

## Occasional Update #28

23 January 2025

### Old and New

**Luke 9:18-20** Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near Him, He asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They answered, "John the Baptist" but others, "Elijah", and still others, "one of the ancient prophets has arisen". He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God" [Christ; the Anointed One]

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The following might seem to be a bit absurd (unless you do it too!) – Quite often when my wife and I are driving somewhere, and especially when the traffic is moving slowly, we look at the number plate of the car in front of us and see if it has the 'latest' number plate (at present, about QHL846, or whatever) or what it's chosen number plate is, like 'LUV U 2'

While driving recently, we were behind a car with the number plate **LUK918**. Being a Christian, I saw this as LUKE 9:18. I thought to myself, I wonder what this verse says. I thought, 'don't be so silly', but I kept on thinking about it. When I got home I opened my Bible to about where I guessed the book of Luke started, and lo and behold it opened to the page where the first verse was Luke 9:18. It blew my mind until I read the first 3 verses (quoted above).

Thinking about Jesus' birth, as most Christians did especially last month (December), and the new year beginning this month (January), I thought about the 'Old and New' – the Old year (era) and the New year (era), especially in the Bible when Jesus was born. This was an extremely important event for the whole world, in fact.

Notice, in the verses above, that the people thought Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the ancient prophets – someone from the **past**. But He wasn't – He was God's Son, come into this world to bring something **new** – salvation through repentance, faith in Jesus' death for our sins, eternal life, and so on.

A child was born, whose name is **Jesus**, which means '**Saviour**' (Matthew 1:21) – the Saviour of everyone who believes in Him; who has repented of their sin (see what John the Baptist and Jesus said in Matthew 3:2 and 4:17), and those people who have put their faith in Him, for "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever comes to Him must believe He exists and He rewards those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6); those who have been born again (John 3:3-7) – that is, they are true believers in, and followers of, Jesus' teachings and example.

In the Old Testament, for example, people's sin was **covered** by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. In the New Testament, people's sin is **washed away** by the shed blood and death of Jesus, the only Son of God; then "He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, *never to be remembered anymore.*" (Micah 7:19)

Jesus Christ is the long-awaited Messiah who many Jews were waiting for. Prophecies were fulfilled when He came. Many of the Old Testament laws were 'fulfilled' and are no longer part of the New Testament teaching of the Christian faith. Jesus is our great High Priest; the Prophet who has come; the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

One thing that is sure is that *there is no sin in Heaven*, so no sinner can get into Heaven without first coming to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance and His forgiveness. Heaven is 'Paradise'. Adam and Eve sinned, and there is no evidence that they ever repented, so they were put out of the Garden of Eden. Lucifer was cast out of Heaven because of his pride and rebellion (Isaiah 14:12-15)

There is a sense in which God does not “send people to Hell” – some people choose not to believe in Him, or His way to forgiveness.

**The Old has passed away; the New has come.** Praise God we don't live in the old BC era (before Christ came). We live in the new AD era – the year of the Lord – King of kings and Lord of lords; our Saviour, Redeemer, the only Son of God, the Anointed One, the Messiah. Praise God for the New era in which we live! Praise God for the New Covenant [New Testament] He has given to us, to guide us in His ways.

A new year has come, and no matter what happens this year, God is with us, watching over us – always. We need not fear, for God is with us: “Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10, 13)

Yes, things will change this year – some for the better, others for the worse. As Bob Dylan's song about social and political change says, “*The times, they are a-changin'.*” There are, and will be, wars; changes in governments; and countries; Presidents and other leaders; people's customs and other behaviours, and so on. But Jesus Christ has come. He is with us. He will protect us. He is our Saviour; the Messiah has come, the Son of God, the Anointed One. The Old has passed; the New has come – may we seek the Lord, follow His teachings and His ways, put our faith in Him, and live our lives in ways which are loving and pleasing to our Lord, day-by-day, throughout this New year and beyond!

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