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A New Year's Message 2019 - Part 2
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I would like to continue part two of the New Year's message for 2019, and the emphasis in this section is on what God is doing. Let's begin with the understanding that God knows the end of every matter from the beginning. So when He launches something, there is no uncertainty as to the success of that thing. When God created man, humankind, He set in motion a thing regarding which He knew the end from the beginning. So it begs the question: Why did God create man? Because that is what is going to be unfolding in a unique fashion in 2019.

In 2018 what we saw was God cleaning off the dross—things that had arisen and asserted itself as if it is the truth (and had done so for decades, one might even say for more than a millennium); false notions of God; things that shocked the conscience and distorted in an unrecognizable fashion what God intended to do. There is no coming back from that abyss. God is actually, by turning up the heat, causing the dross that is in the metal to come to the surface, because He is refining the thing that He is doing in the earth. So when we see the perversion of religion, whether in the historic and Roman Church or the newer versions, the evangelical church, although we are shocked by what we see, God is not shocked. Nor is this a new insert; this was embedded in the very structure, in the elemental structure of these religions, because they were born out of lies and deception, distortions of the truth. The fact that the times have brought such scrutiny to them is simply the process of the Refiner's fire causing the dross inserted into the notions of what God wants and what God is doing, to be released. It is impossible for these coalitions of partial truths with the intent to deceive and lying spirits to remain coalesced and continuing to be presented as if this is from God, because God will turn up the heat, as He has. It is not the enemy, as some have alleged, that is doing this. It is God, because God intends to release the truth from the capture of falsehoods. That is what He is doing.

It is not just institutions that are being shaken. Institutions, one might argue, are being shaken because every *person* who names the name of God is being shaken. So if you are a member of an evangelical church, it is not just that the structure is being shaken. In fact, there is really nothing to shake if you are talking about the structure, because the structure consists of *people* who have agreed to flow together or to be formed together in such a fashion as that. I mean, if you ask—What is the Baptist Church?—it is not a set of creeds; it is *people* who have agreed to certain belief

structures. If you ask—What is the Roman Church?—it is not buildings, and cathedrals, and the way the priests dress. It is not that; it is a *people* who have agreed to a certain set of norms. So, the institutions themselves inevitably are shaken as people are shaken. In fact, there is really no way to shake the institution without shaking the people, because the institutions are essentially legal fictions. In the Roman Church, everyone from the Pope down in their hierarchy is being shaken, profoundly so. In the evangelical church, all of the various configurations of that are being shaken because the leaders are being shaken, in as much as the leaders have led and the people have followed in a certain direction, and that direction has been political—placing its faith in the politics and finances of a nation. So it is going to be shaken, and if we understand the dealings of God, really we should not be surprised at all that these things are being shaken. The surprise is that we do not know God.

Now, God does not shake things just for fun, nor is His shaking whenever He takes a notion to. When things reach their fullness, that is when God deals with them. The shaking is the incontrovertible sign that things have reached their apogee. Belief systems, and people who manage these systems and people who believe in these systems, are being shaken. I read an article the other day about how Roman Catholics are extremely angry and many are losing their faith because of the scandals that have rocked that institution. It is no secret that millennials and, in general, young people are not attending the church of their parents in evangelical circles, even. It is not that they do not have an interest in God; it is that they do not have an interest in *that* presentation of God.

Now, you know, it is easy enough to shoot the messenger. I understand that. Speaking as plainly as I am, perhaps there is some hope that people will be honest with themselves, be truthful. There is nothing quite like intentional self-delusion. You cannot find your way out of the darkness when you do not want it to be anything but dark. If you are stumbling around in the darkness, but you decide that it is preferable to turning on the light, no one can do anything for you. But obviously, not everyone is like that. It brings back to the fore the question: What has God known from the beginning that He is now continuing to do? I want to read from the book of Ephesians. And by the way, I intend to produce a series of messages on the book of Ephesians, because I am currently studying it in great depth. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians said:

Ephesians 1:3-6 (NIV)

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he [God] **chose** us in him [Christ] **before** the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

I want to pause there, although going forward from here, he expands on these enormously important truths. First is, “**before** the creation of the world”—that is, before God created the heavens and the earth.

1. So it is “before” in terms of time: before God created the heavens and the earth; before God said, “Let there be light;” before that, He predestined us to be sons of God through the process of adoption within the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. But, the word “before” also means: in a priority of arrangement. So not only in the sequence of time—in a temporal sense, in a sense as it relates to chronology—but also God placed us *before* creation, so that all creation was established to receive and to accommodate us. Which is why the Scriptures would say, “*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Mark 8:36-37). It is saying that nothing in creation is more valuable than a human being, to God.

In recent times I have watched as religious leaders... Political leaders do not bother me in that sense. When they articulate things that do not represent the standards of God, that does not bother me. I do not expect the leadership of the Body of Christ to come from the political arena, although one might recognize that much effort has been made by some in the evangelical church to make of political leaders, the leaders of the church. That is just a betrayal of their hidden agendas. But, when leaders of the church—when those who have been stood up, whether by their own standing or by others, as leaders of the church—when they blatantly say, put a money amount (a financial figure) ahead of the value of a human being, you readily understand that the church has lost its way. Under such leadership, the church cannot align itself with the mindset of God.

God positioned man *before* creation, which is to say: creation came about to serve God's purpose for the creation of man—God's purpose as associated with the creation of man. So, it is not so much talking about the value of a human life, as much as it is the purpose for which God created human life. Human life, by itself, is not the end of the issue. Human life is about the potential that God has invested in a certain outcome. What is that certain outcome? That is that God has established creation and placed man in it so that He could disciple, discipline, and train man to be a son of God, to represent God in the earth. It is the whole picture. It is not just a slice of it. This is the message with which the Apostle Paul opens the letter to the Ephesians.

It goes on to say, “*For he [God] chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world...*” So, the second piece I want to talk about...

- The first is about “before” meaning both (1) chronologically—before He established the heavens and the earth, He already determined that the point of doing it was that it would serve to produce the sons of God, as a location; (2) secondly—in respect to another meaning of the word “before”—that God values this, the event of man becoming a son of God, more than He values all of creation.

The second thing is this. It says, “*he chose us...*” It is the word “chose”—God chose us. The word refers to the right of God as a divine magistrate to make this selection. So, the choice of man is “right in the sight of God,” which is to say that it was God's intent, and God is the final arbiter. His views are the final statement of what the thing is. It is the *res judicata*; it is the thing finally settled. So, God decided to make man for the purpose of being a son of God, for the purpose of carrying the likeness of God in the earth. This is seminal, meaning, this is absolutely foundational. Clearly, it was not man's idea to be made in the image and likeness of God, because at the point where God made that decision, He was doing so in contemplation of making man. Man was not yet a life in being. Man did not yet exist, so he did not have anything to do with the decision—he had no say in the matter; he had no way of influencing the matter. It was purely the benevolence of God. So, in the eye of God—in the mind of God, in the choosing of God—He chose to make us with the intent of adopting us as sons *in Christ Jesus*.

With that said, it does not just speak of the value of man to God, but it speaks of the astonishing nature of God's majesty—that the divine God, the eternal God, who is not Himself created but always is, decided to put Himself on display in this unique creation. As a consequence, He executed the form of man, and filled that form with an endowment of spirit that came out of the person of God, and gave that form being with an identity as a son of God and with a purpose that corresponds to that identity, which purpose is to reveal the divine nature of God in and through this creation. Nothing else in creation rivals this positioning—not angels, not the physical creation itself. Indeed, the Scriptures are quite plain. They say,

⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You”?
Hebrews 1:5a

⁸But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.” Hebrews 1:8

In this we have an understanding of why creation itself was established, which means that the location that hosts the purpose has come about. In fact, that is why in the book of Genesis, chapter 2, it says that God rested. It means that when He had executed the location in which the purpose would come about, all was in place. What does that mean? It means this is what God will continue to bring about in creation, year after year after year, until the reality that existed in His mind becomes the reality that exists in creation.

That is what 2019 is going to be about. It is going to be about the further developing of a people in the earth to carry the character, the image, the likeness, the personhood of God in the earth. Interestingly enough, the Scriptures say, *“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men”* (John 1:4). So when He lives in us, the light and glory of His presence resides within beings that walk around in the earth. What we have been noticing in this frenzied increase of chaos is the fact that the knowledge of God has been lost. Those charged with the responsibility of representing the Lord have themselves become so thoroughly compromised that they now are indistinguishable from the rest of the darkness around them. Religion has fallen into the abyss. But even as I say that, do not hear me say that the things of God have failed—far from it. For indeed, religion never represented God. It represented itself, hoping to use God as its surety, as its legitimacy, and God

has had enough of it. God let the evil in men's hearts ripen to the point where it cannot be denied, so that when it is brought into judgment, no one may accuse God of not being long-suffering, patient, or kind, even to the malefactors—even to people who have in such an abhorrent fashion perverted what He put them in the earth to be and to become.

But out of this, God is going to raise up a people. In fact, it is not a new thing that God is about to do, but it will be an exponentialized thing that God will do—that God is doing. All along, below the surface, away from the noise and confusion of self-seeking, self-promoting ways, there has been a people quietly seeking God. They have been seeking God to know who He is, with the full expectation that knowing Him has an effect of transforming their mindsets from the fallenness of humankind over these millennia of the development of this anti-God culture. There has always been a remnant of people seeking God. As the darkness grows, those who are seeking God will no longer have hope that He might be found in the darkness. So, the fall-off in church attendance is not a thing to be lamented. The self-destruction of religion is not a thing to be mourned. It is just means that people know that they cannot look to these places, and to these entities, and to these leaders for direction. But, that is not to say that a vacuum exists. God is now raising up a people, complete with leaders, who have not been compromised. As they arise, they will be tried, they will be tested, and they will be brought forth in excellence of character. God will collect His people around such leaders, and God will mature His people through the model of such fathers—because they are fathers, first and foremost—and present them to the world, increasingly, in a visible way in the year that is ahead. So, here and there you will begin to see a people emerge out of suffering and trials. They will come out reflecting the glory of God's nature.

I will see you next time. Bye-bye.