



Glenn Brown

441 ½ Lark Drive
Grand Junction, Colorado 81504

Telephone 970-434-1377
Email casabrn441@gmail.com
Website www.glennbrownministries.com

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HOW OLD IS GOD?

One Saturday last month I visited *Beit Lechem*, a Messianic church in Fruita, when one of my long-time friends, Mike Wuertemburg, was bringing the message. He did a great job. A Messianic church is a Christian church with a Jewish flavor. For instance, their Sabbath is Saturday, not Sunday. *Beit Lechem* is Hebrew for House of Bread. Mike and Edith are serious followers of Jesus. Years ago he was a prison chaplain, and then he and Edith went to Uganda for 10 years as missionaries, and they are raising funds to return to Uganda although they are in their 70's!

During the worship, various members of the congregation, from young to old, came to the front where they waved beautiful symbolic flags and danced. That is the way Jews worship, and it was very reverent and beautiful.

During this time of worship, I believe that I had a flash of revelation about God. I suddenly seemed to know, perceive, see that God is young, not old. If we could see Him physically, He would not look like an old, old man with a long white beard; He would look more like Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus in *The Chosen*.

Yes, I know He has always existed and is called the Ancient of Days in the Bible, but age is a meaningless concept in eternity. *God is, and was, and is to come. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.* But His essential nature is not old, decrepit, tired, worn-out, wizened. God is in His nature, in His essence, joyful, hopeful, and enthusiastic about life and about the future. Those are youthful characteristics.

Zephaniah 3:17 has a great insight about God and the way He feels about you: *The Lord your God is with you and is mighty to save, He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.*

One of the many scriptures that affirm that Jesus was God is Hebrews 13:8, which says, *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.* The first "sign" that Jesus performed in the book of John was when he attended a Jewish wedding. Those weddings lasted for several days and included a lot of dancing and

celebrating. Do you think Jesus sat in a corner and frowned at those folks? He entered into their joyful time so fully that He transformed many gallons of water into wine, and He surely entered into their dancing with gusto. Picture God - - - dancing!

And I have some wonderful news for you. When we join Him in heaven, *We will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is.* We, also, are going to be forever young!

NEBO STOOPS LOW

Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 46, *Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low...* Bel, or Baal, was the chief deity of the Babylonians, and Nebo was his son, "the god of learning and writing." Isaiah reports that the huge idols of Baal and Nebo were too heavy for the carts and oxen on which the Babylonians were trying to carry them away. Nebo was one of the false gods of the worldly people of Babylon that could not carry or rescue their nation from the judgment that was coming on them.

God then tells the people of Israel, in contrast, that He has been carrying them all during their history.

Nebo is, I believe, also one of the false gods of the United States. We idolize education and learning. How many political speeches and commencement speeches at graduation ceremonies have declared that education is the answer to mankind's every problem? Education is, of course, an advantage and a great blessing. But I am reminded of an old story which may be true or may be apocryphal:

Back during the depression a teen-aged boy broke into a boxcar to steal whatever he could. The president of the railroad felt compassion on the young man and decided to help him out. He decided that the railroad would not press criminal charges against the young man, and he personally raised funds to pay for his college education and subsequent degree in law.

Years passed, the young man rose to lead a company described as a corporate raider, and through underhanded means was able to seize control of the railroad and oust the president who had been so kind to him. So a young man who stole from the boxcar of a railroad was enabled via education to steal the whole railroad.

The point is that education greatly increases a person's power to do good or evil, and unless his heart is changed he may choose to do great evil.

Do you realize that the Ivy League Universities, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, etc, were all founded by clergymen primarily to better prepare and educate young men (nearly all men at that time) for the gospel ministry? If you go to the websites of those universities today you will see that they either ignore or downplay that historical fact. That's revisionism. Today, the minds of the leaders in government, industry, law, and education that are being shaped in these universities are being thoroughly inculcated in the wisdom of Nebo, but their hearts are being left unchanged.

A survey of high school students raised in Cristian homes asked, "What is most important to your parents regarding your future, being successful and wealthy or being faithful Christians with good character?" Overwhelmingly they said that being successful and wealthy was what their parents wanted most for them. We may fool our fellow church members, but we surely can't fool our kids about what is really important to us.

Jesus said, *What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul?* Do you really believe that? Is your heart bowing down to Nebo or to Jesus Christ?

WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGED

(Following is David Yarnes' story of how his life changed in a moment. David is Executive Vice President of Morning Star Ministries.)

"One evening, almost forty years ago, I was standing outside a small bar talking to a man I had never met before. I was eighteen years old. There was something different about that man, and I was drawn to him. After talking for only a minute or two, I told him I saw something in him that I desperately needed.

He said to me, "You may have tried meditation or some other spiritual observances, but you're missing something that is more important than you can know - you must be born again." He went on to explain to me in simple terms the foundation of Christian faith.

I had lived my life up until that point apart from God. My life and the mistakes and sins I had committed caused me to be self-reliant and separate from God. Although I had never heard the words this man had spoken before, I knew them to be truth of the highest level. No one had to convince me I needed God to come into my very being and turn on the light where there had been only darkness and emptiness.

I knew that my whole life needed to be transformed. It happened that evening. With a simple prayer, I made a choice in my own will and said something like this:

'God, I want You to rule over my being and my nature. I realize I have been living a self-reliant life and I have committed sins that have displeased you and hurt others. Even though I don't fully understand, I know that you provided a sacrifice and an entry point through the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Forgive me. Please come and live in me now. I want to be a new creature.'

That very night, I went from darkness to light and to possessing the eternal life of God. There were many habits and mindsets that needed to be corrected and changed over a period of time, but from that day I was different from what I had been before.

Without a connection with the living God, life is just about human psychology and skill development. These are important, but they can't take us to our highest destiny and to an awareness of the purpose for life."

My (Glenn) question to you, my friends, is - Have you been born again? This, of course, is the insight that Jesus shared with Nicodemus, the Pharisee, in the 3rd chapter of John. Nicodemus was a good man, a religious man, and a faithful man of God, but he knew there was some key, some central truth, some experience that he needed. Jesus explained it to him.

Perhaps you are a good person, you believe in God, and you attend and serve and give to the church. But have you been born from above?

I'm not trying to put guilt on anyone, but this issue is too important to ignore. You may want to pray the prayer that David Yarnes prayed to God, above. Also, you may want to read and reflect on the little book of 1st John which is near the end of the New Testament.

1 John 5:13 says, *These things have been written* (he is referring to the epistle of 1st John)....*so that you may know you have eternal life....* God wants us to know, to be sure about this matter.

A HORRIBLE VISION

About 25 years ago I went on a mission trip in Mexico with Ford Wilson, a lifetime missionary. One of the churches we ministered in was a small church up on the side of a mountain. Following the service, we were invited to go with the men of the church to a cookout at

the home of a guy named Aurelio. He was a strong looking man in his 40's.

We got to Aurelio's home about 11 PM, and he started grilling meat out on the patio. We grilled, ate, talked (not me so much because my Spanish was inadequate) and laughed for an hour or so. I remember that we all had coats on and it was very cold. Then Aurelio started telling his story, his testimony, and it got very quiet. Ford quietly translated his words to me so I could understand it.

Aurelio said that he grew up in a godless home, and he became a godless man - drinking, fighting and cursing described his life. He got married and was very hard on his wife and kids. Then, when he was about 30, he got very sick. I don't remember what his disease was, but he was in the hospital and nearly died. He said that one night in the hospital he had an experience that was probably a vision, but it was so real he felt like it was literally happening.

Aurelio saw himself standing on the ground looking at a huge, black tornado that started in the sky and came down to earth and continued into an enormous pit going down and down. He saw an endless number of people who were being sucked into the pit, screaming as they fell into the depths. He saw demonic figures in the tornado, then an evil face stopped and looked at him. The demon said, "You are going to come to this place, but first we are going to capture one of your relatives." A few days later, one of his cousins died. His cousin was a drunkard, and Aurelio knew he was the man the demon referred to.

Aurelio said that immediately after he got out of the hospital and his cousin died that he was very frightened. He knew that hell was real and that God was giving him one final chance to change his ways. So he went to a church for the first time in his life, spent a long time talking to the pastor, seriously repented of his sins, asked his wife and kids to forgive him and determined to live for God.

He also said that he started witnessing to his immediate family and his large extended family, and I think he said that over a period of several years everyone in his family had come to the Lord. His extended family comprised a big part of the church we had just visited.

Seven times in Matthew and Luke Jesus warned people to repent or there would be "*weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth*." That was Jesus who said that, not some Old Testament prophet. I repeat, that was Jesus that gave that warning. Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus Christ, the Savior. Are you getting my point? It was Jesus, who is the Truth. It was Jesus.

The phrase, "*Reserved for the blackness of darkness forever*" is used in 2 Peter 2:17 and Jude 13. The phrase, "*down to the pit*" is used some 30 or 40 times in the Old and New Testaments. And the phrase "*bottomless pit*" is used six times in the book of Revelation.

There are two things that keep us stable in life: (1) light and (2) solid, stable footing. Think about how you feel when you arise in a pitch dark room. Neither of those two things are present in a bottomless pit. There is the blackness of darkness forever in a pit that is bottomless.

The reason there is weeping and wailing is because the men and women in that pit realize they did not have to be there. God loved them and provided a way for them to avoid that place through the death of His Son. He invited them to humble themselves and come to Him multiple times all during their life. Time after time they allowed their pride, obstinacy, and unbelief to prevent them from bowing their knee to the Lord.

In His mercy, God showed Aurelio that terrible pit in a vision, and he was wise enough to run to the Lord and be saved. God showed His mercy to me in 1973 when He allowed me to go through a demonic deliverance that scared the living daylights out of me. I know that "*God's kindness leads us to repentance*," but sometimes He gives us a jump-start by scaring us back to reality.

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A WATCH IN THE NIGHT

I found an interesting Bible fact that might help you win a game of Bible Trivia, but I don't think it is at all trivial.

The bible mentions "a watch in the night" several times.

- a. What was a watch in the night?
- b. How long was it?

Answer to a.: Cities and armies posted sentries at night to watch out for enemies. Modern armies still do this.

Answer to b.: The Romans had 4 night-watches: 6-9 PM; 9 PM-Midnight; Midnight-3 AM; 3-6 AM.

The Jews had 3 night-watches: Sunset-10 PM; 10 PM-2 AM; 2 AM-Sunrise.

The part that is not trivial: We are told numerous times in the Bible that the people of God must: "Watch! Stay alert! Don't go to sleep on the job!" We have an enemy, and "*he is roaming around, seeking whom he may devour!*" These are dangerous times. We fathers and mothers, pastors, leaders need to constantly be on watch.

And Moses wrote in the 90th Psalm (there are 150 Psalms and this is the only one that Moses wrote):

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that is past, or like a watch in the night. (Ps. 90:4)

I hope you will read and meditate on Psalm 90. Such a beautiful Psalm. Such great wisdom. Such an amazing and great God.

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THE BOOK OF ROMANS: The sinfulness of man and the righteousness of God

(Romans has been called the greatest theological document ever written. In it, Paul explains the Good News - the climactic revelation of God to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. Following is a part of Paul's introduction in Chapter 1, selected verses.)

"God shows his anger (or wrath) from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature, so they have no excuse for not knowing God.

Although they knew about God, they would not worship him or give him thanks, so their minds became dark and confused.....So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie.....Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.....

Their lives became full of every kind of sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, disobey their parents, refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy.

They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them too.....

I am not ashamed of the Good News because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.....For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith, from first to last. Just as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

(And from Chapter 3)

"Everyone has sinned, we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness,

declares that we are righteous when we believe that Jesus sacrificed his life by shedding his blood on the cross for us."

As I'm sure you know, to "believe" is not simply to agree with the gospel in your mind but to repent in your heart for your independent, self-directed life; to turn away from your sins with God's help; and surrender to the rule of God who loves you. Oh, such a life of adventure and fulfillment God has in store for those who do this!

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry. If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions, you may send them to:

CANYON VIEW VINEYARD CHURCH
736 24 ½ Road Grand Junction, Co. 81505