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Discernment 13 THE CHALLENGE

By Rayola Kelley

Jesus warned us that in the end days, delusion would be prevalent. The problem with delusion is that one is not aware he or she is deluded.

When it comes to being deluded, people are confident they are not deluded and their conclusion is that those who are on the opposing side are the ones who are deceived.



The idea of being deceived will often cause fear for those who are teetering on the fence of delusion. They may have one foot on some truth and another foot on a lie. Although truth is sure and a lie is a slippery "banana peel," they will do all they can to maintain the lie while trying to adjust the truth to their slippery path because the alternative of being wrong not only slams against their pride, but points to the harsh reality of being rendered ineffective and considered a hypocrite. These self-deluded individuals will do everything they can to persuade those around them that they are right, thinking that it will be the proof they need to verify their inept or erroneous beliefs. However, regardless of who they manage to lead astray, truth will remain what it is, and all will be judged by it no matter how much this type of individual tries to keep one foot on it while justifying their personal realities on the fragile footing of a lie (*2 Corinthians 13:8*).

Truth is not half way. A half-truth is nothing more than propaganda that is intended to twist truth enough to indoctrinate people, while truth taken to the extreme becomes an untruth because it lacks the right spirit. Truth that is defiled or handled in unrighteousness identifies a person as being under the wrath of God (*Romans 1:18*). The Apostle Paul stated in *2 Thessalonians 2:10-12* that truth will

test the hearts of people and if they don't love it they will be taken away with a great delusion. As a brother in the Lord reminded all of us at the Bible Study, "You either believe all of the Bible or none of it." You cannot piecemeal the Bible by believing what you want to believe, without treating the whole Bible as a lie. You can't use parts of the Bible to confirm your personal take on a matter while throwing the rest out without becoming an inept hypocrite, incapable of living any of it.

One of the great evidences that truth reigns in our life is that the Holy Spirit has the freedom in our lives to bring us higher (*John 8:31-36; 2 Corinthians 3:17*). The "higher" in this case has to do with the freedom to come to a greater revelation of God outside of doctrinal boxes, rigid belief systems, and concrete theology. It sets us free from the dead-letter strait-jacket of the Law, as well as fleshly, worldly lies by setting the record straight, bringing an assurance of peace with it.

God will not be boxed in by our small-minded concepts. He will not be controlled by a particular school of thought; nor will He operate within the limited confines of our religious conclusions. If anything, the matters of life will challenge our small concepts about God, causing us to realize how small our thinking and conclusions are about God. A. W. Tozer often states we think too little of God and think too highly of ourselves, whether it is what we know, what we think, or what we do (*Romans 12:3*). Often we humanize God by bringing Him down to our understanding, and deify aspects of our thinking and conclusions about Him. Such deification causes us to create and exalt a god to our own liking. We may fall in love with our concept of God, worship the sentiment we feel about Him, and be zealous about what we think we know about Him, but such aspects are nothing but idolatrous.

I learned years ago that I could

easily be deluded. In my fallen state, I am prone to believe a reality that fits my narrative whether it is truth or not. My feelings can be easily persuaded if my pride is being fed. My thoughts can be taken captive if truth is not the pursuit of my heart. I can easily be seduced by the spirit of this world if I do not properly maintain the ways of righteousness and hold myself accountable for my attitudes and actions. Loving the truth is a choice, and I must develop a preference for it over my reality, and desire it over my pride. I must make it a necessity to be my final source of authority when it comes to evaluating what is really going on around me. I must learn to test the fruit of a matter and not assume that my understanding of something is not what is actually determining whether I have a right standing before God. If the right fruit is missing, then the right spirit is missing, which means I am in a wrong spirit which will be considered unacceptable to God (*Galatians 5:22-23*). After all, we are known by our fruits, not by what we necessarily know (*Matthew 7:16, 20*).

We will not enter God's kingdom without the right spirit and truth, nor will we not be offended by it at different times, while always being brought to the crossroad of decisions because of it. In the end, truth alone will stand when everything else is slammed against it, testing it to see if it will stand. Whatever is not truth will be brought down to utter destruction.

We must begin with truth; continue with truth to end with truth. We must begin with the reality of our holy God to come to terms with our sin, opening us up to redemption, and we must continue on with the examples of righteousness found in Christ's teachings, examples, and instructions in order to end with truth. However, truth can be lifeless without the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the means to properly discern how to apply truth to a matter. Job's friends were right about God, but failed to dis-

cern what was going on in the case of Job. They ended up falsely accusing Job and incorrectly accrediting Job's plight to God's punishment. In the end, Job had to make a sacrifice on behalf of his opinionated, self-righteous companions as the Lord made clear Job was right but they were wrong (*Job 42:7-9*).

There is much that can be written about discernment. The truth is people either have discernment or they do not. People are either properly exercising it or becoming dull in it. People either believe what the Lord says or they pick and choose what they are going to believe while operating in a small rut of ignorance or in unbelief towards His complete counsel. People either insist on their reality about spiritual matters or humble themselves to ask for God's perspective, aware that they only know in part, and are always responsible to seek His truth about a matter. Such people realize that they see through the "dark glass" of the flesh, as well as are ever knocking on doors until the one to a greater revelation leads them to a greater life in Jesus (*1 Corinthians 13:9,12*).

We must remember that we may be right about many things, but if we insist that our limited understanding can be applied to all things in every aspect of the Christian walk, we are going to be found wrong in the end because we are not all-knowing or all-wise. We each have our own walk and even though we ultimately learn the same lessons, the way in which we learn them proves to be different, creating a different perspective and approach. We need to keep in mind that due to our diverse experiences we do not have the same testimonies, callings, gifts, and abilities. For example the approach and emphasis of an evangelist is different than that of a pastor or a teacher. The evangelist will emphasize those things that appeal to lost souls and sleeping saints, while a pastor will emphasize the feeding of the sheep to ensure their spiritual well-being, and the teacher will emphasize what it means for one to become a true disciple of Jesus. The evangelist appeals to the soul, the shepherd to the heart, and the teacher to a person's understanding. No one man has a corner on truth and ministry and that is why the Apostle

Paul explained that there is a body made up of believers who have various gifts and that they are given for the edification of the whole body.

I remember a pastor who bragged he was all his church needed, and that he could be the evangelist, pastor and teacher. Needless to say, we did not agree with him and we ended up leaving that church a few weeks later. We drove by that church a few years later and it was boarded up, which is such a shame as it was a fairly new building.

People approach a matter from what they know from personal experience. This is why we are to come together to reason a matter out in humility and meekness for the edification of each other and not to debate it into the ground or insist that people have to agree with our understanding of a spiritual matter before they earn the right for us to even listen to them. The Word was never intended to be used as a club on the sheep in order to drive them into some narrow pen of understanding and belief. It is amazing how some Christians are willing to show compassion for lost souls, but are unloving, rigid, judgmental, and demanding when it comes to struggling sheep who are simply seeking the refreshing Living Waters of God's Spirit and the green pastures of God's living Word.

The Bible is clear that we are to seek the Lord with all our hearts so we can live (*Jeremiah 29:13; Amos 5:4, 6*). "Seeking" reminds us that there is a definite discipline needed in our pursuit and approach to spiritual matters. Matthew 7:7 also refers to this disciplined life when Jesus stated we must ask, seek, and knock. *Acts 14:22* constantly reminds me there is a struggle that occurs when it comes to entering into all that God has for us, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

As disciples, we face the reality of disowning (denying) ourselves on a daily basis so we can pick up our personal cross, creating the necessary discipline to follow our Lord into the abundant life (*Luke 9:23-24; John 10:10*). The cross points to death of the self-life and the influences of the

world, but death of this nature involves a struggle to ensure a new life is brought forth. Before a child is born there is the travelling to bring that life forth, and from that point there will be points of challenge to bring that life to maturity. Parents can experience various struggles to bring a child to maturity, which can include sorrow, disappointment, and a broken heart.

Regardless of the flimsy, false presentation of Christianity taking place in our nation today, tribulation is associated with the Christian life. Jesus told his disciples that they would have much tribulation in this world, but to be of good cheer for He had overcome the world (*John 16:33*). As Christians we are in a war and are instructed to endure hardship like a good soldier (*2 Timothy 2:3-4*). We are in a race and we must put aside any weight that would keep us from running it (*Hebrews 12:1*). The Apostle Paul stated that in order to run the race he had to fight to keep his body under subjection so he would not be a castaway (*1 Corinthians 9:23-27*). It is clear in *Hebrews 11* that the saints experienced various trials and afflictions because of their faith, but their hope was not in this world but in the next; therefore, they willingly embraced such challenges and struggles to obtain a greater resurrection. The Apostle Paul asked the Lord three times to take away the "thorn in his side," but the Lord told Him that His grace was sufficient to keep him and that in his weakness the Lord would prove Himself to be strong (*2 Corinthians 12:7-10*). The Apostle Paul clearly understood the deep work of affliction and he brought out its ultimate goal in *2 Corinthians 4:17-18*, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Granted, salvation is free, but the life of Christ must be *worked in us*, and the tools that are used are tribulations and afflictions, and it must be *worked out of us* in obedience. The Apostle Paul instructed in *Philippians 2:12* to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and he told Timo-

thy, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). God is clearly working the life of Christ in us through the Holy Spirit but we must work it out in our everyday life (Philippians 1:6). "Work" implies there is some type of labor involved in it and we know the end result of that work is that as believers we need to reach our potential to reflect the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

I have learned that there is a cost to know God in an intimate way that involves a process that can lead one into various dark valleys, along narrow, rocky paths and over harsh terrain, but through each challenge I have been keenly aware that the Lord is in control and ever-so-close to me. The Lord knows what kind of adverse challenges and terrain in my walk will bring out the image of His Son in my life. As I realize that I am living the life of Christ in me by faith, I also remember that faith involves a fiery test where complete dependency on Him becomes pure gold in my faith walk (Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 1:6-9).

Our challenge as believers is simple; we need to know the Lord in a personal way. Good relationships do not just happen. Healthy relationships involve an investment and are often forged through times of testing and adjustment. Our relationship with the Lord requires an investment on our part that comes out of love and faithfulness so that we can know Him in greater ways. Daniel 11:32 states, "That the people who do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

It is not what we know, but Who we know. We must not assume our knowledge stands as the absolute measuring stick for others, nor must we presume if people don't see it our way that they are rebellious and unbelieving. Knowing God is not about knowing doctrine or being able to quote Scriptures. I have met people who know Scriptures but who do not know the Word of God. They may know the letter of it, but not the spirit, intent, and principle behind a certain truth because it takes spirit to discern such a matter, and compassion to enter in. They put God in a box instead of letting God be God in the lives of His people. They try to dictate

what people should believe instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to confirm a matter and lead a person into the truth that he or she needs to possess to be transformed in their mind. Such individuals strive to make converts to their way of thinking instead of ensuring that the sheep Jesus died for become converts and followers of the person of Jesus Christ.

The challenge for many Christians is to not let man and his doctrines define them. We are to listen to Scriptural counseling, but we must discern if it is applicable to our present situation. We must be teachable, but not gullible to believe whatever is thrown at us. We must make sure that the Word of God is being used in proper context and in line with the Holy Spirit, and that it serves as our final say as to what we believe is so, and not man's interpretation or personal perception of something. We must fight to maintain our liberty in the Spirit and avoid being brought under some law or religious standard that enslaves us (Galatians 5:1).

I have learned in the past that we, as believers of Christ, cannot live our life or realize our calling in Christ unless we have the freedom to follow the Holy Spirit in it. Often man tries to be our conscience or be the Holy Spirit to us. However, I have learned if the Holy Spirit has not convicted or confirmed a matter to our spirit, it remains a concept that is lifeless and lacks real merit. It is the Spirit that must confirm a matter as He prepares us to accept it as being so.

As we live in a day where great delusion is sweeping the landscape, let us personally make sure we are anchored in the Rock of Ages, the Rock that is immovable in truth, sure in salvation, and faithful in all promises. †

"God cannot give us more spiritual insight, more heavenly visions, more depths of divine wisdom, or more of Himself if we do not fully believe what we have already received by His Spirit. The deeper places our soul longs to go will be withheld from our experience until our faith is activated in trust and obedience, which gives our accumulated facts dimension, our stirred emotions substance, our lofty ideas understanding, and our concepts the illumination of heaven." - Jeannette Haley

ENDTIMES COMPROMISE

By Cedric Fisher

When God delivered me from darkness over 4 decades ago there were numerous Believers speaking the truth, warning about the advent of deceivers and other Endtimes dangers. However, I since have witnessed a significant decline in the number of individuals warning about the Endtimes. What was once a popular topic is currently regarded as negative and counterproductive to the Believer's peace, prosperity, happiness, comfort, and "best life now" trend. I believe that it is actually more counterproductive to numerical growth in this time of Seeker and Emergent churches.

The blunt truth is that the overwhelming majority of professing Christians in our nation enjoy life in their self-ordered environments. Changes that involve any inconvenience or distraction from their delightful pastimes are not popular. They only want as much godliness as is required to be viewed as a valid Christian and then fill in the rest of their life with pleasing and comfortable things and activities. It appears that they are not convicted of yielding their minds and emotional systems over to stimulation by every form of entertainment of the world system. It is perplexing to witness professing Christians become possessed with delirium over sports and yet seldom respond to anointed preaching, teaching, writing, et cetera.

I view their compromise as extremely dangerous considering the period that we are in. The consequence is a permanently closed mind that cannot receive any critical information by the way of the eye or ear gates. The reality is that Christianity is critically stricken with heresy, and that the world system is near to being prepared for Antichrist. Those facts have completely escaped their detection. God in His great mercy continues to send people to warn them.

"Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading."

"Discipling converts of Jesus Christ is the chief character of a mature Christian."

— Oswald Chambers

SHOCK AND THE ROCK

By Jeannette Haley

*"From the end of the earth will I cry
unto thee, when my
heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the
rock that is higher than I.
-- Psalm 61:2*

The word "shock," according to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, has seven primary definitions, the first, which is the subject of this article, is: (1): a sudden or violent mental or emotional disturbance (2): a disturbance in the equilibrium or permanence of something b: something that causes such disturbance. My personal definition of "shock," which is based on my own experience goes something like this: A sudden intrusion into my life or reality that causes an instant emotional drain and resulting numbing sensation. Of course when that begins to "thaw out" you are left to deal with a number of conflicting emotional responses that can sometimes be compared to trying to tame a swarm of bees, one bee at a time.

At such times, a good motto to remember is: When in shock, run to the Rock. *"In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me"* Psalm 31:1-3.

As many of you know, I recently performed an unplanned foot-fumble, flip, twist, up-over-and-out gymnastic performance in our garage that ended with a very undignified crash on the two steps that descend from the house to the garage. The whole thing was shocking, to say the least in more ways than one! First, it's a "shocking" miracle that nothing major was broken, although my tailbone became the center of the whole painful situation, which is shocking in itself; but, my body, mind, and emotions suffered a bit of shock for a while afterwards. On top of that, my two faithful friends (and others who obviously love me) made sure that I was soundly rebuked for being up on a kitchen step stool! Ouch! But, praise the Lord—thanks to much prayer (and God-given comfrey salve) I can now

bend over without excruciating pain, and I am oh-so-thankful! I have never been good at gymnastics, and obviously never will be (nor want to be)!

I was more shaken than I cared to admit, and the terrible pain caused me to shut myself in with my Rock where I totally surprised myself when I started crying my heart out like a little kid, "I want my daddy!" (Which I can't recall ever doing.) Then it became very personal with God—"I want my Daddy!" I have never, ever in my life called Him "Daddy" and not very often even "Father" but, the wonderfully amazing thing is, He heard my cries, and instantly His overshadowing presence descended and comforted me as only a loving Father could a hurting child. What I learned in those unforgettable moments is this: God is indeed our "Daddy" when we are reduced to the state of a helpless, little child. It is only when we are in a totally broken, needy, humble, hurting position and call out to Him that He becomes our "Daddy."

It turns my stomach every time I hear people running around flippantly calling the Rock of Israel and the Rock of our salvation "Daddy." The connotation is that he is just like any indulging, smiling, easy-going earthly father who exists just to give us our every whim, which is demeaning to the Majesty in the heavens! He is not our "Daddy" for every situation in life! What zealous people without knowledge seem to forget (if they ever knew it) is that when Jehovah God powerfully manifests one of His attributes in a given situation, it doesn't mean that any of His other attributes become less "important," or are somehow "insubordinate," "diminished," or "unimportant". God never changes. In other Words, if you have a personal experience with the Lord as your "Abba Father," that does not mean He is "only" your "Abba Father" every moment of the day for the rest of your life at the expense of all of His other attributes. This type of thinking is common among undisciplined, unlearned, inexperienced Christians and is dangerous because it produces an unbalanced, lopsided Christian who only relates to God based on their own limited definition of Him based on their own experiences, preferences, limited beliefs, or emotional needs. In other

words, when a person focuses and overemphasizes any one of God's attributes (such as His love, for example) by taking it to the extreme and building his or her entire life, way of thinking, conclusions, beliefs and decisions on that one particular attribute results in bringing God down to our human level, thus changing Him into a god of our own making to be worshipped. Whenever we take any truth to the extreme, it becomes an untruth.

God is All-Sufficient for every occasion, aspect and situation. No problem, difficulty, tragedy, or event is beyond what God is because God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, and sovereign. God is the great I AM THAT I AM; Elohim, Powerful God; Adonai, Lord; El Elyon, God Most High; El Shaddai, Almighty God; Yahweh, Israel's Covenantal God; Jehovah Jireh, The Lord Provides; Jehovah Rophe, The Lord Heals; Jehovah Nissi, The Lord is My Banner; Jehovah Mekadesh, The Lord Who Sanctifies You; Jehovah Shalom, The Lord Is Peace; Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord is Our Righteousness; Jehovah Rohi, The Lord Is My Shepherd; Jehovah Shammah, The Lord Is There; El Roi, The God Who Sees; Jehovah Mekoddishkem, God Who Is Our Sanctification; El Olam, The Everlasting God of Eternity, The God of the Universe, The God of Ancient Days. Hallelujah! Praise the LORD forever for *"The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation"* 2 Samuel 22:47.

God, our Rock, is never shocked at anything. *"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he"* Deuteronomy 32:4.e He Shock definitely affects our "mental equilibrium" (which also affects us physically) as we scramble to "get ahold of ourselves" in whatever situation has been thrown at us. There is no getting around it that the sudden death of a loved one has to be the greatest shock a person can experience. None of us wants to be shocked by unexpected tragedies, destruction, great losses, or devastating news that deeply affects us, breaks our hearts, destroys or drasti-

cally alters our way of life, and shakes our faith and beliefs to the core. It's a shock when you receive a medical diagnosis that foretells suffering and death for a loved one or yourself. It's a shock when a spouse is unfaithful, or when there is a divorce, or even the death of a beloved pet. It's shocking when someone you trust, and who claims to be a Christian, "throws you under the bus." It's shocking to be the victim of abuse, or witness any kind of violence, or feel violated by a burglary, or learn of the deep roots of evil in our own government, or a host of other things that we witness on the daily news.

Therefore, we humans instinctively try to prepare ourselves for anything that might throw us into a state of shock. We have our psychologists ready to counsel us with their worldly "wisdom" in case there is a traumatic event such as a school shooting, terrorist attack, or other public tragedy. People who live in tornado alley try to build reinforced homes and underground shelters in preparation for the super storm; and, plans are made in earthquake-prone areas for the "big one." Israel has taken the precaution of insuring that gas masks and bomb shelters are accessible to civilians. Our President is working hard to build our military and defenses in the event of an attack on America. Others are stockpiling gold and silver, food and survival gear, and the list goes on. The whole world is scrambling to be "prepared" for the worst, be it from outer space, from the earth's molten core, from biological nasties, or from the designs of evil men, such as the antichrist. The question is, how prepared are individuals in the world today who may suddenly, without warning, find themselves out of the body and into the presence of God? We need to also ask ourselves just how prepared God's people are if they were to unexpectedly find themselves "absent from the body, and . . . present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8b)?

When life shocks us, loved ones can hold our hand, but only God can hold our hearts.

One of the most overlooked, least studied, least understood, and least appreciated books in the Bible is the Book of Job: yet this book is invaluable

in helping to prepare the believer for life's devastating intrusions. God Himself said this to Satan concerning Job: "*Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil*" Job 1:8? After Job lost his animals, servants, property, livelihood and sons and daughters, he "*arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*" Job 1:20-22. Then the Lord allowed Satan to touch his body, yet in spite of intense physical suffering, Job never "charged God foolishly" or cursed God, or lost his faith in God. In *Ezekiel 14:14* we read, "*Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, [the earth] they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.*" What could be more shocking than all that Job suffered, and yet his faith stood firm because he maintained an upright relationship with God that nothing could destroy; he possessed faith that could not be shaken; he kept a heavenly, eternal perspective that could not be altered; and, he hated evil. Job overcame Satan because his heart was established in the Rock, as the eagle who "*dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place*" Job 39:28.

The subject of "shock" has come to mind a lot lately as two neighbors, and one dear friend left this world behind, all within a few days of each other. We are quite certain that one of these souls did not enter through the Gates of Heaven; another sometimes attended church, but we have no idea if she was truly born again; but, we do know without a doubt that the third person has definitely entered into the joy of his Lord. There have also been a number of very sudden fatalities on the highways in our area as well, leaving us to wonder about the state of these poor souls. For those who knew not the Lord, no doubt the shock they experienced, as they suddenly found themselves out of the body and in the clutches of mocking demons, was in-

describably unbearable; the dreaded weight of the reality of their eternally lost state of hopelessness, like an anchor, descending with their tortured souls into the abyss.

No doubt Adam and Eve, after they disobeyed God suffered shock when God cursed the ground and drove them out of the Garden of Eden to go work for their food until the day that they returned to dust. They must have been shocked and horrified when Cain murdered his brother, Abel; and Cain must have been shocked when God pronounced judgment on him saying, "*And now art thou cursed from the earth....*" (See *Genesis 4:11, 12.*) People in the days of Noah had to be shocked when God brought about the great worldwide flood, just as He told Noah He planned to do. No doubt Ananias and Sapphira went into shock when each was confronted and told that they were going to die on the spot, which they did. As we turn each page of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation while keeping in mind that the people recorded there are just as human as you and me, and if we put ourselves in their place, understand and relate to their plights, problems, and emotions, then we can surmise that they, too, experienced states of shock that they had to deal with.

Even though Jesus plainly told His disciples "*The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again*" Luke 24:7, they were shocked when He was arrested, falsely accused, tortured, and crucified. Someone wrote, "The disciples were so stunned by the shock and defenselessness they experienced that, other than John, they abandoned Jesus during the trials and crucifixion, instead gathering together in hiding." No doubt the disciples were also shocked at the news of His resurrection and when He suddenly appeared to them where they were assembled behind locked doors for fear of the Jews.

Being shocked is not a sin, but unbelief is.

I believe that death is the greatest cause of shock because God created us to live forever and put eternity in our hearts (*Ecclesiastes 3:11*). People cannot imagine not "being

somewhere” when they die. Sadly, instead of believing the record that God has given us in His Word concerning life and death, heaven and hell, most of the world goes on to “rewrite the story” and make up their own happy ending. According to a 2009 survey, 25% of U.S. Christians believe in reincarnation. A 2011 Barna survey showed 25% of American Christians believe in Universalism. In a more recent survey (2016) 64% of evangelical Americans believe that all people will be reunited with their loved ones in heaven, which is evidence of the growing trend toward Universalism. The question is, if everybody is going to eventually end up in heaven, then why obey the great commission to go into the entire world and preach the gospel, and make disciples to Jesus? Why send out missionaries to bring the gospel to the lost? Why bother witnessing to people, praying for the lost and for laborers to go into the harvest field, or for that matter why work to do anything or donate funds to bring people to Christ?

It must be a terrible shock for the unsaved in the moment of their death when they suddenly find themselves “absent from the body” and falling into hell.

But, let’s face it. We all love a happy ending; however, what about Truth? Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Jesus said that He is “The way, the truth and the life” John 14:6a, and John 1:1 declares, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word is God.” Therefore, Jesus is the living Word, and the written Word is life and truth. Nevertheless, there exists in these end days an insidious spirit over the world that has redefined the Jesus of the Bible, the Rock of our salvation, into “another Jesus” who is more like us than the coming King and Judge of all mankind. This new Jesus is our pal and buddy, our “doting Father” and will never do anything to “shock” our frail feelings concerning heaven and hell. This is an insidious lie from the devil. The Apostle Paul warned, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, For if he that cometh preacheth another

Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” 2 Cor. 11:3, 4.

The truth is Jesus Christ cannot be separated from the Word, or the Word from Jesus. Therefore, when Jesus declares that He is the “The way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me” He is making it clear that He is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. As much as our emotional sensitivities, imaginations, and personal leanings want to change and “improve” reality in order to avoid any sudden, shocking intrusion into our personal worlds, the fact remains that the Jesus of the Bible is still the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus said, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” Revelation 1:8. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” Hebrews 13:8. “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” I Corinthians 10:4.

Perhaps the greatest shock of all is when “many” who think they are saved stand before Christ and hear Him say, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” Matthew 7:23b. After Jesus spoke these words, He told us the means of preparation for that day when we stand before Him. He said, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

Are you established on the Rock and prepared for the stormy shock? Or is your life built on shifting sand so when the storm hits, and it will, you won’t be able to stand? †

“My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”

by Edward Mote, 1797-1874

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, His covenant, and blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne!
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.



THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT By J. C. Ryle

There is a double nature in all believers. Converted, renewed, sanctified as they are, they still carry about with them a mass of indwelling corruption, a body of sin. Paul speaks of this when he says, “I find a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind” (Romans 7:21-23). The experience of all true Christians in every age confirms this. They find within, two contrary principles, and a continual strife between the two. To these two principles our Lord alludes when He addresses His half-awakened disciples. He calls the one flesh and the other spirit. He says, “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

GOD'S LAST NAME

By Skip Moen

*"Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring **My people**, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."* Exodus 3:10 NASB

Maybe the most important name change that alters how people read the Bible is this one: God. You see, for most people, the God of the Bible is God. He is not first and foremost *the God of Israel*. Israel has been removed from the modifier of God. Now He is just that singular divine being of *all*, no longer uniquely associated with a particular people. Abraham Heschel makes a very important point about this:

"A Christian ought to ponder seriously the tremendous implications of a process begun in early Christian history. I mean the conscious or unconscious dejudaization of Christianity, affecting the Church's way of thinking, its inner life as well as its relationship to the past and present reality of Israel--the father and mother of the very being of Christianity. The children did not arise to call the mother blessed; instead, they called the mother blind. Some theologians continue to act as if they did not know the meaning of "honor your father and mother"; others, anxious to prove the superiority of the church, speak as if they suffered from a spiritual Oedipus complex. A Christian ought to realize that a world without Israel will be a world without the God of Israel."

And that is precisely the world we have today--a world without the God of Israel. Instead, we have the god of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Luther. We have the *institutional* god of the late Holy Roman Empire. We have the god of evangelical recruitment, the god of the next world, the god of numbers, power and status. As Peter Leithart notes, Christianity today is simply institutionalized worldliness. But could we have expected anything else? We have not been rescued from Egypt because we, those of us who have adopted the religion of the West, never left. We elected to stay behind and absorb our pagan gods into the Christian brand.

Sometimes I am criticized for

being so harsh about Christianity. I try to make a distinction between those who are Christian (who grew up in a world they never understood, and who are attempting to be devoted to the God they think they know) and Christianity as a religion. But few people get it. They look at all the good Christians have done (and they have done a lot) and conclude that the religion must be right. They forget the unspeakable history of the Church, or they just never bothered to look. You see, *faith* is not the same as religion. Faith is personal. Religion is public, professional and profitable. Maybe you're like me. You grew up in a world where God didn't have a last name, and then one day you realized His last name is "of Israel" and everything changed. †

URL to article: <https://www.skipmoen.com/2018/05/gods-last-name/>

QUOTES TO PONDER

By A. W. Tozer

"I fear any kind of religious stir among Christians, which does not lead to *repentance* and result in a *sharp separation of the believer from the world*. I am suspicious of any organized revival effort that is forced to play down the *hard terms* of the Kingdom. No matter how attractive the movement may appear, if it is not founded in *righteousness*, and nurtured in *humility* — it is not of God. If it exploits the flesh, it is a religious fraud — and should not have the support of any God-fearing Christian. Only that movement is of God, which honors the Spirit and prospers at the expense of the human ego."

"There is scarcely anything so dull and meaningless as Bible doctrine taught for its own sake. Truth divorced from life is not truth in its biblical sense, but something else and something less. Theology is a set of facts concerning God, man, and the world. These facts may be and often are set forth as values in themselves; and there lies the snare both for the teacher and for the hearer."

"Since He is the foundation of all our religious beliefs, it follows that if we err in our ideas of God, we will go astray on everything else."

THESE RELIGIOUS TOYS WHICH WE HAVE WHITTLED OUT FOR OURSELVES!

By Charles Naylor

Satan always works to make us think that humanly devised religious forms or customs are things of vital importance. In fact, some of these are much harder to break away from than we suppose them to be. They take a deeper hold upon us many times, than divine truth. People feel as though they would be giving up their religion, if they would surrender these forms. A particular mode of dress becomes sacred; or a particular form of worship or service becomes exalted above all other forms. We must recognize these things as being merely human devices, and as having no vital connection with Biblical truth.

We should never become wedded to our religious forms and customs. Let us look away from these religious toys which we have whittled out for ourselves, and back to the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and life. If we have labeled our religious customs as 'Christianity'--then let us tear off these labels, and see that henceforth we call nothing Christian but that which is clearly taught in Scripture itself.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." — Psalm 19:7-10

"Righteousness is a meek state, while godliness is the patient exercise of righteousness by faith due to love."

"If people are not willing to stand for truth they will fall for everything else. The more you stand for truth the more you realize it is truth because truth will always be confirmed in the end."

"The natural response of godliness is the readiness to do good works for the glory of God." - Rayola Kelley

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

Q: "It is confusing to me why nowadays people hear less well WITH the Holy Spirit inside them! My thought is that we should hear BETTER now... but what factors may be causing us to hear less from the Holy Spirit in the present age?"

A: The Holy Spirit is both the promise of the Father and the gift of the Son to His bride. The Holy Spirit enables each of us as believers to be overcomers of the present age and to walk victoriously through this world, but the key to the Spirit is that He is holy. His character and work will never move outside of His holiness, God's plan, and His work to bring forth the plan of God in the lives of His people.

Jesus' instruction to believers and the church is simple, "If you have ears, hear what the Spirit is saying." The concept of ears has to do with actually possessing the ability to hear what the Spirit is saying. The problem is that there are a lot of voices, and as believers we must develop and fine-tune our spiritual ears to hear the Spirit. We fine-tune our ears by believing and obeying the Word that the Spirit inspired to bring forth righteousness in our lives (*2 Timothy 2:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21*). We must ask (for more of the Spirit), seek the truth He wants us to understand about Jesus and His work, and knock until the door is open, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into a greater understanding of Christ and the fruitful abundant life (*Luke 11:13; John 16:13; Galatians 5:22-23*).

Scripture is clear we can vex, grieve, and quench the Holy Spirit (*Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19*). We are first introduced to the presence and work of the Spirit in *Genesis 1:2*, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." According to Strong's Concordance, "move" in this text means to brood over, to flutter, and to shake.

The Spirit broods over God's people, flutters at opportunities to move upon, in, and through them, and shakes when He does move to quicken, empower, and enable God's people to carry out their commission, call-

ings, and gifts. The truth is our souls, without the presence of the Spirit, are void and dark like the earth in *Genesis 1:2*, until God moves by His Spirit. "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (*Job 26:13a*). The Holy Spirit's work is to recreate or transform our souls so that we will reflect Jesus.

I mentioned the Holy Spirit's character and work because by understanding His purpose, we can also understand how His work can be thwarted. He is all about change by transforming the environment to ensure worship and communion with the Lord. The Bible is clear that the Holy Spirit must have the freedom to move in the spiritual environment of our lives (*2 Corinthians 3:17-18*). The more we seek to truly hear what the Spirit is saying the more we will know what it means to walk after the Spirit in the ways of righteousness, be led by Him into a more intimate relationship with the Lord, and walk in Him to ensure victory in our lives (*Romans 8:1; 14; Galatians 5:16*). However, there are four enemies of the Spirit that will change the inward environment of our soul and cause Him to pull back because He is being quenched, withdraw because He is being vexed, and become restricted from moving because He is grieved. These enemies are the world that corrupts, a wrong spirit that perverts, sin that defiles, and the flesh that wars against Him (*2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Galatians 5:17*).

Spirit is about coming into agreement with something that will ultimately influence your attitude, motive, and intent. For example, agreement with the world will dull our spiritual ears; agreement with a wrong spirit will produce bad fruits; giving way to sin will cause us to resist the Spirit; and the flesh will keep us from surrendering to the Spirit. The problem is that few test the spirit in operation to discern if the environment of their soul is correct (*1 John 4:1*). Many assume that if they are not in some major sin, they are alright, but the Lord warns us against such assumptions that will often turn into dangerous self-willed presumptions that refuse to be humbled in order to submit to what is right (*2 Peter 2:10*). It is for this reason that Jesus warns us to beware of how we hear a matter, always test the fruit of it, and to judge (examine) ourselves first be-

fore we incorrectly judge others (*Matthew 7:16, 20; Luke 8:18*).

As you can see, if any of these enemies are present, the voice and leading of the Spirit will be missing. As stated, there are many who assume that all is well, but such individuals may not be checking out their attitudes, the fruits being produced by their actions, or the type of testimony it is leaving behind. The problem is we can become accustomed to the fact that the voice or the presence of the Spirit is missing because as long we have a "few drops" of religion here, and a few encounters of "hype" there, we are "good for the week," while sadly many of the sheep in the churches are wondering, "Where is the revival?" †

ISAIAH'S SIGNATURE?

ChristianPost.com, 3/22/18
Archaeology and Scripture [Excerpts]
(Taken from: The Berean Call)

Archaeologists digging "at the foot of the southern part of the wall that surrounds Jerusalem's Old City," found an ancient refuse dump dating back to the eight century before Christ.

In the refuse dump, they found 33 clay imprints or seals, known as bullae. One of these bore the inscription "Belonging to Hezekiah (son of) Ahaz king of Judah...." The latest issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* features a piece by Eilat Mazar of Hebrew University [who] supervised the excavation that found Hezekiah's seal.

Among the other clay seals was one inscribed with the name "Yesha 'yah[u]." For those of us who didn't study Hebrew, the name means "YHWH is salvation." In English, the name is rendered as "Isaiah."

In 2008, seals belonging to two high officials, Gedeliah and Shelemiah [Jeremiah 38] were found "only a few feet apart."

Thus, "it would not be the first time that seal impressions of two Biblical personas, mentioned in the same verse in the Bible, were found in an archaeological context.

