
DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

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Joy to the World The Lord has come! Let Earth Receive Her King!

Dear Friends of Discernment Ministries:

This letter is to wish the readers of Discernment Ministries a special blessed holiday season as we glorify our King of Kings. So many of you have been faithful in your support of the ministry throughout the years. The website: www.discernment-ministries.org has become a means to spread the ministry worldwide. Newsletters from 1990 onwards can be viewed online. Our board members, Lynn and Sarah Leslie, have maintained the site and also provided the “Herescope” updates which appear there. There have been others who have proved to be a great blessing with their research and contributions to the materials that are continually being sent out.

My husband David and I are planning to travel to South Africa and Zimbabwe this winter to participate in the ministry there. Discernment has an office in South Africa with The Berean Call and it has been very active. In Zimbabwe, we helped start a Bible College when we spent a year there in 2011. The Bible College has been growing and the students are blessed as they study God’s Word and reach out to others. The country

has recently undergone a political change and we are all praying that this will be for the better as there has been much insecurity and suffering because of the economy and state of affairs internally.

We have not appealed for funds as we believe God lays the burden upon the hearts of His People. At this time, however, we are struggling to keep afloat. We do have financial commitment to the Bible College as we help support the staff who work fulltime. Also, our office in the U.S.A. is being managed by Hester van Boven out of Texas. There are costs involved in running an office. Printing costs and postage has become very expensive.

We appreciate the dedication that Hester has given in taking care of phone calls and orders that come in. So, please make this a matter of prayer and whatever the Lord lays upon your heart to give will be greatly appreciated. Send donations to:
**Discernment Ministries, P.O. Box 520,
Canton, TX 75103-0520.** You will receive a tax-exempt receipt for your donation.

Sincerely yours,
Jewel Grewe

*Let Every Heart
Prepare Him Room . . .*

The Five Wonders of the Gospel

*By Professor Johan Malan,
Mossel Bay, South Africa (October 2015)*

Scripture reading:

*“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God”
(John 3:14-21).*

John 3:16 is one of the most widely quoted verses from the Bible. This famous verse is also called “the Gospel in a nutshell” because it is considered a summary of the foundational New Testament doctrine of salvation:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Five core truths in connection with our salvation are mentioned in this verse, which are all five divine wonders. They are the wonder of **divine love**, the wonder of **a heavenly Savior**, the

wonder of **faith in God**, the wonder of **salvation from perdition**, and the wonder of **eternal life**. The Bible offers a full exposition of these supernatural works of God, and emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world and that no person can save himself from his state of spiritual deadness and moral depravity.

The Wonder of Divine Love

God is love, and that is one of His most important moral attributes (1 John 4:16). The *agape* love of God is completely different from the egocentric and covetous love of fallen man. God’s love reaches out to those in spiritual darkness and is inclined to fulfill their needs. All people on earth are slaves of sin and unrighteousness (Rom. 3:10-12). However, God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). In His caring love and saving grace He offers a plan of salvation which makes it possible to every person in the world to be saved – even the most hardened sinner.

The Wonder of a Heavenly Savior

Depraved humanity need a mighty Savior from heaven to redeem them from their lost state. God Himself has decreed the death penalty upon every sinner, “*For the wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:20). A perfect and sinless person therefore had to be found to die substitutionary on behalf of all sinners, thereby serving their death penalty. There was not such a person among sinful humanity who could redeem fellow sinners:

*“No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him – the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough – that he should live on for ever and not see decay”
(Ps. 49:7-9; NIV).*

However, God’s perfect and sinless Son could pay this price. But then He had to leave behind His heavenly glory, making Himself of no reputation and taking the form of a servant, and die the humiliating death of a sinner on the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). The self-sacrificing love of God compelled Him to pay this penalty. “*Greater love has no one*

than this, to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). *“God demonstrates His love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8).

When the Israelites were bitten by poisonous snakes in the wilderness, Moses symbolically demonstrated the Messiah’s future work of redemption to them (Num. 21:6-9). He made a bronze snake which he placed on a high pole, and those who looked at it in faith were healed. People who failed to follow this instruction died from the poison of the snakes. In a spiritual sense, all people are contaminated by the poison of the snake, Satan, through the hereditary fall of Adam into sin (Rom. 5:12), thus accounting for the sinful nature with which each person is born.

There is only one solution to this spiritual disease which causes certain death, and that is to faithfully look on Him who has taken our sins upon Himself and died for them. Peter says, *“Christ also suffered for us, ... Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth; ...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree ... by whose stripes you were healed”* (1 Pet. 2:21-24). Our pernicious spiritual disease is healed by His sacrifice.

The Wonder of Faith in God

Faith in God through Jesus Christ is a gift from the Lord which can only be imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. It happens when we hear the gospel of salvation: *“...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). In the Bible, all people without a God-given faith are described as unbelievers, even though they may believe in one or other idol. Such people practice a false faith (actually superstition) which cannot save their souls. Unsaved people are described as those *“whose minds the god of this age [Satan] has blinded, who do not believe”* (2 Cor. 4:4).

Unfortunately, there are many people who love darkness rather than the light, hence they do not come to the Lord Jesus to be saved. The temporary pleasure of sin keeps them away from the Lord’s saving grace, and that explains why they, due to

their own foolishness, remain under the judgements of God.

A true faith only comes from the Lord. Everyone who receives the Lord Jesus as Savior by faith becomes a child of God in a spiritual sense (John 1:12). He passes from death to life (John 5:24) and enjoys all the blessings which have been promised to faithful followers of Jesus Christ. At the same time, his faith exempts him from God’s judgements upon unbelievers: *“He who believes in Him [Christ] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”* (John 3:18).

The Wonder of Salvation from Perdition

We are living in a transient world in which all forms of life are aging and eventually perish. Human beings are in two different ways subjected to the power of death: they do not only have mortal bodies but they also died spiritually as a result of the Fall (Gen. 2:17; 1 Cor. 15:22). Because of that, they are faced with the first death of the body as well as the eternal second death in hell because of their sins. Converts are saved from both these forms of death by virtue of the atoning death of Christ.

At conversion we are immediately spiritually quickened and thereby saved from the threatening danger of the second death in hell: *“And you He made alive, who were dead in the trespasses and sins”* (Eph. 2:1; cf. Col. 2:13).

As far as the body is concerned, our immortal souls still reside within mortal bodies which are subject to the first death. However, we have no fear for death because the Lord has promised to us immortal resurrection bodies which we will receive during the resurrection of the just at the end of the church dispensation (that is the first resurrection):

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.

Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ,

and shall reign with Him a thousand years”
(Rev. 20:6).

The unsaved dead will not live again until the thousand years are finished (Rev. 20:5), after which they will be cast bodily into the lake of fire where they will be subject to the torture of eternal death – that is the second death (Rev. 20:14).

Have you bowed down before the Lord in faith to be saved from death? He offers mercy to all since members of all nations walk in spiritual darkness and need to be saved. He invites people everywhere to be saved,

*“Look to Me and be saved,
all you ends of the earth!”*
(Isa. 45:22).

The Wonder of Eternal Life

Believers are not only saved from the power of death but they also receive a new life from Christ, which is eternal and perfect. He said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life”* (John 6:47). Every person has a choice between two destinies: he either accepts the forgiveness and eternal life which Christ offers to him, or he remains in his sin and heads for eternal perdition:

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of
God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”*
(Rom. 6:23).

All people will ultimately have to bow the knee before the Lord Jesus as Judge, who will condemn the wicked and confirm the eternal life and blessings of the just:

*“And these [the wicked] will go away into
everlasting punishment, but the righteous into
eternal life”*
(Matt. 25:46).

We can right now have full assurance about our final destination since, after being born again, we receive the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that we are saved:

*“And this is the testimony: that God has given
us eternal life, and this life is in His Son”*
(1 John 5:11; cf. Rom. 8:16).

The unsaved people are convicted of their sin and lost state by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), but they fail to confess their sins to Christ and to trust Him for salvation. They live fatalistically under the domination of a bad conscience which accuses them of their sin, but that is not necessary as the gift of forgiveness, salvation and a new life is offered to all sinners.

The full implications of salvation

The five wonders which form the basis of our regeneration transforms us into a new life in which we are commanded to put on God’s holiness by being conformed to the image of His Son. All five of the divine wonders which are mentioned in John 3:16 should increasingly manifest as characteristics of our new life in Christ.

Our spiritual lives should therefore not only change basically at our salvation, but continue to develop qualitatively as we pursue higher levels of dedication. The Holy Spirit guides us along the path of sanctification and spiritual growth to equip us towards serving the Lord in a more fruitful way. The five wonders of salvation should therefore also be practically demonstrated:

Divine Love as a Principle of Life

The same *agape* love which moved God to send His Son to the world as Savior is also given to us as the foundation of the new life which is imparted to us. Through rebirth we receive changed hearts which function in accordance with the principles of divine love. Paul says, *“...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”* (Rom. 5:5).

At the same time, the Holy Spirit also comes to dwell in our hearts to guide us into all truth and to convict us of sin if we fail to observe the principles of this love. He convicts us of the righteousness of Christ so we may know how to single-mindedly walk in the light of *agape* love.

He also gives us the strength and grace to give practical expression to our new nature. We are confronted by the challenge to be filled with all the fullness of God, as then alone would we be able to fully honor His love in our thoughts, words and actions.

To what degree does your life conform to the nature and dictates of divine love? Your life will clearly show where you stand, since the following actions and dispositions are basic characteristics of this love:

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. ... And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love”
(1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13).

Divine love is not puffed-up and self-centered but instead pursue the interests of others. It is not embittered and unforgiving but inclined towards mending broken and strained relations. It does not condone any kind of duplicity or lies but demands that the full truth about God *and* sin is revealed. It does not reflect on previous sins that have been forgiven but fixes attention on the principles of a pure life as well as the blessed hope of Christ's second coming.

Are you rooted and grounded in this love and do you comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height of divine love? (Eph. 3:17-19). God's *agape* love is wonderful in its nature and unfathomable in its depth.

A Christian literary woman once said that the noblest and most meaningful words that she had ever read in any book are the following three words in the Bible: “*Love never fails*” (1 Cor. 13:8). What an exalted thought – everything around us perishes but God's love for us prevails forever. Nothing can destroy this love in our

hearts – not even the most hostile powers in this world or in the spirit world can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:31-39). Abide in Him every moment of every day (John 15:4-6).

We only have one basic command in the New Testament, and that is to demonstrate divine love on all levels of our existence. It should manifest as love towards God and love towards fellow human beings. If you truly love God you will not serve other gods, nor act dishonorably towards Him in any other way. You will also refrain from harming your neighbor, and therefore will not need any Old Testament laws to govern your relations with other people. “*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ... Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Rom. 13:8, 10). If you observe divine love you will not falter.

The question is whether we fully honor the commandment of love? It should be particularly evident in mutual relations among Christians. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”
(John 13:34-35).

Believers should also show divine love to a lost world since, by its very nature, this love is meant to be a basic motivation for proclaiming the Gospel to all peoples and nations on earth. Nobody should be denied the opportunity of receiving the wonderful gift of salvation. To that end, love transcends typical human reactions and will move us to also love our enemies – not with a humanistic love which only prompts humanitarian aid and interfaith compromise, but with a divine love which leads to the proclaiming of repentance and forgiveness to all sinners.

Complete Identification with Christ

Jesus Christ is the mighty Savior who descended from heaven to fallen humanity. We should not only receive Him as Savior in our lives but also grow up spiritually until Christ is formed in our lives. We should not be bogged down and stagnate at the beginning of our spiritual journey, but grow up to the stature of the mature man or woman in Christ.

Can other people see Christ in your life? We are called upon to be witnesses for Christ, the Savior of the world. A personal relationship with Him, rather than religious laws and rituals, is the key to salvation (Acts 4:12).

Paul was anxious about the Galatians as they were more interested in maintaining a relationship with law and the celebration of Jewish festivals, than maintaining a relationship with Christ. His desire was that they would become conformed to Christ and that His divine love would shine through them (Gal. 4:9, 19). A life in Christ is the only solution to a fleshly life of sin, and that is the reason why Paul said to the church in Rome:

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts”
(Rom. 13:14).

A Strong and Unshakable faith

The gift of faith will be strengthened in our hearts if we are serious about our relationship with God. Jesus often described His disciples as people of little faith (Matt. 16:8). They realized this weakness and asked Him: *“Lord, increase our faith”* (Luke 17:5). We should endeavor to be built up in our most holy faith (Jude v. 20), and prevent being children in our spiritual lives who are tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

The way of faith is a life of continuous struggle against an unbelieving world. As believers we should live like people who perceive the unseen world and experience the presence of the Lord Jesus in the spiritual realm. We must testify about His presence and look forward to the day when the kingdom of Christ will be visibly revealed on

earth: *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses”* (1 Tim. 6:12). There is a battle to be fought in a spiritually hostile world and a victory to be gained.

Some Christians do not fight the good fight of faith; neither are they serious about the guidance of the Holy Spirit who warns us against evil through our conscience and also through the Word. Some of them even reject a life of faith. Paul counseled Timothy to commit himself to *“faith and a good conscience which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck”* (1 Tim. 1:19).

However, we should not backslide in our spiritual life but fight the good fight of faith with perseverance. Paul said to faltering Jewish believers: *“For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end”* (Heb. 3:14). To the Colossians he said that they should commit themselves to be found blameless and irreproachable in the sight of Christ, *“if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel”* (Col. 1:22-23).

Our faith must not become spiritually weakened but be built up and strengthened. The hope to appear before Christ one day and to be part of His kingdom, is a purifying hope which motivates us to live holy and blameless lives. John says:

“And everyone who has this hope in Him [the revelation of Christ] purifies himself, just as He is pure”
(1 John 3:3).

The witness of the redeemed in a sinful world

In His love and saving grace the Lord calls us from the darkness of sin into His wonderful light. He saves us from a depraved world which is heading for the judgements of God.

Through faith we have an unbroken relationship with Him. We are no longer part of the perishing world as we are saved and were transferred from the broad way of sin and unrighteousness to the narrow way of God's righteousness. This change imposes a big spiritual and moral responsibility on us since we have the obligation to follow the steps of Christ, walk as children of the light and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness – neither with false religions (Eph. 5:1-11).

Our witness and values may cause confrontation with the wicked and perishing world around us, and that may even give rise to the persecution of the minority of believers.

Although we have already been liberated from the power of eternal death in our inward man, we are living in perishable bodies which are part of the natural cycle of growth, ageing and death. We still await the salvation of our physical bodies, but that will only occur at the resurrection of the just when Christ will come to catch us away to heaven. On that day we will be clothed with imperishable, glorified bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

Right now we need our weak, earthly bodies to serve the Lord (Rom. 6:11-13), but these bodies also expose us to the wicked world which can tempt us through our senses to sin. Due to the weaknesses of our fallen bodies we may also suffer pain and tribulation. As this body grows old and feeble our hope is focused more strongly on the heavenly body which we will receive when Christ come again:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent [our earthly body], is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands [our future

glorified body], eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven”
(2 Cor. 4:16–5:2).

Proclaimers of Eternal Life

With eternal life already established in our spirit and soul we should day by day live as people whose destiny far exceeds the temporary existence of our mortal bodies. This vision and future expectation compels us to be proclaimers and ambassadors for eternal life in Christ.

We should not complain and ask questions on why we should still remain in this transient and spiritually dark world for a time. We have, after all, been appointed to be the light of the world with the express purpose of giving the lost new hope.

It is exactly here, in the midst of the unsaved multitudes, where the Lord needs us so that many of them may also become partakers of the new life in Christ. We owe it to every dying soul to share the good news with him that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The judgements are only destined to those who have despised the message of salvation because they love darkness rather than the light.

However, do not be in a hurry to condemn the unsaved as many of them do not realize what exactly is at stake in their spiritual lives. The message of eternal life should be proclaimed in a very clear and convincing way so they can realize that sinners in their unsaved state are without God and without hope in the world.

Only Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. The eternal life which He offers to lost humanity can be obtained in no other way than in prayer and by faith before His throne of grace. The opportunity to do so should be seized now because there will be no second chance for repentance from a life of sin after death.