type of life present in a person, while soul points to the spiritual state of the individual. We are either a quickening spirit who possesses eternal life or a lost soul void of real life. Ecclesiastes 3:21 states, "*Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of beasts that goeth downward to the earth?*" Again this Scripture reminds man that he was created to be a spiritual man who is able to soar in spiritual heights when it comes to worshipping God and serving Him, while the spirit of the beast does not have

the same potential or capacity. (See 1 Corinthians 15:40-50.)

The Bible also states that the spiritual condition of the soul determines the ultimate state man will spend eternity in. Jesus said this in Matthew 10:28, "*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" "Destroy" in this text means "a state of ruin." In hell, the soul will not cease to be, but will exist in an utter state of ruin. "Ruin" points to being brought to continual degrees of decay, collapse, deterioration, and loss.

Since the soul determines the state of man, the world requires man's soul in order to gain it, while Jesus states that if man wants to save his life in light of eternity, he must lose the life offered by the present world for the Lord's sake (Matthew 16:25-26).

Where does the soul go? When a believer is separated from his or her body in death, then his or her spirit and soul will be present with the Lord, waiting for the time when the inner man (spirit and soul) will be resurrected in a new, glorified body (2 Corinthians 5:8). †

COMMENTS & EMAILS

"Mankind has always looked for someone or something other than God to worship. He has often worshiped the work of his hands -- same with Ai. The darkened heart of man has always been deceitful and wicked -- some things never change." - WA

"I LOVED the Q&A this month!!! [January] RIGHT ON!! That is a topic that needs to be seen by LOTS of men!!" - ID

"We are more glad than you are that the Lord brought you . . . into our lives. We have been looking so long for good Bible teaching and all we could find was at best watered down skim milk, poured over junk food. We knew something was missing and junk had been added. Now we have a great church and a GREAT Bible study. I have been praising God a lot lately." - ID

"What a wonderful newsletter again! [February] Right on Sisters!!" - AB, Canada

EL ROI By Jeannette Haley



"Thou God seest me" – Genesis 16:13b

Years ago an evangelist friend said, "God is closer than your next breath." Her statement has always reminded me of when I was a little girl staying with my Great-Grandmother for a few hours at her house. She always talked about God and Jesus and I could ask her anything that popped into my childish mind, so when she told me that God could always see me no matter where I was I quickly ducked behind her big overstuffed chair and asked her if He could see me now. I figured if she couldn't see me, then possibly God couldn't either. Of course she assured me that He could. As a young teen I memorized many Scriptures, including *Proverbs 15:3*, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" which shadowed me wherever I went like an invisible "chaperone."

Not too long ago on a quiet, chilly winter morning as I sat alone, snuggled in the corner of the couch, warming my hands around a cup of hot tea, the words, "I see you" whispered through my soul. How can a person ever hope to describe those sudden and unexpected heavenly visitations? How utterly and completely comforting it is, in those times when you feel all alone, small, and insignificant, to be quickened in your spirit by the God who sees. It was such a short, sweet, and deeply satisfying experience, for when God's truth is personalized by the Holy Spirit to our spirits, we will feel His quickening power. I began to meditate on how true it is that God sees us, He is watching us, He is listening to us, He knows our thoughts, and He knows our hearts. No matter where we are on this troubled planet with 7 billion other souls, El Roi knows each of us intimately.

El Roi means "the God who sees me" which is what Hagar, Sarah's handmaid called Him in Genesis 16:13, "And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" The Bible is clear that one of God's attributes is His omnipresence. *1 Kings 8:27* declares, "But will God indeed dwell on

the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" In *Jeremiah 23:23* God says, "Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?" We are reassured by this Scripture in the *Book of Acts 17:27-28*, "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being." King David sang, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" *Psalms 139:7-10*.

It's such a comfort for the saved person to remember that no matter where we are in this life, no matter how we feel, no matter what others think of us, and no matter what happens to us, our LORD sees us. While this fact brings joy to the saved, it brings terror and grief to the unrepentant sinner who is bent on doing things his or her own way. Such was the case with Adam and Eve who, after they disobeyed the Lord, hid from Him. "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou" *Genesis 3:8, 9*? Of course God knew where he was, but he wanted Adam to realize how lost he was, and how his relationship with the Lord would never be as it once was because of sin. *Isaiah 59:2* says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

Adam is a representation of all sinners who try to "hide among the trees" of this world, remaining lost to God until they come to, and embrace, "The Tree" upon which Christ gave up His life to save those who believe. And, who was closer to Jesus as He hung on the cross than the repentant thief who was hanged alongside Him? How can we even begin to imagine

how this dying man felt when he recognized Jesus for Who He is (God incarnate) and declared to others who were mocking Christ, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" *Luke 23:40-43*.

I appreciate what A. W. Tozer wrote about the "distance" we often feel between us and God. He said, "The reason we sense that God is remote is because there is a dissimilarity between moral characters. God and man are dissimilar now. God made man in His image, but man sinned and became unlike God in his moral nature. And because he is unlike God, communion is broken....God is not far away in distance, but He seems to be because He is far away in character. He is unlike man because man has sinned and God is holy. The Bible has a word for this moral incompatibility, this spiritual unlikeness between man and God—alienation." (*The Attributes of God, Volume 1, pg. 123*). He then quoted *Ephesians 2:1-3* which states, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind: and were by nature the children of wrath as others." Then in the fourth chapter we read about this alienation: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" *verses 17-19*.

No doubt Cain was surprised and terrified after he slew his righteous brother, Abel, to know that God saw him. He thought he had gotten away with murder until the LORD asked him, *"Where is Abel thy brother? Genesis 4:9a.* He lied and said, *"I know not"* and then he got defiant and sassy with God and retorted, *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* We have no record in Scripture that either Adam or Cain took accountability for their disobedience and repented. Neither Cain nor Adam believed the warnings the LORD had given them and their unbelief led to a flippant attitude, and self-serving actions that were quickly followed by judgment from God. Let this be both a lesson and a warning to the "professing Christians" of the institutional church in these latter days to examine themselves to see if they are truly in *"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" Jude 3b.*

We know that God saw everything done on the earth before the Flood. He saw righteous Enoch who walked with Him for three hundred years. He walked with God because of his moral character for no immoral person, no matter who they are, or what they say about their religious life, can truly walk in agreement with God, or please Him for God is holy. *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed," Amos 3:3?* How many people today who call themselves "Christians" walk with God in complete agreement, sweet communion, righteousness, and holiness? Only God knows, and He does know! He is El Roi. *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" Galatians 5:16.*

If the population of the entire world from Adam to Noah was in the billions (anywhere from 3 to 17 billion, more or less as advanced mathematicians calculate) then Noah is another "glaring" proof of the fact that nothing is hidden from the sight of El Roi. Aren't you glad that *"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" Genesis 6:8?* (If you want to tie your brain in knots, just do some on-line research about the pre-flood population of the world. As for me, I will settle for all the amazing archaeological discoveries made on land and sea that prove the entire world was populated.) It is mind-blowing to meditate on how, out of all

those people, only *one man* found grace in God's eyes! Other than the eight human souls in the ark, all others perished under the waters of judgment. *"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" 2 Chronicles 16:9.* God is still looking for those with perfect hearts through whom He can show Himself strong.

When Jacob went out from Beer-sheba toward Haran he came to a certain place, and stayed there all night because the sun had gone down. We don't know what his thoughts were as he gathered stones for a pillow (I sure know what mine would've been), but he somehow managed to fall asleep. Then came the dream of the ladder, the angels, and the LORD standing above it who said, *"I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" Genesis 28:13-15.* Jacob's response gives us a clue as to how unfamiliar he was with the Omnipresent LORD, and how unprepared he was to have a personal encounter with Him, for he said, *"Surely the LORD is in this place: and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" vs. 16b, 17.* What a lesson this is for those of us who are called by His name! I don't want to be so spiritually dull, so engrossed in my own thoughts, or so caught up with the "cares of this world" that when the LORD manifests Himself through the presence of the Holy Spirit I end up like Jacob and say, *"I knew it not"*.

How many organized churches are missing the presence of the LORD in their midst because all their man-centered attention and focus is on the affairs, programs, traditions, duties

and agendas of the church because, after all, "the show must go on" and nobody, including God must interrupt! Where would we be today if God had not interrupted the assembly on the Day of Pentecost? *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" Acts 2:1-4?*

Concerning God's omnipresence, the late Pastor Richard L. Strauss said in his series *The Joy of Knowing God*, "Yet the Bible will not let us suppose that God is present in exactly the same sense everywhere. For example, He does not dwell on earth in the same sense that He dwells in Heaven (Matthew 6:9). He did not dwell in Gentile nations in the same sense He dwelled with His ancient people Israel (Exodus 25:8; 40:34). He did not dwell with the Old Testament Jew in the same sense that He dwells with the New Testament Christian (John 14:17). He does not dwell with the unbeliever in the same sense He dwells with the believer (John 14:23). And He does not dwell with the believer now in the same sense He will dwell with him in eternity (Revelation 21:3)"

When you think about Moses spending forty years, day in and day out, herding sheep on the backside of the desert you can only begin to guess at what he thought about as he went about his mundane routine. Was he aware that El Roi saw him wherever he was, or did his encounter with the angel of the LORD in the burning bush give him a startling reminder of the omnipresent God? Of course, the LORD knew how to get his attention, as He does with every one of us. *"Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I" Exodus 3:3, 4.* The Lord always knows where we are,

and He definitely knows how to get our attention. *Jeremiah 23:23, 24* says, “*Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven, and earth? Saith the LORD.*”

The Prophet Jonah is such an interesting little book to study. So many lessons can be gleaned from it. Jonah was about as clever with God as our little Chihuahuas, Bell and Tucker, are with us. They act as if we can't see them if they turn their backs to us, or hide their faces under a blanket. It would be just as funny if it wasn't so pathetic when Jonah thought he was well hidden from the sight of the LORD in the sides of the ship, where he fell fast asleep. As the Bible tells us, there is no place we can go to hide from the eyes of our Creator. But, there is a difference between God seeing us and God being with us, for He can have no communion or agreement with us as long as we are clothed in the filthy rags of sin and unrighteousness. The idea that God is our pal no matter what we think, do or say that is dishonoring to Him or is contrary to His Word is simply not true. King David implored the LORD to not leave him as we read in *Psalms 51:11, 12*, “*Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.*”

Regarding Jonah, A. W. Tozer wrote, “When Jonah refused to obey God and broke off and alienated his heart, he got in a ship to get away from the presence of God. He thought he could get away from God. How foolish of him to think he could get away from God! Then there was Peter, who knelt down and said, ‘Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord’ (Luke 5:8).

“It is the heart that puts distance between us and God. We must not think of God as being far away for the reason that God does not dwell in space and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him’ (2 Chronicles 2:6), but He contains the heaven of heavens. And therefore God is near to you now—nearer to you than you are to yourself.

“And yet the sinner is far from

God. He isn't far from God—and yet he is. God is not far away like a Roman god up on a holy mountain. God is far away in His holy unlikeness to everything sinful. He's far away in the sense of alienation and enmity. The natural man cannot please God (see Romans 8:8), for God and man are alienated. This is the terrible law of the world: alienation.” (*The Attributes of God, Volume 1, pg. 126, 127.*)

The touching and beautiful record of Nathanael meeting Jesus (*John 1:43-51*) reveals how intimately the LORD knows us. From John Gill's Exposition of the Bible we gain this insight: . . . ***before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee***; in which words Christ gives two instances of his omniscience; the one is, that he knew Philip had called him; he was privy to all that passed between them, though they were alone, and the conversation was had in the most private manner. Christ knew what an account Philip had given of him, and what objection Nathanael had made; and what an invitation Philip had given him to go along with him to Christ, and judge for himself; which is here meant by calling him, and with which he complied: and the other is, that he saw him under the fig tree before that: he was sitting under it, as men in those countries used to do; see (*Micah 4:4*), where he might be reading the Scriptures, and meditating upon them; and if, as some observe, he was reading, and thinking upon Jacob's dream, concerning the ladder which reached from earth to heaven, and on which he saw the angels of God ascending and descending, the words of Christ in (*John 1:51*) must strike him with fresh surprise, and give him another convincing proof of his omniscience: or he might be praying here in secret, and so acted a different part from the generality, of religious men of that nation, who chose to pray in synagogues, and corners of the streets, that they might be seen; and likewise proved him to be what Christ had said of him, a true and rare Israelite, without guile and hypocrisy, which were so visible and prevailing among others. It was usual with the doctors to read, and study in the law, under fig trees, and sometimes, though rarely, to pray there.”

Are there times when a commit-

ted Christian feels all alone, lost in a sea of humanity, helplessly buried under a load of care, and/or weary with endless physical challenges? Of course there are such times! We are human beings, not angels. We may be citizens of heaven, but we are still physically living in this present world. Jesus did not come to save us and then immediately whisk us to heaven, but He came to reconcile us back to God so we could go forth, bearing the precious seed of the Gospel to a lost and dying world. He calls us to be the salt and the light of the world no matter who we are, where we are, or what trials and tribulations we are going through. He said, “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*” *Hebrews 13:5*.

Did Jesus include you and me when He said, “*But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*” *Matthew 10:30*? And, did not God comfort His people by saying to them, “*And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear*” *Isaiah 65:24*? Has He not reassured us in *Psalms 11:15*, “*The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry*”? What or who is more intimate than this: “*Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee*” *Psalms 139:16-18*.

Even though there may be times when we feel like King David when he prayed, “*I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top*” *Psalms 102:7*, yet he looked up and rejoiced because the day is coming when “*the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth [His] glory, When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer*” *verses 15-17*. He is El Roi, the God who sees. †

YOGA—By Matt Walsh (From the DAILYWIRE)

It's kind of amazing to see all of the Christians who think nothing of going to a yoga class. There are many excellent ways to get in shape that do not involve participating in Hindu worship.

I have been mocked relentlessly for this opinion, especially by Christians who find any criticism of yoga to be not only wrong but hilarious. It is just a given, in their minds, that Christians should feel free to engage in pagan spiritual practices. The matter is not worth discussing.

This is a very odd situation.

As Albert Mohler points out, Christians of any time prior to the mid-20th century would have taken the reverse approach. They would have been shocked that any Christian would even consider attempting to adopt a Hindu spiritual exercise. Today, however, many of us have adopted it to such an extent that we now defend it with the same ferocity that we defend our faith itself. There are some who seem to defend it with even more ferocity. As with most things, if I have to choose between the modern Christian attitude or the traditional Christian attitude here, I will lean very heavily toward the latter. I'll explain why.

We know that yoga means "to yoke" or "to unite." It has its roots as an ancient Hindu practice meant to unite a person with his body and with the universe. The classic mantras that people repeat in yoga to help them meditate — "so'ham," means "I am the universal self" — are all in service to this mission of "oneness." It is a pantheistic practice because it derives from the belief that we are all a part of some great flow of cosmic energy, which has no original Author, and which we all are born and then reborn into over and over again. Yoga is supposed to bring us into harmony with this "energy." You can find the word yoga and the basic concept in Hindu texts dating back thousands of years. It's true that the modern western version is not entirely the same as its traditional form, but I do not see that as a mark in its favor. After all, it's no coincidence that it was exported to the West hand-in-hand with the philosophy of the "universality" of all religions,

and it finally began to explode in popularity with the counter-culture movement of the sixties. Hindus had their spiritual purposes for yoga, we have ours. Neither purpose seems at all compatible with Christianity.

So, if we follow the trajectory of yoga, we begin with pagan spiritualism, trace it through the anti-Christian counter-culture revolution, then sprinkle on a bunch of new age gibberish, and here we land with the modern day yoga class. Is it really crazy to think that perhaps this thing — with its combination of ancient paganism and new age mysticism — may not be an advisable hobby for Christians?

Of course, yoga apologists will say that the spiritual aspect and the physical acts can be separated. I think that's a bad argument for three reasons:

1) In a great many cases, there is not even an attempt to separate them. Many yoga classes feature these same pagan mantras and meditation techniques which seek to put us "in touch with the universe" and so on. For this argument to work, you would need to find a yoga class that leaves all of that out. It seems pretty cut and dried that a Christian should not be performing physical acts of worship to pagan deities while performing meditations meant to bring him into oneness with the energy of the universe or whatever. But what about forms of yoga that do attempt to strip the spiritual aspects of it?

2) The whole point of yoga is that you *can't* sever its physicality from its spirituality. That's literally the definition of yoga. It would seem that a "non-spiritual yoga" is a contradiction in terms. It's like trying to make G-rated porn. Either its G-rated or its porn. It can't really be both. Either it's yoga or its non-spiritual. It can't really be both. The physical practices of yoga are expressly designed to open ourselves up to enlightenment (Hindu enlightenment, that is). The intended final stage of yoga is to achieve a state called Samadhi, where the self disappears and you are brought into an unthinking trance. You may perform the moves without consciously seeking the demonic trance they were designed to help you attain, but it would seem you are playing, quite literally, with fire. And then the question is why?

3) Rather than: "Can I perform yoga while avoiding the many spiritual pitfalls inherent to it?" It should be: "Will this clearly help me in my walk with Christ? Is this an active good?"

It's very telling that most of the pro-yoga arguments I read from Christians seem to focus on the *possibility* that a Christian *could* do yoga while carefully making sure to drown out or skip over all of the pagan stuff. I thought this was a well-written article by a pro-yoga writer named Katie Kimball, but here's her conclusion: "Yes, practicing yoga could be a sin. Yes, practicing yoga could be a pathway down which one could fall into pagan worship and away from God. However, doing a yoga pose is not an automatic pathway to Hell."

What is the point of trying to repurpose pagan worship for the sake of getting a nice workout? What's wrong with just using an elliptical machine? How is the Kingdom advanced, how is an individual's actual spiritual fulfillment attained, by participating in a pagan ritual? We truly are asking the wrong questions. We're looking to see how much we can get away with before it becomes explicitly dangerous to our souls. Is this the right strategy? Is this how we "cloak ourselves in the armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11)?

There may be some physical benefits to bowing to Mecca five times a day. I wonder how the Christian yoga apologists would respond to a workout routine based around Muslim prayer? My guess is that they would make every argument against it that I have made against yoga. But they don't apply it to yoga because yoga is just a "normal" part of their life, and so they don't question it.

I see a comparison here with something like a Ouija board or a horoscope. Yes, you can mess around with those things relatively innocently, not actually seeking to summon spirits or ascertain your future from the stars, but why? Is this a form of entertainment that Christians should seek out?

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. - Exodus 20:3 — Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. - Colossians 2:8