

2022

Well, here we are again in the beginning of a new year. If you have gone to services this past New Year's Eve or Day or on Sunday, you may have heard many pronouncements concerning this coming year. I am not saying that they were wrong or that they were correct. Each ministry may have heard a portion of what the Lord was telling His Body for this coming year.

However, undoubtedly, there were those ministries that spewed out the same old things as they do every New Year. Things such as this is going to be such a blessed and prosperous New Year for all of God's believers; or that God is going to be doing such great and mighty things this year in the lives of His people, etc., etc., etc.

Now, I am not saying that these things are wrong or incorrect. However, what I am saying is that these things may happen and take place but they may happen and take place in ways that we may not be looking for or thinking of them taking place.

The truth is, no matter how we want to spin it or say it - God is always on the move. I have heard over my years of being a child of God and being involved in ministry, at every New Year's service, that God is going to do great things in the coming year. The truth of the matter is that, yes, God has and will continue to do great things in the times to come. Ultimately, they are all leading up to the time of Jesus' return to rule and reign upon this earth for 1000 years which is also known as His "millennial reign."

Every believer should always be thinking and "looking forward" to that time if you are a true believer in Christ. However, the scriptures are very clear that the times leading up to the return of Jesus are and will be very difficult times for the true believer. Now, I am aware of the many different "schools of thought" concerning the "end times" that believers may have concerning what these end times will be like for the believer.

Some of these thoughts may be expressed in various ways. We have the "pre-tribulation" people; the "mid-tribulation" people, the "post-tribulation" people and the "no-tribulation" people. Each one of these express a belief of when the true believer will be taken from this earth only to return with Jesus when He returns back to this earth to rule and reign for the millennial period - His 1000 year rule and reign on this earth.

All of the above mentioned "theories" can be found and expressed within the scriptures as one interprets the scriptures on this matter. There is enough evidence in all scripture to give some credence to all of these thoughts. That discussion however is for another day and it is not for this discussion. The most important thing for every believer to know, without a shadow of a doubt is that, whenever Jesus does come, will each of us be ready for Him if we are still here? Will we be ready to be taken up to Jesus and then return back to this earth with Jesus to rule and reign with Him upon this earth for His millennial reign?

The fact of the matter is that this should be our hope; this should be our desire; this should be our destiny. I guess what I am saying is that whatever you may believe in - whether it is "pre-trib," "mid-trib," "post-trib" or no-trib," the most important thing to grasp is, "Will I be there?"

You see that is the real question. We must stop thinking about when we will be going. The main thing that we must always be thinking of is the fact that we must keep ourselves ready for Jesus' return whenever He does return. That is where I believe many believers are missing it.

As the years go by and we get closer to the time of Jesus' return. The Word is very clear as it tells us of the difficult times that we all will be experiencing. Even if you are a "pre-trib person" the scriptures are very clear that you will experience at least the beginning aspects of the "end time age." It is the same thing with the "mid- trib" thinking. You will experience some of the difficulties of the "end time age."

Those who believe in the "post-trib" aspect believe that the believer will experience most of the difficulties of the end times. The "no-trib" people simply believe that all believers at that time will go through it all and see Jesus' return.

However, as I mentioned previously, we as believers must stop thinking of "when will we be going to be with Jesus" but rather we must always be thinking of the aspect of "am I going to be with Jesus." I guess what I am saying is that we must always be thinking of our relationship with the Lord in terms of the "now" instead of in the terms of the "later."

One thing we must always remember is that a relationship with our God is not a momentary single event. It is an ever growing, always seeking and true relationship with an everlasting God. What I mean is that it is not simply saying a prayer and in that moment of time and you become "saved" and that is all there is forever and ever. Unfortunately, that is what many of us have made it.

No, it is not just simply saying a "prayer" that makes you a true child of God. It is a change of heart. It is true heartfelt acknowledgement of our God being the absolute, supreme and final authority in every aspect of the individual's life. It is a decision to follow and seek after more and more of God **everyday** of your life.

If we look in the scriptures we do not see people simply saying a prayer and then all of a sudden becoming "saved." Rather, what we see are people who truly made a decision within their hearts which led them to change their lives, their manner of behavior, and even for many of them, to totally change where they lived and how they lived simply because they now believed in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. Yes, they truly changed who they were and changed even their lifestyle.

Today, for many, we simply say a prayer or have someone recite a simple prayer and then we tell them that they are saved and on their way to heaven. Now, I am not saying that it cannot happen in that way. However, if we look in the New Testament we see that those who truly believed in Jesus would change their very lives as well as their lifestyles, simply because they now believed in the true Messiah, the true Lord and Savior – Jesus. We do not really see "the sinner's prayer" anywhere in the scriptures.

However, what we do see is that there was a lifestyle change in the believers' lives that we see in the New Testament. Many times the true believers were ostracized by those around them. Many of them were cast out of their families. Many of them were put to death. Even today, in many orthodox Jewish homes, if one of them chooses to accept Jesus as their Messiah they are cast out of the home. Today, for many who were Muslim and now come to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, the result would be and is actual physical death. This is true in many our cultures and religions that are in the world today.

Yes, coming to accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, your Messiah, should be a "life changing" experience. Your life should begin to change. You should begin to think differently. You should be starting to see things differently. You become a true child of God. You are no longer the "old you" but you become a "new you." As the scripture tells us in 2Corinthians 5:17 tells us, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

I remember when I first truly received Jesus into my heart. I really didn't know much about it. My brother had told me about Jesus when I was in my teen years. I did accept Jesus at that time but I was really by myself. I just went on and went my own way and made Jesus what I needed, or should I say, what I wanted, Him to be in my life. I still did many things that I am not proud of today so I will not mention them.

However, as I look back, I can see that God really did have a hold on my life. As I got a little older, I started hearing about and being around people who would speak to me about the things of God. Oh, I still did some things that I shouldn't have been doing but yet somewhere within me, God was still "calling to me."

Finally, when I got married, after about two years or so, my wife and I both had a sense that we needed more and we began seeking after God. We finally, met some people who we truly connected with who were Christians. We went to their church and the rest is "history."

The thing that I remember about those times was that even though I was not going to church or doing "Godly things," there was still a draw to know God more. As I look back, I believe it all started with when I first gave my life to the Lord when my brother, who had just gotten saved himself, spoke to me of the "Good News." It somehow, somewhere, inside of me, stuck. I am so grateful to God for His love, mercy and His grace that "waited" patiently for me to finally get my head straight to acknowledge and make Him the Lord and Savior of my life. Thank you Jesus!!!

Many years have passed since those days. Many people have passed my way. I have had many great experiences. I have had many disappointments. I have had great things happen in my life and I have also had some major tragedies and disappointments in my life. However, one thing that I am so grateful for today is the love in which God has expressed Himself to me. He has shown me His all powerful love for me. I have made many mistakes but God has always loved me and He has seen me through them all.

You see, for me that was the most important thing of all - that I was and still am truly a child of God. It truly does not matter to me when I see the Father and Jesus – although I can't wait. What matters to me the most is that **I will see them**. I want to see them – whether it will be when Jesus comes back onto this earth or whether it will be when I am so old that I don't want to wait any longer and I choose to just go and be with Him and to be with all those who have gone on before me. Either way – I will be with my God.

The discussion of "pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation or post-tribulation" really doesn't matter – at least to me. The main thing is that whenever He does come, those that say they know Jesus as their Lord and Savior will be ready and will be looking for Him. He may come in the clouds or we may see Him when He comes for us as we pass from this life into the Kingdom life. It really doesn't, nor should it, matter.

This life is simply a "fleeting moment" that will pass away. However, one day, those of us who truly believe and have truly made Jesus their own personal Lord and Savior, as well as our Messiah, will enter into that "new life." It is a "new life" that will never end. A "new life" that will be in His presence forever and ever. A "new life" that will be with Jesus as He rules upon this earth during the millennium reign. A "new life" that will worship and glorify the Father and Jesus under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit in the "New Jerusalem" that will come after that 1000 year rule and reign ends and passes away.

We look forward to that time as we read in Revelation 21:1-4, *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ² And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. ⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*

Oh what a day that will be. It will be a time like no other. The scriptures are very clear as they state that God will be with all those who are His. God – the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit - will dwell in our midst and we shall be with Him. He will be our God forever and ever and ever – for all eternity and then some. It will never, never end.

So, here we are today celebrating a “New Year – 2022.” I pray that we all continue to look ahead. I urge you all to look steadfastly beyond what we see happening now and look to what we are looking forward to – the 1000 year millennial and then the New Jerusalem. It is found in His Word. He gave us the Word so we can see and always “hold on” to that hope and assurance that He gives to each of His children.

That is truly who we are – His children. This life will pass away and everything of this world. However, God the Father, the Son, Jesus and the Holy Spirit will never pass away. His Word will never pass away and it all will be fulfilled and it shall all come to pass.

We must always be reminded that this earth and the world that we are now living in is not our “home.” We are simply “passing through.” One day we will be home – home with our God and it will never end. So I say to one and all, “Have a very, very happy and joyful New Year.” Do not look at the things around us and the things that we may see because these are all temporary. Rather, I encourage all of God’s people to always keep your eyes on the things that are above and not of this world.

Remember what Revelation 22:20 tells us, *“Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”*
Yes, Lord Jesus, *“...come quickly.”*

From Trish and myself, have a truly blessed New Year.