

Old Things Pass Away As All Things Become New

'If anyone is (grafted) into the Messiah, they are a new (spiritual) creation. The old things (earthly desires, worldly behaviour) have passed away. Behold, all things (spiritually) have become new. All things are of God Who reconciled us to Himself through Jesus the Messiah and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Jesus reconciling the world to Himself, not judging them for their trespasses, having committed to us the Word (Gospel) of reconciliation. We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Jesus as though God were entreating the world by us. We beg you on behalf of Jesus, be reconciled to God. For Jesus Who knew no sin, God made to be sin on our behalf so in Him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:17 to 21).

'In Messiah Jesus, being Jewish or Gentile is not important, but we are a new creation' (Galatians 6:15).

When we read these passages of scripture, many people think the Lord means their earthly lives suddenly become new but that is not what the Bible means. When the Lord said all things have become new, He meant in the spiritual realm of salvation, which gradually brings positive changes into our earthly lives. When an adult is born-again, they do not suddenly have a new spouse, new house, new children, new location or a new job. Becoming 'new' in this context is being removed out of the kingdom of darkness of sin and hopelessness, into the Kingdom of God with His divine Light, hope and eternal life. The purpose of God's redemption has always been to reconcile mankind back to Himself. Through accepting the blood and cross of Jesus, we become fit to be able to enter into the Kingdom of God. 'Give thanks to the Father Who made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of God's people in Light, Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love in Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins' (Colossians 1:12 to 14).

The only source of God's revelation to mankind is the Bible; the spoken Word of God written down as the Lord instructed His prophets. Almost every chapter in the Bible contains references to the supernatural world of God. God is Spirit (John 4:24), so naturally when we give our lives to the Lord we immediately enter into the supernatural realm of God and that is what becomes new to us. The Bible is the only scriptural record of the early church's beginning. It is not possible to consider a new life in God without supernatural power and experiences. Supernatural events are intrinsic to a full Christian life and the beginning of that life brings forth the 'new creation' with the aid of baptism in Holy Spirit. All the early Christians received that experience. Without the help of the Holy Spirit we may become religious but not genuinely and fully committed to God. The words, "If anyone is in the Messiah," can only mean people who are born-again, which is a spiritual transformation and not visible to our sight but is so important to God, the holy angels rejoice every time a person repents and turns to God for salvation. Jesus said, "I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the holy angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). When a person is born-again, they accept God Who is Spirit so we then become spiritually aware with a new 'birth' and a new nature. Being born-again is like a new start, a second chance. When we were born as infants we were physically alive but spiritually unaware, but when we are born-again we are physically alive and spiritually alive with God.

With the spiritual change that being born-again brings, comes gradual changes of our attitudes and beliefs until we have the attitudes, thoughts and the good behaviour of Jesus. The more committed a person is to God, the faster they will grow in God. The less committed a person is, the slower the spiritual growth and the chances of falling away from God is higher. Once we walk through the door of salvation, a totally new spiritual world opens up to us. That is when everything becomes new. Every valuable spiritual thing God is giving to us is hidden within the salvation message of Jesus. There is an enormous difference between earthly education and the carnal wisdom of this world, and the spiritual wisdom of the knowledge of God. The world does not have the answers to the many problems people in the world face daily. Mankind's wisdom cannot impart spiritual truth. Before we are born-again, as a naturally thinking person we cannot comprehend the things of God and consider them foolish but after we are born-again, as we walk in God, the things of God become more and more clear. God gives us spiritual discernment and eventually, we walk with the mindset of our Messiah. 'The things we speak, not what mankind's wisdom teaches, but what the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. The natural man (or woman) cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to them. They cannot understand spiritual things because they are spiritually discerned, but those who are spiritual, discern all things and the spiritual person is judged by no one (but God). Who has known the mind of the Lord so they should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Jesus our Messiah' (1 Corinthians 2:13 to 16).

As we walk with God in this newness of life, our lives slowly change. The old life and old habits 'die' as the 'new' life with new attitudes, aspirations and a desire to please God develops. Some things become new for us quite quickly but other things take time. Sometimes God demands we give up things we enjoy to wholly follow Him. Other times the Lord demands we obey Him exactly as He has instructed us. One thing the Lord

demands of us is to be baptised. 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). When we obediently follow the Lord in the waters of baptism by full immersion, we are declaring our desire to 'die' to our old life and live with God in our new, spiritually aware life. Coming up out of the waters of baptism is a declaration of our spiritual resurrection from bondage to sin, to freedom and forgiveness of sin. 'We were buried with Jesus through baptism to death, so just like Jesus was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we will also be part of His resurrection. Knowing our 'old sinful selves' were crucified with Him so the body of sin might be done away with, we are no longer in bondage to sin. Those who have died have been freed from sin but if we died with Jesus, we will also live with Him. Jesus, Who was raised from the dead can die no more. Death has no dominion over Him, for the death that He died, He died to sin one time but the life He lives (in heaven), He lives to God. Thus consider yourselves also to be dead to sin but alive to God in Messiah Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6:4 to 11).

The life we have before being born-again is referred to as being the 'old man' and the new spiritual life we live in God is referred to as being a 'new creation' or a 'new man'. Scripturally, we need to consciously 'put on' the 'new man' as we 'put off' the 'old man'. 'Put away your former way of life, the 'old man', that grows corrupt after the lusts of deceit and be renewed in the spirit (attitude, aspirations) of your mind. Put on the 'new man', who in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (Ephesians 4:22 to 24). 'Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the 'old man' with his evil behaviours and have put on the 'new man', who is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator' (Colossians 3:9 & 10). As the 'old man' transforms into the 'new man' as born-again believers give up their sin, so also the transformation of reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles takes place forming 'one new man'. Jesus removed the barrier between Jews and Gentiles through His suffering, death and His shed blood on the cross. He died for all humanity, Jews and Gentiles alike. That reconciliation makes every person who accepts Jesus, joint heirs with Him and members of His Body of believers. Gentiles had absolutely no hope of salvation without Jesus our Messiah, Who was Jewish. 'You were at that time separate from the Messiah, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world but now in Messiah Jesus, you who were once far away from God are made near to Him in the blood of Jesus. He is our peace, Who made both (Jews and Gentiles) one Body and He broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the hostility, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so He could create in Himself 'one new man' of the two, making peace and reconciling them both in one Body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility ... Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the Body, fellow partakers of His promise in Messiah Jesus through the Gospel' (Ephesians 2:12 to 16; 3:6).

When we are identified with Jesus in death – His death on the cross and our death to sin, we then identify ourselves with Him in burial. The outward process of our 'death' to sin is baptism in water by full submersion. When people die and are buried, they do not have small amount of earth sprinkled on them, the body is fully covered by soil. In the same way, when we are identifying our 'death' to sin it should be by being fully covered by water, not sprinkled. Those people who refuse to be baptised are refusing to be 'buried' with Jesus. If we refuse to be buried then it is impossible to be raised up from the watery 'grave'. We cannot then be resurrected to new life, just as Jesus was resurrected to His life in heaven with His new resurrected body. The two go hand-in-hand. If we refuse to identify with Jesus via the waters of baptism, we are cut off from the chain of events that leads to our identification with Jesus in resurrection. That means we cannot fully walk in newness of life because baptism is our 'burial' with Jesus. When we study the lives of the early Christians, we can discern they were all believers, they were all baptised in water by full immersion and they all received the gift of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. They were what we now refer to as being Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical or Messianic Christians. Being baptised by full immersion the way the Bible tells us to, is an act of conscious obedience. Refusal to be baptised is an act of deliberate rebellion and disobedience. Notice what Jesus said, "Most certainly (strongly, adamantly) I tell you, unless a person is born of water (baptism) and the Holy Spirit, they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God!" (John 3:5).

We are identified with Him by being made alive in God just as God raised Jesus from the dead. If we do not 'die' to self and sin and are buried, we cannot be raised and made alive with Him again. 'This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you. Not by removing the dirt of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus' (1 Peter 3:21). Jesus died, was buried, was resurrected and then enthroned. We are identified with Jesus in death, burial, resurrection and being enthroned. If we want to be enthroned with Him in heaven, we must first 'die' to self, be 'buried' in baptism, raised out of the water and only then will we be able take our rightful place on the throne. That is where we belong. After we begin the process of salvation on earth, we later go on to the Kingdom of God and that is when we sit with Jesus on the throne. Just like Jesus before us, before we can go up to the throne, we first have to go down to 'death to self' and 'burial' before resurrection. When we are in Jesus and identified with Him, we have the

right to go right to the top – to the throne. Jesus' destination is our destination. We do not please God by false humility and settling for less. His ultimate goal for us is to be enthroned in high heavenly places so our goal for us should be the same. As far as God is concerned – it has already been done. Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He does not have to do anything more for us. He has finished the process so we must complete the process. For us, it will not be real unless we receive by faith, that spirit of revelation and knowledge, then we need to act on it. As long as people stand outside of spiritual things they cannot see the whole picture. Once they walk through the whole process, then the truth and His wisdom can be revealed.

Some of the early Christians had come out of deep idolatry. The immense changes in their lives were brought about by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. There are people who have the wrong attitude regarding the gift of the Holy Spirit. Being baptised in the Holy Spirit is not an ultimate goal nor is it a gateway. It is an act of obedience. We do not stop living once we have attained the Holy Spirit. We cannot just sit in church every week and think we have reached our goal. The wonderful blessing and experience of being baptised in the Holy Spirit is too fantastic to be able to explain in words. It is a deeply spiritual experience that only those who are baptised in the Holy Spirit can fully understand. The way into the Kingdom of God is to repent, be baptised in water and receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). That is to happen in the beginning of our spiritual walk as we begin to put off the 'old man'. In the early church it was normal for every believer to be baptised in water and in the Holy Spirit as soon as they had put their faith in the Lord Jesus. That was the normal pattern. There was no waiting around for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It happened almost as soon as they had accepted Jesus. Straight after that, they went on into the fullness of the Christian life. The life of a Christian is a supernatural life. The gateway into our new life is the supernatural experience of being born-again. If we remove the supernatural aspect of salvation we cannot have scriptural Christianity.

Once we have received the Holy Spirit, as we grow in God we supernaturally receive the knowledge and revelations of God, His wisdom, power to witness, power to cast out demons, discernment, healing with the laying on of hands, peace, comfort, the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues and interpretation, and we are able to 'hear' the spiritual voice of God as He instructs us. All of those attributes are past mere believing. Those things come by knowing Him, listening to Him, walking with Him and worshipping Him. The Holy Spirit opens the 'eyes' of our hearts, our spiritual eyes and enlightens us so we can fully understand the hope of His calling (Ephesians 1:18). The hope of our calling as believers is the only hope mankind has. Hope always relates to the future – that is the hope of eternity. When we fully understand the reality of our eternal life that lies ahead, we live differently. We know our lives are constantly being scrutinised by God so we will be able to receive our rewards for what we have done in our bodies whether for good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). God is constantly watching us all and people are often surprised to learn, God writes down everything we do and say in His books held in heaven, and we will be judged accordingly (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12). When we fully comprehend the reality of that, we should tread carefully. We cannot live a genuine Christian life unless heaven is a reality in our hearts, not just our minds. Our minds believe, our hearts know and comprehend the reality of eternal life with God. We know where we are going after we die. We are no longer lost. All of these things are what God meant by 'all things become new'. All of the blessings mentioned in this paragraph are new to a new Christian. The old attitudes, rebelliousness and hopelessness all pass away when we are born-again and live in obedience.

The hope, the inheritance and the power of God will be only theology or religious language until God gives us the spirit of revelation and knowledge that make these things real to us. All believers in Jesus have been raised from spiritual death into spiritual life. People who are unsaved, those who do not want to walk with God do not know such changes can occur. People who are spiritually lost do not realise there is such a thing as salvation. When unsaved people open themselves to God, He slowly brings them to the point of receiving the sacrifice of Jesus, even though there is no intellectual knowledge of His working quietly in our hearts that bring us to the point of salvation, which is through His mercy and His grace. We cannot be saved by our own efforts or by our own 'good works' so we cannot boast about it and God receives all the glory for our salvation. 'By grace you have been saved through faith and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of your works so no one can boast' (Ephesians 2:8 & 9). After we believe, have accepted Jesus and after our repentance, we are justified by faith. That means we are acquitted of guilt, becoming the righteousness of Jesus through His blood. We cannot be bold in our own righteousness but we can be bold in the righteousness of Jesus. 'The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus is for all who believe. There is no distinction, for all people have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Jesus' (Romans 3:22 to 24). 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul will be joyful in my God for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness just as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels' (Isaiah 61:10). We are saved and justified by faith and His grace. We cannot be justified by any amount of good works – we must be justified by faith and faith alone.

As we walk with God, one of the things we must overcome is the tongue (James 1:26). Lying, gossiping, nastiness and boasting are all called sins of the mouth. 'With the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride for the curses and lies which they utter' (Psalm 59:12). 'The tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how a small fire can spread to a large forest. The tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire by Gehenna. Every kind of animal, bird, reptile and thing in the sea has been tamed by mankind, but nobody can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison' (James 3:5 to 8).

Another 'new' thing is our future, which is spoken of as though it has already happened, yet we are still on earth so the Lord has already worked out our future. 'God has raised us up with Jesus and made us able to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Jesus' (Ephesians 2:6). Through our faith in Jesus, God has raised us up – He has resurrected us and He has enthroned us. It is not going to happen – it has happened to all those who believe. We have been identified with Jesus because He took our place on the cross. He bore our guilt, He paid our penalty and He died our death. We are already able to identify ourselves with Him. The Bible says, "I am crucified with Jesus – it is no longer I who lives but Jesus Who lives in me. The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). All that God has planned in eternity for us is being worked out in our lives here on earth.

Yet another 'new thing' that occurs after salvation is our holy priesthood. The priesthood of born-again believers is nothing like religious priests in the church. Our role as priests to God is to sanctify ourselves and live holy lives worthy of our relationship with our holy God. We are to offer up sacrifices of worship, praise, thanksgiving, prayer and obedient service. 'Sanctify yourselves and be holy for I am the Lord your God' (Leviticus 20:7). 'I urge you brothers (and sisters) by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing and perfect will of God' (Romans 12:1 & 2). 'Put away all wickedness, all deceit, hypocrisies, envies and all evil speaking. As newborn baby Christians, long for the pure milk of the Word of God so you may grow in God if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Come to Him as a living stone, rejected indeed by men but chosen by God, precious as living stones, built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus' (1 Peter 2:1 to 5).

When we become holy priests to God we also become rulers with God. He even calls us 'kings' and collectively, a chosen race of people. 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession so you may proclaim the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light, who in time past were not a people but now are God's people. You who had not obtained mercy have now obtained mercy' (1 Peter 2:9 & 10). The business of a king is to rule and Christians are to 'rule' by prayer and humility. People who are not saved cannot comprehend how important these various 'new spiritual things' are to our eternity and we can only change our lives by the grace of God. We cannot change by ourselves. We all need His help. As time goes by, we may marry, raise children, move house or get a new job but as born-again believers, those things are now all considered to be as 'unto the Lord' and not the fulfilment of earthly desires. Many people realise they must change their lives in order to please God. The Bible is filled with Godly directions given to us to follow. When the Bible says we are not to do some things, then for our own sake and for the sake of our spiritual growth in God, we should cease doing those things. When the Bible instructs us to do good, righteous works, then we must do those good, righteous works. The works we do that God approves of, make up our spiritual garments of pure white linen, the clothing the Lord will give us on the day born-again believers become the 'Bride' of Jesus the Lamb. 'Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Let us give the glory to God for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. Permission was given to her so she could array herself in bright, pure, fine linen, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of God's people. Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. These are true words of God' (Revelation 19:7 to 9).

Amen and God bless you.

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