

LOOKING UP

January-February 2023

*"...look up, and lift
up your heads."
Lk. 21:24*

Facing a New Year

BY PASTOR JASON SALMI

It seems like all of us could use some encouragement as we enter into the unknowns of a new year. This is not a new idea, nor is it unique to Christians. It has long been the tradition of many people all around the world to mark the change of their calendar with optimism for what may be in store. However, we are all aware of just what sort of unexpected (possibly unwelcome) changes can come with the passage of a mere twelve months. Vapid and baseless

optimism can leave us empty and without hope when it fails. So, while we still want to begin this year with encouragement, let's make sure that it's the kind that is not based on our circumstances. In fact, let's find hope in that which runs totally counter to our circumstances.

In John's Gospel, Jesus proclaimed to His disciples that, far from life being a bed of roses for those who followed Him, they would actually be despised and rejected because of their association with Him. He told them: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before

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Regular Schedule

Sunday

9:45 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Worship service

Holy Communion

2nd & 4th Sunday of the month

Meal

2nd Sunday of the month

Board Meeting

7:00 PM 1st Tuesday
of the month

Ladies Bible Study

10:00 AM Wednesdays

Youth Group

TBA

Friday Night Bible Study

7:00 PM Location TBA

it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (Jn 15:18-19)

This could at first sound like cold comfort to those who’d left everything behind in order to follow Him. Every one of us desires acceptance and peace with the world. Yet what Jesus came to give us is better than that. He did not come just to bring us ease and comfort. Those who follow Him are prone to all of the ills that the rest of the world is...and more; financial hardships, relationship problems, physical ailments, death...exclusion, rejection, persecution.

Then, after He’d made sure that His disciples’ eyes were fully open to what each new year might have in store for them, Jesus said something which seems unbelievable on its face: “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.” (Jn 16:33a) Nothing about what He’d laid out sounds anything like peace! But there’s a little phrase in there that is all too easy to skip over. He said, “that in me you may have peace.” Indeed, if you are in Christ, the peace which is yours isn’t able to be disturbed by your circumstances. The rest of that verse completes Jesus’ declaration: “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (16:33b)

Dear Saints who are loved by God, and are His adopted children through Jesus Christ, you may truly face this new year knowing that, whatever it brings, you belong to the One who has overcome the world. May this word of encouragement bring you peace.

Looking Ahead

January 28th
Annual Meeting

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Mt. 28:19-20

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