

# GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

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## Choices Part 6

### SETTLING FOR LESS?

By Rayola Kelley



We are constantly making decisions throughout the day. Decisions are to bring clarity, but to have clarity you have to know where you are and where you are going. Today there are many wandering in confusion and fear, aimlessly trying to find their way through what appears to be a maze that has only one way in and no way out. Nothing seems real as everything becomes surreal, unrecognizable, and for the most part senseless.

As a nation we are facing tyranny at every level, lawlessness at its height, violence in its most brutish forms, and insanity taking hold of people in the form of fear, hatred, and greed. We are watching kingdom rise against kingdom within our own nation as the tares are clearly being defined for future separation from the wheat. We observe as the so-called "heroes" and "examples" of our day take a knee to Baal to maintain some flimsy status while selling their soul and dignity for a temporary bowl of gruel that in the end is going to become bitter to their souls.

And, what about our "so-called" leaders? Many are taking refuge behind titles, false promises, vain rhetoric and/or hollow silence in the hope of crossing some winning line without running the race to keep their image untarnished, while their hands are muddied by their utter corruption and wicked compromises. We are being

divided by cheap masks that will cause some people to become lost in the masses of the unseen, all of it to dehumanize by robbing many of any real individuality, while those who dare to maintain their individuality and rights are unmercifully judged, incessantly mocked, put down for not complying, and persecuted for not letting the insane, senseless propaganda and agendas behind it remain unchallenged.

We see the memorials of our great struggles and victories of the past as a nation being ignorantly pulled down in complete disregard for our humble beginnings, the intense birth pangs that occurred for a Republic, based on an incredible Constitution, to emerge as a nation forged in fire. As a nation we do not hide our failures; rather, we show how exceptionalism rose out of the lessons of our failures because exceptionalism never wants to settle for less than that which is excellent.

In spite of what has caused some to begin to faint in their minds, others to grow cold out of fear and indifference, and a few to hide in an insipid corner, the Lord is exposing the present character of this nation. We are being weighed in the balance, and guess what? We are found to be wanting.

The problem with greatness in humanity is that it becomes arrogant and begins to digress into utter decadence. If you add abundance to it, it clearly sees itself as being self-sufficient, where like the Laodicean Church in *Revelation 3:14-22*, it does not see itself as lacking. However, such blindness reveals its foolish judgment for it will inevitably become wanting in the scales of God. He will see it as poor, wretched, and miserable.

Self-sufficiency is a snobbish, indifferent attitude. It perceives that it is in control, on top of it, and holding the reins of life, but it is also the great board in the spiritual eye. It swings so high in its haughtiness that it is incapable of seeing or hearing the warning signs. It sits back on the laurels of

past fading glory, while ignoring its spiritual bankruptcy, and if not humbled and repented of, it becomes deluded about the future judgment that awaits it (*Matthew 7:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 6:3*).

As a nation we are living in perilous times, and it is not necessarily because man has suddenly become lawless, but because some of God's people have become indifferent towards their spiritual legacy, complacent towards their service towards God, and are compromising with a doomed world, which creates a spiritual vacuum that is being filled with every foul and wicked thing imaginable.

Some of you are probably ready to throw up your hands because of the realities of today, but I want to encourage you to realize the days we are living in have been prophesied and are pointing to the blessed hope of Jesus' coming. The truth is the days we live in are not calling for us to throw our hands up in the air; rather, it calls for us to soberly consider the times we are living in while vigilantly preparing ourselves to occupy until He comes. We need to make sure our lamps are full of the oil of the Holy Spirit to walk through the darkness of this dangerous season that is now upon us.

It has taken me a few years to understand how desperate we must become in this world to properly prepare for the next. The more man recognizes his vulnerability and need for God, the more desperate he becomes to see the Lord. This desperation only comes when our love for Him grows. The Apostle Paul put it this way in *2 Timothy 4:8*, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." We need to long for Jesus' appearance, not to escape our present trials, but to see the One our heart so loves, our inner being desires, and who we are just plain "homesick" for.

When man is comfortable in what

is considered normalcy, indifferent in self-sufficiency, and living the high life of decadence in abundance, he is not desperate. He may be lean in his spirit, dissatisfied in his soul, and display fickle, unbearable moods, but he is not desperate for the Lord. He still perceives he has some life to live here on earth and he does not want to be cut short in it.

In order to prepare and occupy, we as believers must learn the lessons of our times. The question is how can a society such as ours, fall into great disarray? The answer is that we as a people and a nation have been relying on the honor of our past glory to stand, while letting the promise of future glory slip through our hands as we squander what remaining glory we have on false promises and vanity. We want to hear the lies instead of the truth of what is. We want to be comfortable and not inconvenienced in any way. We want to be happy living our life and not have it disrupted by the reality of the miserable state of affairs of our country, society, and homes.

However, much of the miserable condition of this nation will ultimately be flung at the feet of the visible church in America, just as the coats of those who rushed to stone the first martyr, Steven, were flung at the feet of Saul (Paul) who was present. (*Acts 8:58*.) I want to make a distinction. God has called a people, but in many cases, He ends up with a remnant who remains true to Him. Like Israel, there were, and are, many people who made up the nation and likewise there are many who make up the church in America, but the real church will probably prove to be a remnant. Remember, many are called, but few are chosen (*Matthew 20:16*). The chosen few are those who will ultimately stand on, for, and with truth regardless of what is going on.

This is not something we like to hear or read, but as we watch the great separation taking place in our world, we must note it will happen in the visible church as well. Sadly, much of the visible church is now a system that plays to the tunes of this world and government to maintain worldly kingdoms that simply have tacked Christ onto their activities to legitimize them. The real church will eventually be forced to come out of the system and be separate in order to keep the light of its testimony go-

ing. Again, this is something we may not want to hear or read, but the Apostle Peter made it clear that judgment begins in the house of God (*1 Peter 4:17*).

Let us face it, as humans we want to be made comfortable in our present vanity so we do not have to face how hollow our lives have become. We want to get along to avoid conflict, but we are now being embroiled in it in every arena of the world. We just want to be left alone to live our lives, but the tyrants and the despots know nothing of peace and will not be content until they have made the comfortable miserable, the peaceful afflicted in soul, the casual stirred up, and the non-committed cowering in some corner, while the fickle, ignorant activists march in the streets for their wicked cause, only to be offered up on an unholy altar marked by foul graffiti. The reason for this conflict is so they can swoop in with their wicked communistic agendas and be the "saviors" of the disruption they created, with the intent of making us utter slaves to their whims.

The question is how did the real church allow Satan to take control of the visible church? All you have to do is read books on Nazi Germany before and up to and during WWII. The church in Germany wanted to continue to play church regardless of the times it lived in, and as a result the leaders committed spiritual whoredom with Hitler to keep the doors open. No doubt they convinced themselves that having some semblance of religion was better than having none at all. However, if they understood the character of God, they would have recognized that God will never accept, condone, or approve of such unholy agreements. God's main concern has never been to keep some type of spiritual semblance going in the name of religion; rather, His heart has always been to see a people remain true to their true calling of holiness.

We are called to be a holy and separate people. We are priests of the most high God, saints with a clear calling, soldiers of the cross, believers of that which is marked for eternity, and as His people we must not allow our garments to be muddied by compromising with the corruption of the world.

We come back to the question of how did we digress into such a state? In many cases it is one decision at a

time and one step at a time. Each step is walking on a path that subtly descends into that which makes sense to the carnal mind, seems normal to the flesh, and will justify self-serving whims and emotions, but will be rejected by the Lord. This spiritual slide away from the center of what is true causes a person to lose all sense of direction. It is important to point out that each little deviance in decision dulls the person down, robbing him or her of discernment.

Although such a spiritual detour is nothing more than a slight turn from what is right, it puts one on the broad way (*Matthew 7:13-14*). And, what is the decision that will cause one to take what seems like an insignificant detour? It is to settle for less.

As Christians, there is only one right choice and that is the excellent ways of God, and the ways of righteousness. To choose the ways of righteousness is not an easy choice to make because a person will have to deny the world of its demands on him or her in order to press forward toward the high calling he or she has in Christ. The believer will have to avoid giving the pride of the self-life any platform by denying it any audience, and it will have to apply the cross to the lusts of the flesh in order to stay the narrow course of excellence (*Matthew 16:24-26*).

It is easy to see the people in the Bible who settled for less. We have Abraham and Sarah settling for less when Sarah gave her handmaiden, Hagar, to Abraham in order to raise up his seed. The result was the son of a bondwoman mocking the promised son. Ishmael represented the flesh and could not share in the inheritance with the promised son, Isaac, and the result was conflict, separation, and sorrow (*Genesis 16:1-12; 21:5-13; Galatians 4:28-31*).

This example of Abraham and Sarah teaches us that when we take matters into our own hands, we end up with less, and at times miss the real blessings of God. The reason we end up with less is because we do not trust God's timing in a matter. Granted, we might believe His promises but when we try to bring those promises forth in our own power, in our own way it turns out to be what it is; fleshly and a disaster because we fail to trust that His time and ways are perfect.

We have an Esau, who settled for the world by selling his spiritual

legacy for a bowl of lentils (*Genesis 25:29-34*). It was clear he was hungrier for the world than for the reality of God. He was a man of the earth, lived off of it, and was content with it and saw no need for that which was eternal. At the prospect of suffering a bit of discomfort due to physical hunger, he was quick to cast aside the burden of the high calling and inheritance attached to it.

In the case of Esau, he settled for less because he did not value what was unseen, eternal, and of God. He trusted what he physically saw, relied on what he knew, and was self-sufficient in what he could do and was content with this present world and had no need to prepare for the next.

Sadly, some Christians are quick to cast aside their spiritual legacy to maintain aspects of their lifestyle on earth. They may console themselves that such an action is not all that important and that in the end it will all work out. However, the blessings and inheritance are attached to our spiritual legacy and if we do not value it enough to pursue it, we will end up losing the blessings attached to it and fail to see that which is associated with our inheritance.

We have Isaac who was willing to accept less by blessing his oldest son, Esau, because of a worldly tradition and the fact his son knew how to satisfy his taste buds, while ignoring that the spiritual legacy belonged to Jacob. We see questionable intervention taking place to bring forth the promise, ensuring that Jacob, who valued the spiritual legacy, received the earthy blessing that rightfully belonged to him (*Genesis 25:21-26; 26:34-35; 27:30*).

As believers, we settle for less because we ignore the heavenly promises concerning the glory to come. We can become shortsighted by the world as we bow before our own personal fleshly preferences. It was clear that Esau was Isaac's preference, but Esau was not the one who would carry on the spiritual legacy. It is also clear that there are those who prefer seeking the riches of the world over gaining the riches of heaven. The flesh wants to taste the things of the world, but the spirit wants to become rich as it grows in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (*Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 3:7-8; James 2:5*).

We see Jacob's son, Reuben, gambling away his standing as the

oldest son, heir to the blessing that was to automatically come down to him, when he fornicated with one of his father's concubines. He lusted after the temporary, while risking the place of honor to taste of forbidden fruit. Even though he might have perceived his action was hidden and would remain so, in the end he discovered it was not so and that he had to settle for the consequences that came with it. His father was aware of his son's sin and passed the blessing on to the oldest son, Joseph, who was of his union with Rachel (*Genesis 49:3-4, 24:22-26*).

There are religious people who believe God will not see questionable actions or that it will be worth tasting of the deadly fruit of sin regardless of the consequences. However, we know God sees all matters, whether it is in light of physical darkness or not. The reason God sees all things is because He is the light. Nothing can be hidden from Him, and as believers we need to remember that whatever we compromise in darkness will be exposed and declared from the roof tops (*Luke 12:3*). It matters little what excuses you try to justify wrong actions with, they will be exposed for what they are in the light and in the end the reproach it brings will prove it was never worth it.

We see Moses initially settling for less when he contended with God about his calling. He was to go to the court of Pharaoh and declare it in his courts, "Let my people go so they may worship their Lord." However, Moses saw himself inept to be such a voice and the result was God unhappily sent Aaron. Aaron may have had a good voice, but he did not have the conviction and calling. As a result, he led Israel into idolatry by forming a golden calf and then told a "little white lie" to throw any consequences away from himself. He sided with Miriam in a revolt to overthrow Moses. Since he was a High Priest, he was spared from paying consequences, but Miriam became leprous and had to spend seven days outside of the camp as an example (*Exodus 4:10-16; 32:1-7, 20-25; Numbers 12*).

Christians have been entrusted with a high calling and all the tools they need to carry out their calling have been made available to them, but they look at self and see their ineptness and settle for the arm of the flesh instead of the arm of God. Every

place the arm of the flesh is behind something, it will prove vain, inept, or cursed (*Jeremiah 17:5-8*).

The ails of the church in America come down to Christians settling for the base ways of the world instead of pressing forward to obtain the excellent ways of God. The problems plaguing this nation are due to the people settling for man's best and not demanding the standard of God's righteousness be upheld in every arena. The chaos of our society is that man settled for a liberal, convenient idea of morality instead of insisting on maintaining what is moral. And, when it comes to our homes, parents settled for trinkets of the world to gauge success and happiness instead of healthy relationships in families, while often allowing others to nurture and form the character of their children.

It is obvious we as a society have dropped the ball and now the consequences are not only angrily pounding on the doors of our institutions, they are knocking them down while ushering in destruction and hopelessness.

Next month I will be dealing with more examples of settling for less, but right now I want to challenge the reader to consider if you have settled for less, and if so, in what way? It is never too late to turn and face God, to find the courage to pick up the ball and trust Him to put you back on course, proving that the latter can indeed prove to be greater than the former. †

## OSWALD CHAMBERS QUOTES

If ever we are going to be made into wine, we will have to be crushed; you cannot drink grapes. Grapes become wine only when they have been squeezed. I wonder what kind of finger and thumb God has been using to squeeze you, and you have been like a marble and escaped?

Solitude with God repairs the damage done by the fret and noise and clamour of the world.

All heaven is interested in the cross of Christ, all hell terribly afraid of it, while men are the only beings who more or less ignore its meaning.

We pray when there's nothing else we can do; Jesus wants us to pray before we do anything at all.

# PROPHECY

## Part 2

By Jeannette Haley

Biblical prophecy tells us all we need to know, but man's imagination, which is often fueled by fear and personal agendas, tends to either exaggerate, embellish or ignore different aspects of it. Therefore, let us become as little children, keep it simple, and believe what the Bible says. Jesus' disciples were just as human as you and me, and they asked Him when certain things would happen, what would be the sign of His coming, and what signs would signal the end of the world. (See *Matthew 24:3*.) Jesus gave a direct, simple, understandable, chronological "list" that can serve as a pattern, or outline, into which other biblical prophecies can be easily identified as applicable, or compatible, with the pattern, thus filling it in by contributing additional details. So, let's look at some of what He said, verse by verse in order and check off what has, is and will come to pass, keeping in mind that many prophecies throughout Scripture have a double or triple fulfillment.

When reading through *Matthew 24*, be sure to note, circle or underline the word "Then." The first thing He said was, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" verses 4, 5. You may ask, who claims to be "Christ"? The answer is anyone who claims to be "The anointed one of God" because that is what "Christ" means. In reality, there are so many false prophets, false Christs, and false "Christian" leaders that even a modest world count is over 3,300. Such people are more than deluded—they are demonized. Demons want attention and desire to be worshipped. I knew a man years ago who was not only into drugs (which is an open door for demons) but he believed he was literally Jesus Christ and even flew to Israel to tell them he was! Consider the popes. "The term "vicar" comes from the Latin word *vicarius*, which means "instead of." In the Catholic Church, the vicar is the representative of a higher-ranking official, with all of the same authority and power that that official has. Calling the pope the "Vicar of Christ" implies that he has the same power and authority that Christ had over the church." (From [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org).)

Jesus' prophetic warnings have

been in the process of being fulfilled since Jesus ascended to heaven and they will continue to be fulfilled until His return, and beyond. Concerning deceivers and wolves in sheep's clothing, however, we know there is a marked increase in their numbers, all proclaiming to have special insights and answers to "hidden knowledge" or "mysteries" that the church doesn't have, never did have, but "needs to know" for these end times. *2 Timothy 3:13* foretells of such, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." We know from *2 Thessalonians 2* that there will be such a great falling away from the truth, and refusal to receive "the love of the truth, that they might be saved" that God Himself will send a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." *1 Timothy 4:1* warns, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."

*Matthew 24:6*: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." It's no secret that this world has been filled with war and bloodshed since Cain killed Abel. The difference for our time is the fact that "hearing" of wars and rumors of wars is universal thanks to technology. And, for Israel in particular there is the non-stop, continual threat of attack. On a worldwide scale according to [reference.com](http://reference.com) there are currently "10 official wars and 8 active military conflicts recognized by the United States. There are also other violent conflicts involving 64 countries and 576 militias and separatist groups." In another place they report, "Twenty-eight countries are either involved in war or are experiencing armed conflicts within their borders." Currently there is a growing threat of conflict with China in the China Sea. On the home front, in Democratic controlled cities from coast to coast, we are now under the continual threat of violence from well-funded, and well-organized Marxist and terrorist mobs committed to the total overthrow of the United States of America.

Moving on to verse 7 Jesus adds some weighty details concerning this particular time of wars and rumors of

war which we need to take time to focus on. He said, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." Again, this entails the entire world, and oh! How fitting it is for our time. We all can see how nation is rising against nation, and especially against Israel. As for kingdoms, think about the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. (See *Colossians 1:13*.) We can see a great divide occurring the world over between these two kingdoms.

Concerning famines, roughly 9.1 million people starve to death each year. One recent headline read, "Locust swarm: UN warns of food crisis in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Somalia." Another reads, "Locust swarm reaches Nepal: East African swarms charging West: Swarms from Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia are expected to migrate westwards through Sudan, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Mauritania." Another reads, "A posh financial and technology hub Gurugram is the latest victim of a massive locust invasion: The city is close to the Indian capital New Delhi with a population of 26 million: Swarms growing around the world" and yet another update reads, "South America becomes the third continent after Africa and Asia to succumb to locust plagues." There has been much said recently about possible food shortages in the United States as well, causing people everywhere to hoard food and plant gardens.

Next in line are pestilences. According to *Bible Study Tools Dictionary* the meaning of this word is, "Any sudden fatal epidemic is designated by this word, and in its Biblical use it generally indicates that these are divine visitations. The word is most frequently used in the prophetic books, and it occurs 25 times in *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel*, always associated with the sword and famine." Another definition which I find interesting is, "Pestilence – Or PLAGUE, in the Hebrew tongue, as in most others, expresses all sorts of distempers and calamities. The Hebrew word which properly signifies 'the plague' is extended to all epidemical and contagious diseases. The prophets generally connect together the sword, the pestilence, and the famine, as three evils, which usually accompany each

other. The glandular plague, which in modern times has proved so fatal in the East, is the most virulent and contagious of diseases. In the fourteenth century it overran Europe, Asia, and Africa, and 25,000,000 are estimated to have died of it within three years. Like the Asiatic cholera, it is one of the most appalling scourges sin has brought on this world; and may in this point of view correspond with the "plagues" referred to in the Bible, Exodus 9:14 11:1 1Ki 8:37." (From *ATS Bible Dictionary*.) One report said the Spanish flu killed 17-100 million people. HIV/AIDS pandemic killed 32 million +, and Corona is around 533,000 and counting as of this date. Of course, death from pestilence has been on earth almost as long as mankind, but as time winds down, these things are occurring in more rapid succession and with greater intensity.

Jesus' warnings of earthquakes occurring in different places is interesting because of the dramatic increase in earthquakes. In 2014 NBC news reported that "Between 2004 and 2014, 18 earthquakes with magnitudes of 8.0 or more rattled subduction zones around the globe. That's an increase of 265 percent over the average rate of the previous century, which saw 71 great quakes, according to a report to the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America. For those of you who like to keep track of earthquakes as well as all the other global happenings, check out [www.thebigwobble.org](http://www.thebigwobble.org). There you can find information on all the active volcanoes, as prophesied in *Joel 2:30*, "And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke."

At this point Jesus interjected a statement that helps us get our bearings. He said, "All these are the beginning of sorrows" *Matthew 24:8*. Again, all of these things have been occurring all over this world in increasing numbers since our Lord ascended to heaven, including two world wars, the holocaust, the Korean and Viet Nam wars, and other numerous wars resulting in mounting sorrow. In our time we have experienced an increase and intensity of such events, and in 2020 alone the world has suffered through a "planned" pandemic, along with organized chaos and extreme lawlessness and injustice, all culminating in great sorrow. One can only imagine how much sorrow is mounting up to heav-

en from broken hearts and broken lives as we look around us and realize that what Paul prophesied in such scriptures as *2 Thessalonians 2*, *1 Timothy 4*, *2 Timothy 3*, and *Acts 20:29-31* have been, and are now being fulfilled.

Because of our mind-blowing technology, which is in the hands of powerful globalists who view Judaism and Christianity as "non-essential," Jesus' statement in *Matthew 24:9* concerning persecution for the faithful is stunning. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." Concerning Christian martyrs since the time of Christ one report estimates at least 70 million, and another states that the year 2019 was the year of Christian martyrs. In the top 50 World Watch List countries alone, 245 million Christians in the world experience high levels of persecution for their choice to follow Christ. As for persecution of Christians in America, *The Washington Examiner* reported that Pastor Andrew Brunson (who was falsely accused and spent two years in a Turkish prison) said he was "astounded at the speed with which the U.S. is imploding" and predicts persecution of Christians will follow. "Persecution is nothing new....The thing is, that we in the West have not experienced [persecution] very much. It's very unusual for a Westerner to be arrested for his faith. So we haven't experienced it, but I think we are going to. I think it's coming to this country." Rev. Mark H. Creech Christian Post Columnist added, "One might argue that persecution is now alive and well in America with the purging of Christianity from the government, the muzzling of state officials, employees, and appointees who are Christian, the public attacks on churches and Christian businesses, the media and Hollywood's disparaging of anything Christian in almost every film they make." I might add that nowhere in academia is Christianity warmly embraced: both God and George Washington, along with history, have been kicked out with the Holy Bible, creationism, Christian holidays, morals, and common sense!

As I write this, the whole world is reeling from the rise of hateful, touchy, militant revolutionaries whose flimsy excuse for murdering, plundering and destroying is "offense." In *Matthew 24:10* Jesus warned us, "And then

shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." Christians know that the wicked weeds of offense, betrayal and hate all originate in the putrid soil of pride, and we also know that pride is Satanic through and through. *Proverbs 16:5* says, "Every one [that is] proud in heart [is] an abomination to the LORD: [though] hand [join] in hand, he shall not be unpunished." We know that on Judgment Day the proud in heart, and all evildoers will be punished by God. The reason I'm focusing on this right now is because of all the sudden losses, heartbreaks, great sorrows, and unfathomable sufferings people everywhere are experiencing because of the death, devastation and loss of freedom due to the planned pandemic, totalitarian unconstitutional edicts and abusive punishments of many of our own despotic political leaders, and the shocking rise of an invasion of militant America-hating rioters. Such people are seething with hatred for God and anything that is Christian, Jewish, American or righteous.

Here are some additional Scriptural reminders of what God thinks of pride: *Proverbs 8:13* – "The fear of the LORD [is] to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." *1 John 2:16* – "For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." *Philippians 2:3* – "[Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." *Proverbs 16:18* – "Pride [goeth] before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." *Galatians 6:3* – "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Pride is delusional, which makes it very unpredictable and dangerous. That is why Christians who are eager to "save" brainwashed Marxist and Communist members of Antifa need to be very wise and seek God's will and leading in the matter.

At this point, Jesus issued another warning about being deceived. He said, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" *Matthew 24:11*. Who are these false prophets, and why are they able to deceive many? It would appear, given the order in which Jesus gave this warning, that these false prophets,

like wolves, are opportunists who prey on weak, fearful, confused, ignorant and immature (undisciplined) sheep with itching ears. Quoting from Elicott's Commentary: "In Josephus (Wars, vi. 5, § 2) we have the record of this working of false prophecy in more immediate connection with Judæa and Jerusalem. Up to the last moment of the capture of the city by Titus, men were buoyed up with false hopes of deliverance, based on the predictions of fanatics and impostors." This struck a chord with me because in these times of uncertainty, danger and distress upon, not only our nation, but upon the organized churches in particular, Christians are looking for prophecies and promises that will "buoy up" their hopes of deliverance, and a return to the "old normal" way of "doing church." This intense desire for peace and prosperity, hope and happiness, solutions and safety provide a wide-open door for ever-so-charming false prophets, deceivers and imposters.

In the next verse, *Matthew 24:12* Jesus said, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Iniquity is moral deviation, and who can say that there is a limit to the moral deviation taking place in this evil hour in which we live? Iniquity is selfishness and perversion that manifests itself in the extremes prophesied for the perilous times in which we live in *2 Timothy 3:1-7*. Some "in high places" even appear to have a "form of godliness," but they "deny the power thereof." As you study these verses, you will easily identify them as not only having been fulfilled throughout history, but are specifically being fulfilled now. Please notice that God does not tell us to "Go preach the Gospel to them," but instead warns us to "turn away." Jesus likewise warned, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" *Matthew 7:6*.

Now we come to this promise: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" *Matthew 24:13*. In the Greek, "endure" means "to stay under, remain, to undergo, have fortitude, persevere, abide, (take) patiently, suffer, tarry behind." Virtuous is a word came to mind that describes such a person. The question is, where does virtue come from? The answer can be found in *2 Peter*

*1:3-8*. It is clear from these verses that if we are to "endure to the end" we must not only possess such virtues, but be fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, have intimacy with Him.

W.H. of Gospel Hall wrote, "Before that 'end' there must intervene terrible persecutions against the disciples of the Lord (of whom those addressed were the living representatives), and all will not pass through these unscathed: 'many shall be offended,' and shall even apostatize from the faith. 'And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end' (i.e. of this great tribulation)—that is, shall not apostatize—'shall be saved,' in the sense, I believe, of being preserved alive." With that in mind, consider *1 Thessalonians 4:17* says, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." In the Greek, the word "remain" means survive, so no wonder our LORD said in *verse 22* "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Jesus said in *verse 14* "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." But, He did not stop at this point because He has much more to say about the events that take place in Israel concerning "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet," and to give further instructions concerning false Christs, and false prophets which shall show great signs and wonders prior to His coming. He tells us exactly what to expect concerning tribulation, and then what will take place immediately after the tribulation of those days, and finally in *verses 30 and 31* we read, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

A wonderful, easy to understand,

yet very informative teaching on the comparison between *Matthew 24* and *Revelation 6-8* can be found at: <https://www.prophecytoday.uk/study/teaching-articles/item/479-end-times-v-comparing-the-book-of-revelation-with-matthew-24.html>.

The following comparison is from a chart on that Web Site:

*Revelation 6:1-2* is a time of conflict and deception, and is compatible with times of deception (*Matt 24:4*); False Messiahs (*Matt 24:5*), wars and rumours of wars (*Matt 24:6*), false prophets (*Matt 24:11*).

Warfare on the earth, removing peace among people (*Rev 6:3-4*); Division, hate and betrayal (*Matt 24:10*), lawlessness and lack of love among people (*Matt 24:12*).

Famine and death by the sword and wild beasts (*Rev 6:9-11*); Famines, plagues, earthquakes (*Matt 24:7*).

Endurance of believers with much martyrdom (*Rev 6:9-11*); Great tribulation signs in the universe (*Matt 24:29-30*).

Great signs in the heavens and fear across the nations (*Rev 6:12-17*); Post-tribulation signs in the universe (*Matt 24:29-30*).

The preservation of the Tribes of Israel and fulfilment of the long-promised salvation (*Rev 7:1-8*); Parable of the fig tree, symbolizing the restoration of Israel (*Matt 24:32*).

The Gospel going to the entire world and multitudes being saved (*Rev 6:9-17*); The Gospel being preached to all nations prior to the end and prior to Jesus' return (*Matt 24:14*).

A time of intercessory prayer (*Rev 8:4*); The importance of watching (*Matt 24:42*), the importance of maintaining faith and persevering through trials (*Matt 24:42-49*).

The final woes (*Rev. 8:7-9:21*); A warning sign of the abomination of desolation (*Matt 24:35*), continued warnings of troubled times and how to respond to them (*Matt 24:15-28*), the sign of the Son of Man (*Matt 24:30*), Some taken and some left (*Matt 24:36-42*), Post-tribulation gathering of the elect (*Matt 24:31*), the admonition to watch for Jesus' return (*Matt 24:42:44*).

Dr. Clifford Denton explains, "In the end there will be the dramatic return of Jesus with authority to judge all people, when his victory over death will be made real to all that

have faith in him and when his Lordship will be revealed to all (Rom 14:11; Isa 45:23).

“Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 are clear down-to-earth descriptions of those times. The Book of Revelation introduces us to the fact that there is an awesome heavenly perspective behind the scenes of what will be experienced on this earth. Our response to this awesome picture is to hold in faith for the final outcome, rather than to work out a detailed formula ahead of time predicting all that will take place.

“Jesus, in Matthew 24 (and parallel passages in Mark and Luke), described the way we would experience this *on earth*. Now, through Revelation, we see it from the heavenly perspective. That is what the Book of Revelation adds to what we already learn from the rest of the Bible.”

Why study prophecy? Because God revealed it to us so that we would 1) not remain ignorant, but understand His plan for His people, Israel, the Church, the nations of the world, and all creation, and 2) prophecy shows us where we are in God’s timeline, enlarging us through God’s perspective giving us purpose and expectancy, and 3) prophecy brings sobriety to our lives and causes us to seek to be prepared to stand in tribulation, and be prepared for His coming, and 4) prophecy ultimately reveals the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not want His people to remain ignorant of Him, His Word and His will for all people. He even promised a blessing for those who read the Book of *Revelation* because it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. *Revelation 1:3* says, “*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*”

Indeed, it is! †

## QUOTES

A person repents when he comes to the place where he discovers that the will of God is the government of his life and the glory of God is the reason for his life. He only has repented who has changed his mind about his reason for being.—Paris Reidhead

The liberal says the end of religion is to make man happy while he's alive. And the fundamentalist says the end of religion is to make man happy when he dies.—Paris Reidhead

## CHRISTIAN SCAPEGOATS

By Lynette Hughes

John 15: 18-19 tells us, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

Writing in about A.D. 196, Tertullian said, “The Christians are to blame for every public disaster and every misfortune that befalls the people. If the Tiber rises to the walls, if the Nile fails to rise and flood the fields, if the sky withholds its rain, if there is earthquake or famine or plague, straightway the cry arises: ‘The Christians to the lions!’”

Not much has changed for believers; anti-Christian bias continues to scapegoat Christians. Attempts at saving the lives of innocent unborn children are portrayed as attempts to make life difficult for women in crisis. We are vilified and branded Islamophobic for saying Christians and Muslim do not worship the same God and that eternal life comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. When we express our biblical beliefs on marriage and homosexuality, the LGBT rush to blame us for instigating a “climate of hate.”

Barak Obama angered small-town America with his ‘they cling to guns and religion’ remark, and we continue to be bombarded with absurd accusations of being ‘deplorable,’ ‘racists,’ and ‘extremists’ by the angry, vocal elites of the Democratic party and intellectually dishonest MSM. They don’t just disagree with us, they hate us with a seething rage because we refuse to bow to their idols, praise their false gods, and subscribe to their conscienceless rejection of sound moral absolutes.

Rather than acknowledge Islamic radical ideology, in the aftermath of the 2016 Orlando shootings, if you had watched the network news and listened to the mainstream media you would have come away with the impression that a Conservative Christian man, militantly waving a Christian flag and screaming “Make America Great Again” walked into a gay nightclub and murdered 49 people on direct orders from the Republican National Committee headquarters located in the basement of the Trump Tower in a space rented from the National Rifle Associa-

tion, rather than an Islamist terrorist.

The anti-Christian hostility and scapegoating in this nation is escalating. We must not deceive ourselves about the cultural climate in our country with its rising extremist left wing organizations that seek the destruction of Christianity. With the growing hatred of all things Christian, we are being set up to be persecuted as the Jews were during the reign of Hitler. Where we have previously been met with indifference, we are now facing unprecedented levels of persecution as anti-Christian sentiments intensify.

The day is fast approaching where even the most half-hearted, semi-committed, lukewarm, indifferent ‘believer’ will no longer be able to avoid taking a decisive stand for or against the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are spiritually fence-sitting and offering up lip service, while sucking up all the immoral views of the ungodly, will soon enough meet the enemy head on. When neutrality and indecision is no longer an option, and you will no longer be able to hide your faith, will you instead loudly claim to be an atheist? When you are forced to get off the fence and decide who you will follow, will you follow God or the enemies of God?

Soon every professed Christian will face their own crisis of faith as they encounter intense pressure to conform to this world, and decide if they want to be identified as a true disciple of Christ Jesus or not. The days ahead for American Christianity looks increasingly ominous. To think otherwise is to be willfully blind.

In Matthew 5:10-12, Jesus said, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” †

## BEWARE

“*Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;*” *Acts 13:40*

“*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*”—*Colossians 2:8*

## RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

**Q:** "I just would like your opinion of the controversy surrounding Christians obeying governors and mayors who demand that believers must wear masks due to the instructions of Romans 13:1-2."

**A:** It is clear why there is so much conflict. It is much like the one that the church has over the matter of law and grace. The dispensation of grace never did away with the law, while our faith establishes the law, which was to serve as a mentor and schoolmaster that points us to the finished work of redemption (*Galatians 3:24*). The question is what law is the Apostle Paul making reference to in *Romans 3:31*? Paul made mention to the law of faith (*Romans 3:27*), the law of Moses (613 laws known as Torah) (*1 Corinthians 9:9*), the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (*Romans 8:2*), the Talmud or Oral Law of the Jews which Jesus referred to as being the traditions of men (*1 Corinthians 14:34; Matthew 15:1-20*), and the law of sin and death which is also known as the Law of Sinai or the ten commandments (*Romans 8:2 refer to Romans 13:8-10*).

The ten commandments served as the moral code of the law of Moses. All laws were to line up to the principle, intent, and moral integrity of the commandments to be considered legitimate. In other words, the 613 laws of Moses had to maintain the integrity of the Ten Commandments to be permitted, and a law that did not was prohibited. Some of these laws became obsolete due to the environment and times, while the shadows of others were fulfilled in Jesus (*Galatians 4:9-11; Colossians 2:14-17*).

This brings us to America. We have something known as the Law of the Land. It is called the Constitution. All leaders and judges in this country take an oath to uphold this Law and if any law is made outside of this law it is basically considered unlawful or prohibited. Now with this in mind, the so-called "laws" concerning masks are not laws but edicts or proclamations that have no real teeth unless people act as if they are binding laws. They are at best suggestions but outside of being suggestions, the only power they hold in our lives is the power we give them. Only our senators and representatives in a lawful assembly have the power to pass binding laws that

the citizenry are required to abide by, and if they do not line up to the Constitution of the United States, can be challenged in a court of law.

These edicts from governors and mayors are not laws. They were not passed by those who represent the interests of the people. For officials to threaten them as a "law" reveals they are being unlawful. They are undermining the integrity of the Constitution and abusing the trust and the authority they were given.

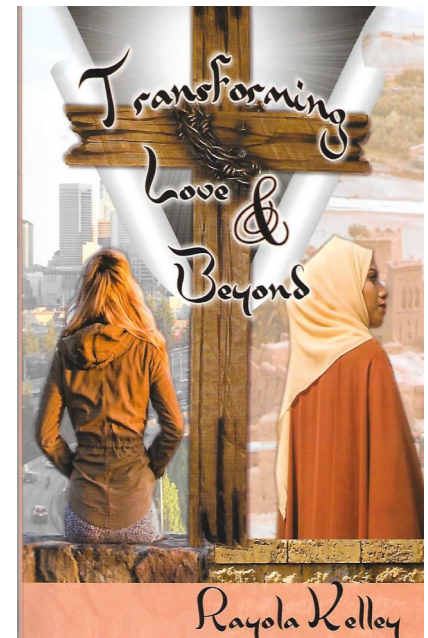
This brings us to Christians who maintain they must wear the masks because of *Romans 13:1-2*. It is clear they do not understand what constitutes the real law of the land that we are all responsible for upholding. The law of this land does not require us to give in to unlawful edicts that would undermine the freedoms that the Constitution has guaranteed us.

As Christians, we are to obey God if there is point of disagreement when it comes to other laws. At this time and at this place in history, we must recognize that it is becoming clearer and clearer that the masks are part of wicked agendas that have been in place for years. If you don't believe me, consider what is happening right now to our churches and in communities.

Our Constitution protects free speech and our religious freedoms and yet what is under attack? What do the fruits reveal about the spirit, agenda, and priorities of these so-called "laws" that we are told to blindly obey? Churches are under attack, the law-abiding people are being shamed for not playing nicely in the sandbox of control, conformity, and insanity, lawlessness is reigning, homes are falling apart, and our communities are under siege.

Some Christians need to educate themselves about what is really going on, others need to understand what is what, and some need to simply face the evil in operation. As American citizens, we have been given a right, and in a sense, an obligation to stand against tyrannical, abusive control, in order to maintain sacred liberties for all, and as citizens of heaven we need to stand against evil with truth and withstand against wickedness with righteousness. It is true that for evil men to triumph, good men simply need to remain silent and do nothing while hiding behind wishful thinking that all will turn out well in the end.

Jesus tells us we can know something by its fruits and the fruits of these edicts are godless and wicked. It is clear that Christians who continue to ignorantly hide behind *Romans 13:1-2* in compliance with these tyrannical edicts will find themselves on the wrong side of both the law of this land and the righteousness of God. †



Book Review at Barnes and Noble:

"This unique book is more than 'transforming' for those who truly hunger and thirst for genuine answers to their soul's deepest longings, needs and hopes. Through the lives of the three individuals so expertly depicted in this powerful book, I found myself relating to them in ways that helped to shed new light, and understanding on past failures, broken dreams and periods of hopelessness. The author expertly and beautifully leads the reader on to the pathway to personal triumph and glorious victory. I love this book!"

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/transforming-love-beyond-rayola-j-kelley/1136944632?ean=9780986406683>  
—\$12.95

**"Our Nation's honored tradition of prayer has sustained us and strengthened our trust that God will continue to watch over and accompany us through the best of times and the darkest hours."  
- President Donald J. Trump**