

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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

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The Reality of God

Part 2

By Rayola Kelley

Who is God? As stated in the first article, if we do not get God right, then everything from our premise, understanding, and conclusions will be wrong. Premise has to do with the direction one will travel, understanding will determine the reality one adopts, and conclusions will establish attitudes towards the unseen and life in general. It is for this reason many people are walking in the wrong direction, while adhering to a false reality and possessing perverted conclusions. Ultimately, such individuals will not be able to trust anything about their understanding and reality.

Clearly, when the true God of heaven is missing from the equation, there is no premise of truth in which to discern a matter, no moral compass in which to make sound judgments, and no sure foundation in which to stand. There is nothing but a vacuum that will be filled with the lies of the age, the practices of the world, and the wicked philosophies of the modern day heretics, despots, and tyrants.

Just as the Bible warns in *Matthew 7:24-27*, when some person, institute, or organization has been established on the shifting sands of worldly philosophies, heretical beliefs, and nonsensical realities, the whole structure will end up collapsing on itself. We see that for the last five to six decades, certain factions have attempted to strip America of her spiritual foundation, gut her of any real moral compass, and erect a false heretical light by throwing God out of every arena. The halls of justice are now made up of a cesspool of judges who have established oppressive laws, policies, and replaced morality with immorality in light of political correctness. We see an educational system that is in the business of in-



doctrinating and not educating. We see a religious system which adheres to worldly philosophies and humanistic gospels. The institution of family has been exploited by those who want to feel good about preferences and lifestyles that have been clearly deemed as abominable by God's Word and cited as already having been judged and condemned in the courts of heaven.

Regardless of man's attempt to replace God, mock His righteousness, and rage against His judgments, God remains unchangeable in His character, ways, and judgments. He is God and there is a three-fold witness. His Word declares who He is, His creation verifies His existence, and mankind proclaims His character and ways. All three witnesses are in agreement and their testimonies would be upheld in any fair court as being so.

Who is God? The Bible is clear about painting a reliable portrait of Him. The first introduction of the Bible to the reality of God is simple, but profound. *Genesis 1:1* states that, "*In the beginning God...*" We often ignore the first three words in this profound statement. But, the first three words set a premise that should clearly establish our approach to the concept of the fourth word: God.

Let us consider the meaning of the first three words in *Genesis 1:1*. The first word is "in." How many times have we used this small word and not considered its full implication. The word "in" in this text means a matter is all inclusive. In other words, there is nothing that can be added or taken away where the word "in" is being used, because it is broad and general as to what it can embrace. The fact that this small word is all inclusive makes it boundless and incomprehensible. Ultimately, the word "in" implies the matter which it is referring to is complete.

What does the word "in" tell us about the subject matter? It tells us that in the beginning, God was. The

idea of God is incomprehensive, but everything that is associated with God is complete. Every detail including the beginning of everything, and every matter that surrounds His existence and works stands complete in Him and originated with Him. Clearly, the word "in" in regard to God states that He is all in all and operates in and through all matters.

The second word is "the." How many times a day do we use this small word? The word "the" puts a point of distinction or identification in relationship to the noun that follows it. It implies that the noun, as in the case of the word "God," stands in the unique position of being predominate or singular in its class or reference. In essence, this small word has no real past tense to it for it has to do with the present standing of something. For example in the beginning, God is.

Scripture is clear there is only one God (*Isaiah 43:10; 44:8*). There is no God before Him, after Him, or beside Him. He is "the" God of all creation. He created the Universe with its many galaxies, stars, and planets. He alone stands distinct in every area of His creation.

The concept that there is only one God has caused much distress to those who do not want to be hedged in by absolutes. They want the liberty to explore and decide how they want to perceive God. They do not want to have to operate within boundaries that do not allow for sentiment, personal preferences, and controllable notions. It is for this reason that man has a tendency to tout many gods, and like the implanted captives of Assyria in the land of Israel, they will simply try to add the unknown God of the Bible to their entourage so they will have all bases covered just in case one may be a counterfeit (*2 Kings 17:23-41*).

The third word is "beginning." "Beginning" in this text has nothing to do with the idea of origin; rather, it

points to that which is the first in place, order, rank, and serves as the chief or principal thing (*Strong Concordance*). The reason for keeping the intent of the word "beginning" in proper context is because God has no beginning. He has always been and He always will be. He serves as the chief and principal source behind all we see. He alone ensures proper order, holds the ultimate authority in the matters of heaven and earth, and will and must serve as a preeminent place in all affairs. Clearly, He must become the premise in all matters to ensure truth and integrity.

Since man is finite, he wrestles with the concept of an infinite God who is not subject to anything or anyone. In his limited understanding man has a hard time accepting that God never had a beginning because He always has been inclusive (He was) and continues to be who He is (distinct and singular), and will ultimately be what He always has been. In God there is no past that is not part of what is present and there is no future for it is already so in the realm of eternity.

It is for this reason that terms such as "the first and the last" have been ascribed to God (*Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 1:11*). Since He is "the beginning," of all matters, He also marks the end of them (*Revelation 1:8*). He is the first in order and the last who will have a final say. He is the beginning of what is and will be the end of what will be. Since He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, He is God.

By this time your head may be swirling. Clearly, the concept of God is incomprehensible. In all honesty if we could comprehend the reality of God, He would not be God! Granted, we can know God and come to a limited understanding of Him, but we will never fully comprehend Him in our present state. However, man cannot accept the fact that he cannot somehow figure out God. After all, man wants to figure out God so he can keep one step ahead of Him. He wants to be able to influence or control Him on some plane. It is for this reason that man gets into speculation about God. Instead of accepting that He is all inclusive, with no need of any counsel, help, or intervention from

man, man in his arrogance makes his beliefs or ideas about God inclusive. In the end, man begins to erect a god of his own liking. He even can become sentimental about his god, completely devoted to him, and willing to fling all aside to follow and worship him. However, the god of man's imagination is nothing more than a dead, lifeless image.

When we think about the word, "God", many incorrectly perceive Him as a vague concept, making Him indifferent, or a force that is in operation within this world and mankind that can prove to be powerful, but not always loving, kind, and gentle. It is hard for man to put his mind around the fact that God is not a vague concept, nor a force. In fact, He is a person, with attributes, personality, and a will. He is not a concept that is indifferent, but a reality that is very much involved with the affairs of mankind. He is not a force to be reckoned with; rather, He possesses all power and uses it to bring about end results for the benefit of man and His glory.

Who is God? As you can see, the first four words in *Genesis 1:1* reveal that He something of a phenomenon that is beyond our comprehension. To try to understand God would be like trying to take the entire ocean and put it in a small jar. It is not possible, and it is for this reason we must approach the Bible to simply believe what it says about God rather than trying to fit it in the small jar of our understanding. The more people try to fit God into their limited theology, concrete doctrines, and worldly notions, the more apt they are to erect a lifeless idol and succumb to the darkness of unbelief toward the true God of heaven.

It is simple to ask what do you believe about God, but the more important question is who do you believe God to be? Is your understanding of Him based on some vague notion, religious teaching or dogma, or have you had a personal encounter with Him that forever made Him real to you? Not only is He real to you, but are you growing in an intimate relationship with Him?

Next month we are going to consider one of the names of God. Keep in mind, a name implies that God is a person who can be personally identified and known by His attributes, His personality, and His ways. †

DISCERNERS SPEAK OUT

"No one wants to hear about the book ["The Mystery of the Shemitah"] being a fabrication. What can you do, warn and let the Holy spirit bring follow up until the light is shed abroad in their heart. My goodness, what a mess in todays church!!! - WA

"This link (<http://standupforthetruth.com/2014/09/book-review-mystery-shemitah/>) virtually dismisses Cahn's tales as rubbish. As God's dealings have basically always been with Israel, and the Bible is about Israel, its history and future. Israel was supposed to have preached the gospel to the world....It also maintains that the Shemitah was intended to be a blessing to Israel, not a judgment or punishment. Its amazing how people manage to twist things. Interesting that he is a rabbi, like the other old boy that said God had given him the name of the Messiah. He got that right sure enough, but when I read the book, I was convinced it was not God he was hearing, as other things he said he heard sounded to me straight out of the pit! I am not at all sure that He [God] is giving prophetic revelations today. Why would He need to? Everything we need to know is in the Word. Its complete. There is nothing left out, and the more your study it, the more you find in it! "- UK

"Well, what else would one expect from a 'Christian Rabbi' who studied the Kabalistic mystic Jesuit priest (Kaduri)? Cahn is so set on trying to make Judaism and 'Christianity' one, under the OLD covenant, and America the new 'promised land' that he believes his own tales. Unfortunately, so do a lot of other people. It seems people are not just deceived, but they WANT to be deceived. He's all part and parcel of the enemy team paving the way to the One World religion." - VA

"The bottom line is that people believe Cahn has now been shown 'mysteries' that God has kept secret for millennia and, all of a sudden, decides to reveal them to ONLY CAHN! That is cultic and deceptive on so many levels." - FL

THE DANGER OF ADDING OR SUBTRACTING

Part One

By Jeannette Haley

***“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”
Ephesians 4:14***

Some people seem to be born with the type of brain that loves arithmetic, and they have no fear of jumping into what I call the incredible, yet terrible and wonderful mystery of mathematics. Unfortunately, this is one “gifting” that definitely passed me by. In fact, I wasn’t just “behind the door” when mathematical gifts were “passed out” (as the old saying goes), but somewhere beyond the reaches of outer space. “Math and me” have simply never been pals, and try as I might, never will be. It was a doomed relationship from the “git go.”

Having said all that, however, there is one area that involves “adding” or “subtracting” that has the potential of grabbing my complete attention, while instantly igniting a burning fire within—and that is when it comes to those who intentionally “add to” or “subtract from” the Word of God. The LORD God warned Israel, *“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” Deuteronomy 4:2.* The Hebrew word for diminish is *gara*, which means to scrape off; to shave, remove, lessen or withhold: abate, clip, take away, keep back, restrain, make small, withdraw. All such actions certain rebellious and prideful members of the human race, being under an evil persuasion and temper of mind, have consistently practiced throughout history, and especially so in these end times, thereby fulfilling prophecies foretelling of their *“cunningly devised fables.”*

Flippantly ignoring such verses as *Proverbs 30:5, 6*, which states, *“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest*

he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” the false prophets continue on with their tales, while leading those with itching ears down the broad path to destruction. *“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” Revelation 22:19.* It can’t get any plainer than that.

God never changes. His Word never changes. Why? Because *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God” John 1:1, 2.* The Lord Jesus Christ declared, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away” Luke 21:33.* Nevertheless, when false workers come along with their impressive titles, positions, education or so-called “spiritual experiences,” such heretics will be openly embraced by undisciplined, undiscerning people whose souls are either lean (starving), or who innocently trust wolves in sheep’s clothing. Heretics also attract carnal people with “itching ears” who crave something “new” or “sensational,” and people who are willing to trade diligence in studying the Word of God for a “fast ride on a short cut” to some sort of “feel good spiritual experience” that costs them nothing. Others, who do not know, believe or love God and His Word, and who are looking for “another spiritual path” and power can be quick to embrace New Age beliefs, practices, and techniques which open the door to the occult. In other words, people who boo the Bible, ditch discernment, tire of truth, and love lies are easy prey for ravening wolves in sheep’s clothing who are masters of deception by subtly “adding to” or “subtracting from” God’s Word (usually always for fame, fortune and fed egos.) The truth is adding to God’s Word causes it to say what it clearly does not say; therefore, there is also a subtraction (diminishing) of God’s Word because the truth becomes “tarnished” through man’s manipulation. *“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” 1 Peter 1:25.* By perverting the written Word, heretics pollute what is holy, and put their followers in danger of perdition. Paul warned, *“Holding fast*

the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” Titus 1:9-11. There is no doubt that we are living in the prophesied time of apostasy—the falling away from the truth.

One example of manipulating God’s Word through “adding and subtracting” is the “Jesus Died Spiritually” (JDS) teaching. To quote from the Moriel Archive, this teaching “has been documented and often pointed out that this ‘Jesus died spiritually doctrine’ comes from Christian Science and ‘New Thought’ teacher E.W. Kenyon. Kenneth Hagin is commonly thought to have simply copied it directly from him. This may be true. Hagin at times copied Kenyon’s writings word for word, even when describing his own ‘personal revelations of Christ’. It must be noted though that even John Calvin alluded to the ‘Jesus suffered in hell’ idea.”

“Word of Faith” (WOF) teachers, Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Frederick Price, and Charles Capps have capitalized on this heresy and with the addition of a few fanciful embellishments of their own teach it as a biblical fact. (Note: Benny Hinn adds to God’s Word by teaching the fallacy that Jesus “died spiritually” in the Garden of Gethsemane. Mormons also teach this.) A summary of the teachings of these WOF leaders is: Jesus went to hell, Jesus was separated from the presence of God, Jesus finished the atoning work in hell. When Jesus’ blood was shed on the cross it did not atone (“completely atone” is the implication), and Jesus had to be born again. Jesus’ words in *John 19:30* contradict what the WOF people teach, *“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”* [Emphasis added.] *Colossians 2:14, 15* tells us that the finished work was done on the cross, *“Blotting out the handwriting of the ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it*

to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." To sum it up, here is a quote from a discerning Christian: "When was the sin debt cancelled, blotted out, wiped away, erased? It was taken care of at the cross--not in hell and not by Jesus suffering there. Nowhere does the Bible teach that the atonement was finished in hell. This is so serious that anyone teaching that the atoning work was not finished in the cross is denying the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross." (<http://carm.org/did-jesus-die-spiritually>).

Contrary to the cunningly devised fable that the WOF people have adopted and embellished that Jesus "died spiritually" (which as Deity He could not do) and that He had to be "born again," (which would indicate that He was a sinner, and not Deity), *1 Peter 3:18* declares, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened [resurrected physically] by the Spirit." [Emphasis added.] In the next two verses we read what took place when Jesus descended into hell after he, on the cross, commended His spirit into the Father's hands. (See *Luke 23:46*.) *1 Peter 3:19, 20* says, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison: Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water." So we see that Jesus, having all authority and power, preached to the captives in prison. Compare these verses with *Ephesians 4:8-10*, which says, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things.)"

The JDS proponents are foolishly preaching "another gospel" with "another Jesus" that promotes "another spirit." The Law required a physical death, with shed blood, to atone for sins. The Gospel is clear that after Jesus paid the price of redemption, His physical body was committed to the

grave, where in three days it would be raised anew, but Scripture shows us that His spirit was not subject to any other entity for upon His death, He personally commended it in an upward direction. Clearly, there was a separation on the cross for Jesus, but it was not a spiritual one. Just as He stated in *John 12:23-27*, His humanity fell into the ground to produce more seeds unto eternal life for His glory, while He placed His spirit in the hands of the Father, and not Satan and hell (*Luke 23:46*).

The examples found in Scripture clearly back this up. There is no such thing in the entire Bible that even remotely hints that animals had to "die" spiritually to atone for sins. Instead, there had to be the shed blood of the sacrifice which pointed to Christ's shed blood on the cross for us. Christ's life was not taken; rather He laid it down for us (*John 10:18*) so that by His physical death and the shedding of His blood He would fulfill the requirement of the blood sacrifice in relationship to God's holy Law, as a means to atone for our sins so that we (believers) do not have to suffer spiritual death.

At no time did Satan ever have power or control over Jesus. To teach this is blasphemous, and insinuates that Satan is more powerful than Christ. In a nutshell, "The teaching of the word of faith/positive confession movement upon examining clearly takes away the redemption work of Christ's blood, and in its place subtly presents three heretical essentials to what happened to Christ from the Cross to the Resurrection, which implied are: (1) Jesus died spiritually and had to take on Satan's corrupt nature, (2) Jesus was dragged to hell and tortured by the devil for three days and nights, and (3) Jesus had to be born again by His spirit becoming recreated." Scripture refutes such insane blasphemy by continually reinforcing that the blood of Christ is the most important factor relating to one's salvation, as the entire reason for Christ going to the cross was for His blood to be shed for the forgiveness of our sins. At the last supper He took the cup and said, *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28)*. (See deceptioninthechurch.com)

The WOF teachers will not only

come under the judgment of the Word for adding to it in the matter of the JDS error, but also for teaching mind-science, New Age occult techniques to gain control over people and situations through "positive confession," and "psychic prayer" (witchcraft) in order to bring about desired results through concentrated meditation, imagery, and focused "energy." People need to wake up to the very real dangers involved in any of the subtly different forms of mind altering meditations and practices such as contemplative prayer, which can have as powerful an effect on the mind as certain drugs, whether legal or illegal, in producing an "altered state of consciousness," which is a wide open door for demons and familiar spirits.

Consider that all of the examples, types, and shadows in the Old Testament sacrifices (see *Leviticus 1-7*) that symbolize the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. There is nothing in the Old or New Testaments to suggest in any way that Jesus had to go to hell for us, die spiritually, be tormented by Satan in our place, or have to be born again. This blasphemous Scripture twisting demeans the completed work of redemption on the cross by His shed blood, throws a blanket of confusion over the Gospel (since it is "another gospel"); demeans the Person of Jesus Christ (presents "another Jesus") which results in "another spirit." That the Passover lamb was a type that pointed to the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" *John 1:29b* is beyond dispute. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" *1 Corinthians 5:7*. "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" *1 Peter 1:19*. (See *Isaiah 53:7*; *Revelation 7:9*; *15:3*; *21:22*.) Obviously, the Passover lamb that was sacrificed, and the blood that was applied to the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses so that the Lord would pass over them, sparing them from death, portrayed the blood that Jesus would shed for sin on the cross. There is no indication whatsoever that somehow the Passover

lamb had to die “spiritually” in order for the Lord to “pass over” when He saw the blood! (The rite of the Passover is instituted in *Chapter 12 of Exodus*.)

This is what God’s Word says: *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood and without shedding of blood is no remission” Hebrews 9:22b.* [Emphasis added.] In *1 Peter 2:24* we read, *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”* [Emphasis added] *Isaiah 53:4, 5* is specific in describing what Jesus accomplished on the cross. *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*

Oswald Chambers, on the substitution of Christ, and referring to *2 Corinthians 5:21*, which says *“He hath made Him to be sin for us . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God. . . .”* taught, “The modern view of the death of Jesus is that He died for our sins out of sympathy. The New Testament view is that He bore our sin not by sympathy, but by identification. He was *made to be sin*. Our sins are removed because of the death of Jesus, and the explanation of His death is His obedience to His Father, not His sympathy with us. We are acceptable with God not because we have obeyed, or because we have promised to give up things, but because of the death of Christ, and in no other way. We say that Jesus Christ came to reveal the Fatherhood of God, the loving-kindness of God; the New Testament says He came to bear away the sin of the world. The revelation of His Father is to those to whom He has been introduced as Saviour. Jesus Christ never spoke of Himself to the world as one Who revealed the Father, but as a stumbling block (see *John 15:22-24*). *John 14:9* was spoken to His disciples.

“That Christ died for me, therefore I go scot free, is never taught in the New Testament. What *is* taught in the New Testament is that ‘He died

for all’ (not—He died my death), and that by identification with His death I can be freed from sin, and have imparted to me His very righteousness. The substitution taught in the New Testament is twofold: ‘He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; *that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*’ It is not Christ *for* me unless I am determined to have Christ *formed in me.*” (My Utmost for His Highest, pg. 303.)

How intensely Satan despises the blood of Christ! How deeply Satan scorns the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! How profoundly Satan hates those who have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb! How miserably anguished and furious He is at the eternal written Word of God! How greatly he trembles in dread and cringes at the words, “Jesus, God Incarnate.” How tirelessly Satan works to overthrow the Way, the Truth, and the Life of the Kingdom of God in his effort to swallow up the entire world in his own kingdom of darkness and death! The truth is he was defeated by Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. He knows his time is short, and he will stop at nothing to spew forth his lies to deceive multitudes through his *“false apostles”* and *“deceitful workers.”* *“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” 2 Corinthians 11:15.*

Concerning the work of Christ, C. H. Mackintosh wrote, “In considering this great subject, two things claim our attention: first, what Christ has done for us; secondly, what He is doing for us. In the former we have atonement; in the latter, advocacy. He died for us on the cross. He lives for us on the Throne. By His precious atoning death, He has met our entire condition as sinners. He has borne our sins, and put them away for ever. He stood charged with all our sins—the sins of all who believe in His name. ‘Jehovah laid on him the iniquities of us all.’ (*Isa. 53*) And again, ‘For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.’ *1 Peter 3:18.*...

“This is a grand and all-important truth for the anxious soul— a truth which lies at the very foundation of the

whole Christian position. It is impossible that any truly awakened soul, any spiritually enlightened conscience, can enjoy divinely-settled peace until this most precious truth is laid hold of in simple faith. I must know, upon divine authority, that all my sins are put away for ever out of God’s sight; that He Himself has disposed of them in such a manner as to satisfy all the claims of His throne, all the decrees of His Law, and all the attributes of His nature; that He has glorified Himself in the putting away of my sins, in a far higher and more wonderful manner than if He had sent me to an everlasting hell on account of them.

“Yes, He Himself has done it. This is the very gist and marrow, the heart’s core of the whole matter. God has laid our sins on Jesus, and He tells us so in His Holy Word, so that we may know it upon divine authority — an authority that cannot lie. God planned it; God did it; God says it. It is all of God, from first to last, and we have simply to rest in it like a little child. How do I know that Jesus bore my sins in His own body on the tree? By the very same authority which tells me I had sins to be borne. God, in His marvelous and matchless love, assures me, a poor guilty, hell-deserving sinner, that He has Himself undertaken the whole matter of my sins, and disposed of it in such a manner as to bring a rich harvest of glory to His own eternal name, throughout the wide universe, in presence of all created intelligence.....

“But oh the profound mystery of the cross!— the glorious mystery of redeeming love I see God Himself taking all my sins — the black and terrible category — all my sins, as He knew and estimated them. I see Him laying them all upon the head of my blessed Substitute, and dealing with Him about them. I see all the billows and waves of God’s righteous wrath — His wrath against my sins — His wrath which should have consumed my soul and body in hell throughout a dreary eternity; I see them all rolling over the Man (Christ Jesus) who stood in my stead; who represented me before God; who bore all that was due to me: with whom a holy God dealt as He should have dealt with me. I see inflexible justice, holiness, truth, and righteousness dealing with

my sins, and making a clear and eternal riddance of them. Not one of them is suffered to pass! There is no con-vivance, no palliation, no slurring over, no indifference. This could not possibly be, once God Himself took the matter in hand. His glory was at stake; His unsullied holiness, His eternal majesty, the lofty claims of His government."

With the celebration of Thanksgiving in mind, in closing I would like to quote for you Andrew Murray on giving thanks. *"Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever." -Psalm 136:1*

"This psalm is wholly devoted to the praise of God's mercy. In each of the twenty-six verses we have the expression: 'His mercy endureth forever.' The psalmist was full of this glad thought. Our hearts too should be filled with the blessed assurance. The everlasting, unchangeable mercy of God is cause for unceasing praise and thanksgiving. Let us read what is said about God's mercy in the well-known Psalm 103. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies' (ver.4) Of all of God's other attributes, mercy is the crown. May it be a crown upon my head and in my life! 'The Lord is merciful and gracious, and plenteous in mercy' (ver.8). As wonderful as God's greatness is, so infinite is His mercy. 'As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him' (ver.11) What a thought! As high as the heaven is above the earth, so immeasurably and inconceivably great is the mercy of God waiting to bestow His richest blessing.

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him' (ver.17). Here again the psalmist speaks of God's boundless loving-kindness and mercy. How frequently we have read these familiar words without the least thought of their immeasurable greatness. Be still, and meditate until the heart responds in the word of Psalm 36: 'Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens' (ver.5) 'How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore, the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings' ver.7). 'Oh continue Thy loving-kindness unto those who know Thee' (ver.10). Take time to thank

God with great joy for the wonderful mercy with which He crowns thy life, and say: 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.'" (Murray, *The Secret of Adoration*)

Do you adore Him today? †

Betrayal: Why Barack Obama Uses the Term ISIL

by Jan Markell

www.olivetreeviews.org

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In my conference message at the Fall 2014 "Understanding the Times", I looked at many Presidents of the United States and their blessing or cursing of Israel. I am a strong believer in the Genesis 12:3 blessing and cursing. God *does* bless the nation, denomination, church, ministry, business, etc., that blesses Israel. He likewise curses those who hammer her or betray her.

The daily reports about the carnage of ISIS in the Middle East are disheartening. The terrorists actually call themselves the Islamic State or IS. The media calls them ISIS. *Barack Obama calls them ISIL.* What's behind this?

The "L" stands for The Levant. This is a geographic region that today includes Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, parts of Saudi Arabia, parts of Turkey, a part of Egypt and all of Israel. The Levant is a crossroads of Western Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean, and northeast Africa.

Understand that ISIL, ISIS, or IS, has made it clear that *Jerusalem is the final destination for the formation and declaration of global domination. The goal line is Israel; the goal posts are Jerusalem.*

The Islamic State wants much greater domination by 2020 but the heart of the Caliphate is to be Jerusalem...God's holy city. The city to which Jesus will return some day. The heart of the Caliphate is the entire Levant but *they are marching towards Israel.*

So why does Barack Obama insist on calling the Islamic State ISIL? Some suggest he is sending a signal to the terrorists that he is okay with this idea. We don't know that for sure but



when one looks at his overall policies against Israel, it makes sense.

We don't know if the Islamic State senses they have the U.S. President in their back pocket. It seems obvious. In his speech to the U.S. back on September 10, he said "ISIL is not Islamic." To defend blatant, ruthless terrorists indicates some sentiment for them and their cause. Of course they're Islamic. *They call themselves Islamic.*

Obama has come under fire for underestimating the threat of this "jayvee team" wreaking havoc across the Middle East and threatening the western way of life, and yet he continuously refers to them as ISIL. A "jayvee team" doesn't go after an entire region -- in fact, have ambitions of a global Caliphate. And he and his State Department know their ambitions are The Levant.

We have a weak, ineffective air campaign in that region. A lot of air strikes are at night which limit some terrorist casualties. Are some of our highest leaders on the wrong side of this battle? Or are some just forced into silence?

Israel knows what is going on and she is further reminded that her long-time ally has seemingly switched sides. She senses the betrayal. But this is playing into the predicted biblical scenario that must play out, since according to Zechariah 12, *all nations will turn on Israel.* If you look at things *through the lens of Bible prophecy*, you will lessen your despair as the world deteriorates. Admittedly, church pulpits won't help you do this.

Is it any wonder that America is more problem laden than at almost any other time in her short history? There are consequences for coming against God's covenant land which *He declares as His* in Leviticus 25.

"I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you, I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Take it seriously. Look at history. Have you ever seen a Hittite or a Jebusite? Civilizations who come against Israel are no more.

America is engaged in risky behavior. The behavior has consequences. *They are in our daily headlines.*



RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

MINISTRY THAT EDIFIES

Q: *I am confused about how I should feel about people who are going through tough times. I find myself feeling sorry for them, but am uncertain as to how to approach or minister to them. I was wondering if you could give me any insight about this matter.*

A: You are not the only one who is struggling with this issue. Many Christians walk around in a state of complexity when it comes to ministering to others. Their heart is to be a blessing to others, but most of the time they feel utterly incapable. They are not sure how they are supposed to feel about the person or situation, which causes them to have doubts about how to approach the individual, and if they can't approach the person in a proper way, they are inept in ministering to him or her.

The first thing you have to do before you can minister to others is to seek God's perspective in the right motive. Most ministry hinges on how it makes the individual feel about him or herself. As long as the person seeks to minister out of sentiment or noble feelings, it will fall flat.

The Lord knows where an individual is in his or her plight, the right approach that will best fit the circumstances, and the type of ministry that will ultimately edify. He knows how to reach past the excuses, defuse the walls of isolation, and address the real crux of the matter. Sadly, because of limitations, many times people approach others based on their own past experiences and ideas. This can prove to be ineffective.

This brings us to the second step, as already alluded to. One must make sure he or she is out of the way. Jesus gave up His sovereignty as deity to become man so He could properly identify with us, and we with Him. He met people where they were in their plight. He knew when to reprove and challenge the prideful, enter in with the broken hearted, and bring healing to the spiritually wounded. His way of ministry serves as an example to us, but we must first discern where people are spiritually. We must keep in mind that there is no real formula in ministry

because we must minister according to the person.

This brings us to another important issue. It is easy for those who are suffering, to evoke our sympathy. Sympathy is mainly feeling sorry for someone, but sympathy is often a fleshly reaction. It causes many to see themselves as caring, when in reality they often become complacent when it comes to following through with real ministry. On the other hand, those who allow their sympathy to take them on an emotional ride can prove to be impulsive in what they do, causing their sympathy to become subject to being manipulated by those who it is directed towards. My past dealings with my own sympathy was that it often fell short of producing any real action or fruit, and if it did have momentum behind it, it was often misappropriated. Usually, if a person does react because of sympathy, the momentum will only last as long as the sympathy is present. In other words, such sympathy is fickle and can tire a person quickly because it is self-serving and sentimental.

On the other hand there is empathy. Empathy is the capacity to enter in with another person's feelings and challenges. Another way of putting it is empathy is a well-rounded sympathy that becomes identified with a person's plight. Sentimental sympathy usually leaves the one who has it feeling good about him or herself, while empathy is active and will express itself in compassion in order to minister to a person.

Jesus never felt sorry for people but He did feel compassion towards them. His heart was to see them healed, saved, and completely restored. But, He also knew when to enter in with them and how, which brings us to the final aspect of ministry—that of burden.

Jesus died for the whole world, but taught the crowds, and ministered to individuals. He understood what His real burden (responsibility) was in regard to His part in securing salvation. As individuals, we cannot save the whole world, nor can we carry the enormous burden of it. We need to discern when a person's plight is our burden, knowing that God will give us the necessary love, wisdom, and grace to see it through. †

QUOTABLES

"He blesses God for all things, looks on them as coming from Him, and receives them only for His sake; not choosing nor refusing, liking nor disliking anything, but only as it is agreeable to His perfect will." - John Wesley on *1 Thess. 5:16-18*

"Be assured, if you walk with Him and look to Him, and expect help from Him, He will never fail you." - George Mueller

"If fellowship with God is our first concern, then we can have fellowship with Him in the kitchen, in sickness, in any kind of trying and difficult situation. Whatever lies across our path to be done, even the most irksome chore, is there to be done for God and for His glory. Gone will be the former striving, bondage, and frustration. We shall be at peace with our God and ourselves." - Roy and Revel Hession, *We would See Jesus*

"If we do not give full faith and credit to the Written Word which we have seen, experience proves that we are in great danger sooner or later of diminishing the love and honor we give the Living Word [Christ] whom we have not seen, for our conviction that . . . God became flesh and dwelt among us . . . is based upon the facts on which such conclusion rests; and if the record of the facts be impugned, who can retain the conclusion based upon them?" - Dave Hunt, *In Defense of the Faith*

"We can stand affliction better than we can prosperity, for in prosperity we forget God." - Dwight L. Moody

George Washington, in his farewell address, warned, "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion... Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

"Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it." - William Penn

"The greatest miracle that God does today, is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world, and make that unholy man holy, and put him back into that unholy world, and keep him holy in it!" - Leonard Ravenhill

Is Your Church Worship More Pagan than Christian? By Todd Pruitt

There is a great misunderstanding in churches of the purpose of music in Christian worship. Churches routinely advertise their "life-changing" or "dynamic" worship that will "bring you closer to God" or "change your life." Certain worship CD's promise that the music will "enable you to enter the presence of God." Even a flyer for a recent conference for worship leaders boasted:

"Join us for dynamic teaching to set you on the right path, and inspiring worship where you can meet God and receive the energy and love you need to be a mover and shaker in today's world...Alongside our teaching program are worship events which put you in touch with the power and love of God."

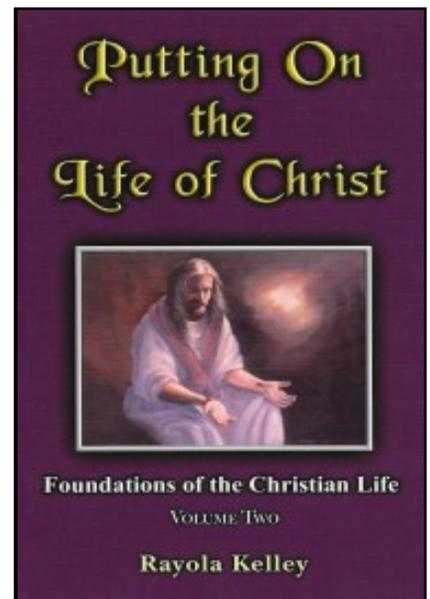
The problem with the flyer and with many church ads is that these kinds of promises reveal a significant theological error. Music is viewed as a means to facilitate an encounter with God; it will move us closer to God. In this schema, music becomes a means of mediation between God and man. But this idea is closer to ecstatic pagan practices than to Christian worship.

Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. He alone is the One who brings us to God. The popular but mistaken notions regarding worship music undermine this foundational truth of the Christian faith. It is also ironic that while many Christians deny the sacramental role of those ordinances which the Lord Himself has given to the church (baptism and the Lord's Supper) they are eager to grant music sacramental powers. Music and "the worship experience" are viewed as means by which we enter the presence of God and receive his saving benefits. There is simply no evidence whatsoever in Scripture that music mediates direct encounters or experiences with God. This is a common pagan notion. It is far from Christian.

In his helpful book True Worship Vaughan Roberts offers four consequences of viewing music as an encounter with God. I will summarize them. **1. God's Word is marginal-**

ized. In many Churches and Christian gatherings it is not unusual for God's Word to be shortchanged. Music gives people the elusive "liver quiver" while the Bible is more mundane. Pulpits have shrunk and even disappeared while bands and lighting have grown. But faith does not come from music, dynamic experiences, or supposed encounters with God. Faith is birthed through the proclamation of God's Word (Rom 10:17). **2. Our assurance is threatened.** If we associate God's presence with a particular experience or emotion, what happens when we no longer feel it? We search for churches whose praise band, orchestra, or pipe organ produce in us the feelings we are chasing. But the reality of God in our lives depends on the mediation of Christ not on subjective experiences. **3. Musicians are given priestly status.** When music is seen as a means to encounter God, worship leaders and musicians are vested with a priestly role. They become the ones who bring us into the presence of God rather than Jesus Christ who alone has already fulfilled that role. Understandably, when a worship leader or band doesn't help me experience God they have failed and must be replaced. On the other hand, when we believe that they have successfully moved us into God's presence they will attain in our minds a status that is far too high for their own good. **4. Division is increased.** If we identify a feeling as an encounter with God, and only a particular kind of music produces that feeling, then we will insist that same music be played regularly in our church or gatherings. As long as everyone else shares our taste then there is no problem. But if others depend upon a different kind of music to produce the feeling that is important to them then division is cultivated. And because we routinely classify particular feelings as encounters with God our demands for what produce those feelings become very rigid. This is why so many churches succumb to offering multiple styles of worship services. By doing so, they unwittingly sanction division and self-centeredness among the people of God.

<http://www.christianity.com/church/worship-and-hymns>



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