

New Years occurred just a couple of days ago. For nearly thirty years I attended a prayer meeting with a group of friends on this evening. We would kick off the night with a potluck dinner, then follow up with a 3-hour time of worship, praise, and listening to the Lord. At the exact stroke of midnight, we'd celebrate with a rousing rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In!" Old and young alike would dance and exult as we marched into the new year with our Lord and one another. What a fun tradition that was. But two years ago, the group decided to discontinue the tradition because so many members had aged to the point that they had difficulty being out that late, etc. Now each of us has had to decide how to start a new tradition.

This year more than any other of my life I felt a total disconnect from the Times Square scene and the descent of the ball at the stroke of midnight. It never has been a tradition for me to be caught up in it, but I've been aware of it (haven't we all) and occasionally watched part of it. This year was my last.



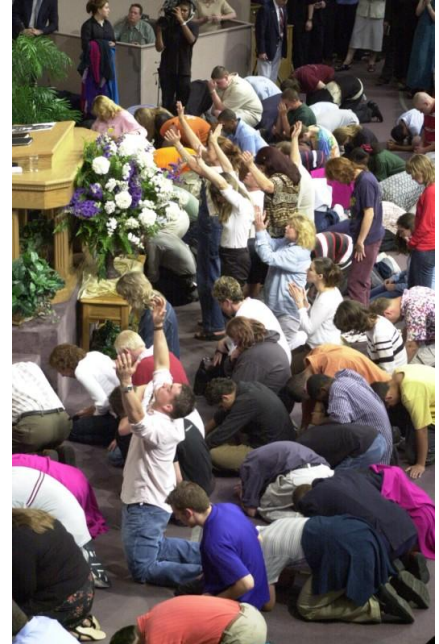
Thanks to GodTV, a channel carried on my TV network, I was able to watch some of the "One Thing Conference" and "The Call" in Kansas City, Missouri. I turned it on for about 6 hours on New Year's Eve – and soaked my heart in worship of our Beloved with about 20,000 others who were attending those meetings live. Periodically, I'd switch over to Fox News Network to see how the Times Square folks were coming along, and was just stunned at the chasm between these two lifestyles.

My intention in making these remarks is not to bash anyone for how they may choose to "ring in" another year on this planet. What I'm gripped by at the moment is a dawning in my heart of how totally "other" the invitation is to walk with Jesus really. That was one of the more wrenching things I might have done in awhile, soaking in intercession and warfare worship with the Kansas City group, then flipping over to the goings on at Times Square. Somehow it struck me that what I was seeing were the misplaced priorities in our country (among others) that God has spoken about so many times in His Word. Listen to this:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness;..."
Isaiah 5:20

I was struck by the millions of dollars that were being spent to make that event in New York City possible. All of the publicity, the non-stop coverage by all of the major TV networks, an unimaginable amount of money spent on food, beverages, lodging and travel expenses..... and all of this is an annual event! This kind of celebration is repeated in many other cities, for example in the Big Easy, New Orleans. This is a long-held tradition. Two million of us spent the night there.....

And then in Kansas City, Missouri, there was this small gathering of some 20,000 people, most of whom were between the ages of 18 and 25. What were they doing? They were worshipping the Lord of the universe, they were crying out to God for this nation, they were praying God's Word back to Him on behalf of the world. They were asking God to forgive them personally for their sins, to forgive this nation for our rebellion against Him. Isn't this amazing? The contrast is staggering. All of this brings to mind one more thing I'd like to mention.



There truly are two forces working in this world, each vying for the hearts of men. There is God, He who made us, He who redeemed us in Jesus His Son, the God-man; He who has loved us since before the foundation of the earth. He has made Himself known to us. He has spoken to us in His Word. He longs for us to turn to Him and be saved. He is truly the Light of the world. He is peace. He is joy unending. He is rest. He is calling us to come completely to Him.

And there is a second force at work in this world, Satan, the one who despises God from the very depths of his being. He who is a liar and the father of lies. His greatest desire is to convince men away to ignore and disbelieve God's Word and reject His love. He labors towards this end, not because he loves us but because he despises God. He is truly the Prince of darkness.

As you and I march into 2008 as friends and disciples of Jesus, let's check our bearings. Might I simply leave you with the exhortation Peter gave his flock:

11 Use all the armor and weaponry that God provides, so that you will be able to stand against the deceptive tactics of the Adversary. 12 For we are not struggling against human beings, but against the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers governing this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.

13 So take up every piece of war equipment God provides; so that when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist; and when the battle is won, you will still be standing. **14** Therefore, stand! Have the belt of truth buckled around your waist, put on righteousness for a breastplate, **15** and wear on your feet the readiness that comes from the Good News of shalom. **16** Always carry the shield of trust, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the Evil One. **17** And take the helmet of deliverance; along with the sword given by the Spirit, that is, the Word of God; **18 as you pray at all times, with all kinds of prayers and requests, in the Spirit, vigilantly and persistently, for all God's people. Eph. 6:13-18**

Precious friends, will you take your place on the Lord's side? Will you ask Him to show you the big picture of what is happening today? Will you allow Him to jar you awake, to startle you with the Truth? Time is short! His plans include not only having you as His friend and disciple, but also shining through you in this world, offering hope through you to others, being a light in the darkness, offering men and women a life-changing touch of His Presence wrapped in frailty.

Happy Blessed New Year!