

2020

Here we are again on the cusp of a new year and a new decade. There is always a sense of excitement and anticipation at this time of year. For us in the Body of Christ, undoubtedly, we will be inundated with messages and prophesies concerning the times we are in and the year or years ahead. I have already heard some of them. I am not saying that there is anything wrong with this. However, the only thing I cannot help but notice is that the prophesies and “words from the Lord” are all saying different things.

Depending on what “camp” you are in or lean towards you will hear words that accommodate that particular “camp.” I am referring to “camps” such as the hyper-faith camp, the hyper-grace camp, the prosperity Gospel camp, to name just a few. Many of these “words” speak about what God will do for His people and how blessed we all will be in this New Year. Again, I am not disavowing any of this and I pray that it will all come to pass.

Personally, as I ponder on this upcoming year and the years to follow, my desire is for God’s people to simply turn towards Him in a way like never before. I am reminded of the Exodus from Egypt by the Israelites and their wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai. God had delivered all of the Israelites from Egypt as it states, “...with a mighty hand.” The people witnessed time and time again from that point on as they traveled in the wilderness, the mighty hand of God moving on their behalf. Not just delivering them from their enemies, but by providing for every one of their needs.

However, as we are all well aware of, although God did all these wonderful things for His people, it was never enough. We see that it did not stop them from constantly murmuring and complaining against Him. It came to the point where they actually made “golden calves” and began worshipping them as their gods. This can happen when people turn their focus upon themselves and their own wants and desires. It causes them to lose focus on their God, the one who delivered them from their bondage in the first place. Hmm...

Then, as they were just about to enter the “Promised Land,” the land of Canaan, God told them to send out one man from each of the twelve tribes to see how good that land truly was and to come back and report to the people. Again, we know the story. They all came back and reported how wonderful the land was – a land “flowing with milk and honey.” But... ten of the men came back with the report that it was too difficult to go in and claim the land. They said that there were “giants” in the land and that they would be as “grasshoppers” before them. Their report was so negative that everyone believed the report of these men; everyone that is except Joshua and Caleb. Joshua and Caleb chose to believe the report of the Lord.

Why did Joshua and Caleb choose to believe God and not what they saw with their own eyes as the others did? There have been many, many sermons and teachings concerning this and all of them are based on Joshua and Caleb’s faith. I believe this to be very true. As we know, Joshua, Caleb and their families were the only ones of the generation who witnessed and were freed from the bondage of Egypt by the “mighty hand of God” to enter the Promised Land. All of that generation who were freed from the bondage of Egypt never made it into the “Promised Land.” They all died in the wilderness. Why? The answer may seem to be simple – they did not believe God. But is it that simple? Could there be something else about Caleb and Joshua that was different from the rest?

If we look at Numbers 32:11 and 12 we may get a glimpse of what else was different about Joshua and Caleb. In Numbers 32:11 and 12 we hear God declare, “*Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: ¹² Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.*” I believe the key to Joshua and Caleb’s decision to believe the report of the Lord concerning the Promised Land was settled way before they were

called upon to go in and actually see the Land. The key is found in verse 12 as it states, “...for they have **wholly followed** the LORD.”

The decision of Joshua and Caleb to believe God and go forward and enter the Promised Land was not made at that moment. No it was made long before that. The decision was inevitable because both of these men, through their lives and lifestyles, “**wholly followed** the LORD.” What does it mean to “wholly follow the Lord?”

The Hebrew word translated to the term “wholly” is “*male'*(mä·lä’),” which is actually a verb – an action word. It means to be full, filled and satisfied; to be consecrated to; to be armed with; to be accomplished in; to live in abundance with. Using this definition we can see that the decision to believe God in this very tenuous and historic moment of time was not a quick “off the cuff” decision. This decision was a lifetime and lifestyle in the making. To Joshua and Caleb, because of their lifestyle of relationship and consecrating themselves and being filled in abundance with God, this “decision” was not even a decision. It was a “no-brainer” for them.

Why am I bringing this up to our attention as we are discussing entering into a new year? Well, I believe, just as most of us do, that the time is at hand for the soon return of our beloved one – Jesus, our Lord and Savior. I believe, as most of us do, that the Exodus from Egypt was a type and shadow of salvation and deliverance from the bondage and slavery to sin that would come through Jesus, the Lamb of God. I also believe that the “wilderness” experience was a type and shadow of every believer’s life as we live our lives on this earth. I believe that entering the “Promised Land” is a type and shadow of that time and place when we will spend eternity with God the Father, His Son, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

In the account we just discussed, we see that it was only those that were living a lifestyle “*wholly following the Lord*” that God specifically stated would be entering into the “Promised Land.” I again believe that Joshua and Caleb were a type and shadow of believers entering eternity. However, I also hear God state very clearly that it was because Joshua and Caleb “*wholly followed the Lord*” their entire lives once they were freed from the bondage of Egypt is what caused them to make the right choices and totally believe God no matter what others said or did. They were not carried away with every “wind and wave” of man’s thinking. There was never a choice for them. It was their life and mindset – God said it and that settles it for me, period. Why? Because I have a genuine, vested relationship with my God.

Yes, I believe God is doing and will do great and wonderful things by “His mighty hand” in this coming year and the years to come for His people until He returns. I believe all prophecies found in the scriptures concerning this will all come to pass and be fulfilled. We must remember that Jesus will come a second time to all believers. Every true believer will experience His “Second Coming.” We may experience His coming if the Lord allows and we see Him coming in the clouds on “that day.” Or we may experience it one day when we take our last breath here on earth and He comes to take us home with Him. Either way, my desire for myself, and for others that read this discussion, is that we make that quality decision today and for that decision to continue to be lived out this coming year and in the years to come until “that day” when we do behold Him face to face. That decision being, **we will** “*wholly follow the LORD*” and “*as for me and my house, **we will** serve the LORD.*”(Joshua 24:15)

Back in 1960 (for those who remember that far back), John F Kennedy stated in His inaugural address these famous words, “Ask not what your country can do for you... ask what you can do for your country.” I suggest that maybe we need to make a similar “mindset adjustment.” We need to stop asking what God can and will do for us. Hasn’t He already done it all for us through Jesus? This year let us have the mindset of, “Lord, I desire to bless and delight the heart of you, my King. What would you want me to do **unto you** as an expression of my love, adoration and worship of you, my first love?”

In Micah 6:6-8, God gives us a little hint about what blesses His heart and what He truly desires of His people both, in this coming New Year and in the times to come...

*“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?⁸ **He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”** - Micah 6:6-8 (KJV)*

May you all experience a very blessed New Year
God bless you, Ray and Trish