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HAPPY NEW YEAR

By Jason Frizzell

The following article was written by Jason Frizzell just a couple of days before his death on December 29, 1981.

No doubt every one has heard or said in the last few days the expression, "Happy New Year". In many instances the expression came from a sincere heart. In many instances it came in a frivolous manner and in many instances from habit during the first part of each New Year.

It is good that we have been permitted to live another year. We have passed another milestone on our journey to eternity and to our appointment with death. We are entering another year as we measure time. Millions of people all over the world have gathered together for some kind of activity and at the stroke of '12' midnight on December 31, a shout went out: "HAPPY NEW YEAR"! Bells rang, horns blew, resolutions were made, great plans for the future will or have been discussed. Some resolutions will be kept, many will be broken. It is a lovely and beautiful spirit to have in our hearts, when we can truly say to those we meet, "HAPPY NEW YEAR", but millions of people will not know or care about the scripture of Luke 2:14. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." What a different world we would live in if all mankind, when they say "Happy New Year" would mean - "On earth peace, good will toward men."

The Bible is not silent about the beginning of new things, even the beginning of a new period of time, also expressions of concern about physical and spiritual happiness (prosperity). Exodus 12:1 states: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, this month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." Read all of Exodus 12. III John 2: "Behold, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in good health, even as thy soul prospereth."

The following remarks will be in the form of an Acrostic: Taking a letter and let it stand for a word, a phrase of exhortation, or warning viewed from the Bible.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

H Hold fast to your faith this coming year, many will loose their faith. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full

assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without waivering (For He is faithful that Promised)." (Heb. 10:22, 23.) "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." (Heb. 4:14.) "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (I Cor. 16:13.) "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwrecked." (1 Tim. 1:19.)

A Assemble, coming together, or unity of purpose, as often as the saints meet for worship. "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. 10:25) "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." (I Cor. 16:1, 2.) "And they continued steadfast in the apostles doctrine and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42.) Read I Cor. 11: 17 - 34.

P Pray earnestly every day of the new year, in faith. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask?" (Matt. 7:11) "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thess. 5:17, 18.) "Confess your faults, one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent pray of a righteous-man availeth much." (James 5:16.) "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord are against them that do evil." (1 Peter 3:12.)

P Prepare our hearts for great blessings from God during the coming year. "Ye

are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even the whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3:9, 10.) "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shalt thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Prepare to meet thy God." (Prov. 3:9, 10.) "Therefore, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, Prepare to meet thy God." (Amos 4:12.)

Y Yield not to temptation; for yielding is sin . . . against God and thyself. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." (Matt. 26:41.) "Abstain from all appearances of evil." (I Thess. 5:21.) "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and inticed." (Jms. 1:13, 14, 15.) Read Matt. 4:3-11.

N Neglect not your talents and new opportunities for the coming year. "The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my bonds (chains)." (II Tim. 1:16.) "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10.) "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17.) Read Matthew 25:14 - 30.

E Examine ourselves daily to see if we are in the faith. "Examine yourselves . . . prove your own selves, know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (II Cor. 13:5.) Read I Cor. 11:28 - 30 and meditate.

W Work. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is

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EDITOR Mike Pace

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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dead, also. (James 2:26.) "Be ready to every good work." (Titus 3:1.) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (I Cor. 15:58.)

Y Yield your members to righteousness every day of the year. (Paraphrased verses: The same body, the same mind, the same hands, that were once servants of sin are now their servants of righteousness. (Romans 6:11-26.) "And they that are Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Galatians 5:24.)

E Exercise yourself in godliness. "But refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness." (I Tim. 4:7.) "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God." (Heb. 5:12-14.) This verse is telling us to exercise in spiritual growth or die. We ought to be stronger, more godly and less foolish and stubborn because of past years experiences.

A Aim for sinless perfection, yet be not defeated if you fall short of that expectation. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." (Heb. 6:1.) "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 3:18.) The exhortation here is, to become more like Christ whom we can see through the eyes of faith in his Word. When we error, and we often do, pray for strength, try again be faithful whether perfect or not.

R Redeem the time . . . for it is the stuff life is made of. "Redeeming the time because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:16.) "Wherefore ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away."

PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS

By Harold Turner

"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 by the Spirit: 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." (I Peter 3:18-20.)

Needless to say, this passage has arrested the attention of many a Bible student. There are some things which should be kept in mind as we try to understand and explain any passage. We should keep in mind that what ever the explanation or interpretation is, it must be in harmony with the overall teaching of the Scriptures. Too, it is important to keep in mind the whole context of what the writer is teaching. For example, what was the purpose for which a statement was made? What was the writer trying to convey to his readers? Any explanation that does not fit into the overall context, is, in all probability, not correct.

What was Peter teaching when he stated that Christ went and preached unto the spirits in prison? Some have interpreted this to teach that after being put to death, Christ went in spirit and preached to the spirits of those who were lost. Before we deal with this point, let us first consider the overall context to determine just what Peter was teaching.

It seems clear that Peter was trying to encourage Christians who were suffering for their faith. He reminded them of two important facts. If they live right, God will reward them with eternal life, on the other hand, if they live in disobedience, God will reward them with eternal punishment. Beginning with verse 9 he said that Christians are not to render evil for evil or railing for railing, but rather a blessing. In verse 14 he states, "*but if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye . . .*" In verse 15 he encourages them to be ready to give an answer concerning the hope they have. In verse 16 he reminds them of those who will speak evil of them and

(James 4:14.) "Boast not thyself of tomorrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring." (Prov. 27:1.) "Now is the accepted time: Behold, now is the day of salvation." (II Cor. 6:2.) "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. 3:7-8.) "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." (I Thess. 5:14.) HAPPY NEW YEAR!

who will make false accusations against them. How were they to react under these circumstances? In the next verse he said, "*For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*" In the following passages Peter introduced the above passage of I Peter 3:18-20. In this he shows that Christ suffered at the hands of evil doers. He suffered and died in order to bring others to God. But though he was put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit to live with God. Assuring Christians that they also have this same hope through Christ. Peter then mentions Noah and his work prior to the flood. In II Peter 2:5 Noah is called a preacher of righteousness. But obviously from Peter's use of this it was understood that Noah also suffered for righteousness sake. Through Noah's efforts he was able to save only his family; the rest of the world was disobedient to his message. But because of his righteousness Noah was able to save himself and his family. This, no doubt was to encourage the Christians who were suffering for doing right. Peter then continued into chapter four, saying, "*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*" (I Peter 4:1-2.)

Therefore, the context of I Peter 3:18-20 is dealing with the Christian suffering for doing right, and is designed to encourage him with the promise that God will reward him for living right. Peter is not dealing with the idea that some lost people will have an opportunity to hear and believe after they have died. This idea does not fit the context. What, then, does Peter mean by Christ preaching to the spirits in prison? There are two questions for us to consider. How did Christ preach to these spirits? And, when was the preaching done?

How did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? Let's consider something before directly answering this question. There are numerous passages that speak of God or Christ speaking, but which show that they were speaking through some other person. Notice Hebrews 1:1-2, "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . .*" This clearly shows that God spoke to the fathers, but not personally. He spoke by the prophets. God spoke to us by his Son, but not personally, he does it through an instrument. The apostles were selected by Christ to bring His message to the world. In Matt.

10:20, Jesus said to the apostles, "For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." In connection with this, in Acts 1:2 we are told that after Jesus returned to heaven with the Father, "He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen." Then in Acts 2:4, the apostles were all filled with the Holy Ghost, "and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance." Christ was speaking through the apostles "by the Spirit." In Ephesians 2:17 it is said that Jesus preached to those afar off (the Gentiles), and those who were nigh (the Jews). However, Jesus did not preach the gospel to the Gentiles in person. He preached to them first through Peter (Acts 1:5:7), and then through Paul and others.

The point of all this is to show that while Christ is said to have spoken, he did it through others. He preached "by the Spirit" through the apostles, and in the Old Testament he preached "by the Spirit" through Noah and others. Through Noah, God's Spirit was striving with man to repent and live righteously. So, how did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? He preached "by the Spirit" through Noah, just as he preached "by the Spirit" through the apostles to the disobedient of the first century, who are also in prison awaiting the judgment.

When did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? Actually we have already answered this, however, let us consider some additional things relative to this. Notice that Peter does not say that the spirits were in prison at the time they were preached to, they were in prison when Peter wrote this. Actually they were in prison because they had died in disobedience. The fact that they were disobedient shows that they had had an opportunity to obey, and had refused it. Peter shows that they were disobedient while the ark was being prepared.

Let us consider another question. In view of the interpretation that Christ went and preached to these people during the time he was dead, we would ask how this was possible. Notice in Luke 16:26 what Jesus said regarding the two realms of the spirit world. "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Now if this gulf cannot be crossed, how did Jesus get to these spirits? And, even if he could, what good would it have done? He said that they could not pass from there even if they wanted to. They could not be saved from that place.

Another question one might ask, is, why would Jesus have gone only to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah? Why were they more special than all the other disobedient spirits? Is God a

respector of persons? In Romans 2:11 Paul said, "There is no respect of persons with God." He then added, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." The sinner shall perish. The people of Noah's day sinned by disobeying God. Why would they be given a second chance?

The judgment of God is going to be determined by the life we live in the flesh. Hebrews 9:27 states, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." As we die, so shall we be judged. In II Cor. 5:10 Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the

things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." We will be judged according to what we have done in our body, not by what we have done in our spirits after the body has died. This applies to the people of all time.

The teaching of Peter is to encourage faithfulness in the face of suffering. As God raised up Christ, and as God saved Noah from the disobedience of his day, so will God save us if we live righteously, and he will reward us with eternal life when our body dies. To live in disobedience to God's will is to forfeit all hope of eternal life. You will not have a second chance after you die.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL ACTION

By Bill Graddy

The church is the heaven born, blood bought body of Christ. (Matt. 16:13-20; Acts 20:28.) It is original. It is a spiritual entity with no rival. It shall stand forever. (Dan. 2:44.) The church is truth and men may pervert it, but we cannot change its glorious power and destiny. (Prov. 21:30; II Cor. 13:8; John 10:35; II Tim. 3:15.) Salvation is in the body of Christ because Jesus is the head and Savior of His Body. (Acts. 2:47; Eph. 1:21-23; 5:23.)

The only divine institution wherein is salvation, it has a different and distinct role. The function of the church is to preach the gospel, to worship God, and to

do benevolent work. In this unique role it is not to serve as a substitute or as an adaptive agent for the state, school, and home. The comparative activities or similar duties will be on an individual basis not as a church sponsored edit. Thus, the church is peerless with the eternal salvation of men as its supreme object.

All authority and power is of God. (Rom. 13:1.) Therefore, all institutions are permitted to exist. However, **only** in the church did God place salvation! (Eph. 1:3; 3:10-11, 21.) This excludes the home, state, and school from this exalted position. The church cannot serve as a home and spank children, neither can it provide recreation and secular education for its members. It is tragic that some congregations are usurping the authority of the Scriptures by relieving

the parents of their responsibilities in the realm of recreation. (Eph. 6:4.) To use these activities to promote the cause of Christ is to "rape" the gospel and to rob the home of its God given functions. Jesus is the drawing power! (John 12:32.) When we use material things such as family life centers to build the house of God, we are erecting a sandy foundation that will prostitute the power of God as in John 6:26. (Matt. 7:24-29.) The New Testament does not authorize the church to provide recreation for the members any more than it does to use instrumental music in worship. The members of the church can aid the state by being good citizens. (Rom. 13:1-7.) The church can aid the home in helping to perfect spiritual qualities, but the physical capacities are the responsibilities of the parents. (Eph. 6:4.) We must keep the church separated from the world and institutions which would intrude and interfere with her divine action. (Eph. 5:11.) As God ordained that these institutions exist so he decreed that they be separate. To mix and mingle these is to commit spiritual adultery.

The adage, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is good advice, but, let us remember, it is the home's duty to provide the social aspects and the role of the church to mature the spiritual qualities of men.

How many congregations are in the embryonic stage of being a full fledged denomination relative to unscriptural motivational and recreational enticements?

CHRISTIANITY OR SUPERSTITION

By Mike Pace

Many people do confuse religion and superstition. Therefore they think that we should do away with all religion. But this is not true concerning Christianity. Superstition and even other ideologies often times are religious; but none of them are true and pure religion. False religions may have extreme and even conflicting ideologies and superstitions in their make-up.

But there is a great difference between the Christian religion and superstition, or any other religion; and so much so that Christianity is firmly opposed to all superstition; and wherever Christianity is accepted, superstition cannot live. Why? Christianity is based upon evidence - EVIDENCE which cannot be successfully disputed and ignored.

Superstition has no evidence and facts upon which to base an unqualified faith. There is all the difference between true religion and superstition that there is between truth and falsehood. Superstition is a belief in, respect and reverence for, or worship of that which is unknown, mysterious, or supposed to be; but with no evidence and facts upon which to build an unlimited belief. It can only thrive on ignorance. Unveiling of truth kills it.

The true Christian religion is a belief in, a respect and reverence for, and worship of that which is KNOWN through abundance and incontrovertible evidence to EXIST, to have SUPERNATURAL POWER, to have ALL KNOWLEDGE, and to have REVEALED HIS WILL to man that man might worship intelligently. A corrupted Christianity may have a mixture of superstitions; and all false religions may be classed as or under superstition. But true religion is opposed to superstition!

True Christianity enlightens men and does away with all kinds of superstitious practices. It kills superstition. Superstition arises, or results from ignorance. Christianity deals with that which is known, and has solid evidence and facts upon which to exercise intelligent worship. True religion is a fruit of knowledge. Superstition is a fruit of ignorance. Superstition drags a people, a race, a nation down. It offers nothing to lift a people up.

Superstition can rise no higher than its

originators and sponsors. Its ideals and aims can be no higher than that of the men who started and carried it on. Superstition is founded upon deception; so its fruit must be deception. There is nothing in it to lift men any higher than the ideals of those who direct the superstition. Hence, as they practice fraud and deception, the fruits will likewise be fraud and deception. Its principles are only base and fleshly, sensuous and even devilish; therefore, its fruits can only be immorality, fleshly, sensuous and devilish.

Christianity is from a higher source. Its author is admitted by all to be the world's greatest teacher. His teachings are good and uplifting. Every principle is a principle that all admit is good. In fact, NO ONE has ever been able to even think of ONE good principle that Christianity does not teach. Every opponent of Christianity has had to admit that fact. The teaching is true; its doctrines are holy; its precepts are binding; its decisions are immutable. It gives wisdom. Its practices make better citizens; its rules are safe. It contains light to direct man along life's road, and comfort to cheer him the while. It alone can lift up any people. Its every precept - its every principle is far above the highest ideal or aim of man. It has power to mold true, wholesome, and unblamable characters. Christianity can thus build up, because it is based upon truth. Superstition cannot build up, because it is false.

The religion of Jesus Christ is the only religion that is the giver of true happiness. Nor can forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal salvation be found elsewhere.

It is the author of the Christian religion who truly teaches:

Avoiding hatred (Matt. 5:21, 22)
 No lustful thinking (Matt. 5:28)
 No unfair judgments (Matt. 7:1-2)
 Love of enemies (Matt. 5:44)
 Reconciliation (Matt. 5:24)
 Non-resistance (Matt. 5:38-39)
 Avoiding anxiety (Matt. 6:25-29)
 Self-examination (Matt. 7:3-5)
 Respect for government (Rom. 13:1-7)
 Obedience and respect to parents
 (Ephesians 6:1-2)
 Equity of man (James 2:1-4)
 A universal brotherhood (Matt. 23:9)
 Forgiveness (Matt. 5:24; 18:21-35;
 Mark 11:25)
 Thrift, Industry and Generosity
 (Eph. 4:28)
 Progress (Hebrews 6:1)
 The value of Truth (II Cor. 13:8)

Truth as a Basis for Freedom
 (John 8:32)

Humility (Luke 14:11)

Benevolence (Acts 20:35; Eph. 4:28)

Honesty (Romans 12:17)

Single standard of morals (Gal. 3:28)

Unselfishness (Romans 12:10)

The Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12)

We might continue indefinitely in naming the principles of righteousness given in God's Word. We do not deem it necessary. Here we have the world's only perfect standard of conduct.

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