

## Rounding A New Corner

[based on 1 Kings 3:1-13]

Well, here we are in a brand-new year. It seems like only yesterday we were writing 2022 on our cheques...oh, wait a minute, it WAS only yesterday!!!

How many of you stayed up last night to watch the ball drop in Time Square? I understand that over a billion people each year, all across the world, watch that event. That got me to wondering about the history of the New Year's Eve "ball", and what I discovered was intriguing.

The first "time-ball" was installed on top of England's Royal Observatory at Greenwich in 1833. Since then, approximately 150 such time-balls were installed around the world, but very few are still working.

The tradition is, however, carried on today in the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., where a time-ball descends from a flagpole at noon every day – and, of course, every year in Time Square, where it marks the stroke of midnight and the beginning of the New Year.

In 1907, New York "dropped" an iron and wood ball, adorned with one hundred 25-watt light bulbs. It was 5 feet in diameter and weighted 700 pounds. Over the years, the New York "time-ball" has undergone a number of alterations. One of the most recent dramatic transformations was created by Waterford Crystal, for the millennial celebration in the year 2000. The ball was six feet in diameter, and weighed approximately 1,070 pounds. It was covered with a total of 504 crystal triangles of various sizes. Each of those triangles had a special inscription for hope – Hope for Fellowship, Hope for Peace, Hope for Wisdom, Hope for Unity, Hope for Courage, & Hope for Healing, to name just some of them.

The ball had a name, and I certainly didn't know this...it was called "The Star of Hope". Now, why would they call the New Year's ball the "Star of Hope"? Because each New Year **IS** a time for hope! It's a time for opportunity. It's a time for us to grasp hold of our future and our destiny.

Proverbs 17:24 tells us that we have the opportunity to 'lay hold of our destiny and future' for this New Year. The hope for our future depends upon us. But you know what? **That** hope doesn't lie in "wishing on a star" – which is essentially what those triangles on the Star of Hope actually are all about. The "hope" for fellowship, peace, wisdom, courage, and so on, are not based upon promises, but upon a wish for what we'd like to see take place in the next year.

Proverbs 24 says that the 'wise' man has a powerful future waiting for him, because he keeps his eyes on wisdom. By contrast, the fool has his eyes on something else...his eyes are all over the place, looking for a quick fix – the easy way.

What is the difference between the two, and how can we avoid becoming like the foolish man, so that we can get the best God wants to give us? Well, let's take a look at the fool first ... "The fool's eyes", says Proverbs, "wanders to the end of the earth". This verse has always interested me, because I can see this guy in my mind's eye...

There is a story of a woman picking berries in a strawberry patch. She would pick a strawberry here, & then look up and see another nice one a couple of rows away, and off she'd run to pick that berry. Then she'd notice another delicious specimen a few plants away and off she'd go again and again and again, all across the patch. In the time it took her to fill one basket, ten could have easily been gleaned, had her eyes been realistically focussed.

The fool is like that. He's always looking for an easy way to get ahead. He's the guy who invests in the future by buying lottery tickets. He has many relationship break-ups because no partner is ever good enough; he has trouble holding down a steady job because no job suits his talents; and of course, he can't find the perfect church...

Such folk are always looking for the greener pasture, so their eyes wander constantly. Like the lady picking fewer berries, the fool ends up doing less with his life, than he was truly capable of achieving.

By contrast, the wise man is focussed. He realizes that the only lasting success in life comes from sticking to the task at hand... no easy fixes, no running from 'pillar to post' for solutions... The wise man focusses on achieving one central objective.

And what does the wise man pursue in his life? Proverbs 17:24 shows us, that "A discerning man keeps wisdom in view."

Solomon, who was the author of Proverbs, was once asked by God to name the one thing he wanted. When Solomon asked for wisdom, God responded, (1 Kings 3:11-13 Easy-to-Read Version) "You did not ask for long life and riches for yourself. You did not ask for the death of your enemies. You asked for the wisdom to listen and make the right decisions.

So, I will give you what you asked for. I will make you wise and intelligent. I will make you wiser than anyone who ever lived or ever will live. And I will also give you what you did not ask for. You will have riches and honour all your life. There will be no other king in the world as great as you..."

Too many people believe that if they only had power, wealth and influence, they'd be happy. In looking always toward a better tomorrow, we lose the perspective of appreciating what we have right now.

Like Solomon, a wise person looks for wisdom by asking God. Hear this from James 1:5, "If any of you LACK wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all, without finding fault, and it will be given to them."

When we look to God for His wisdom in our lives, we are better off than the fool because there are NO limits to God's vision. Both as individual Christians and as a church, our ability to create a great New Year isn't limited by our own power. What God can do with our lives is the single most important advantage we have...

The renowned French Renaissance writer, Francois Rabelais stated: "I place no hope in my strength, nor in my works; but all my confidence is in God my protector, who never abandons those who have put all their hope and thought in Him..."

Friends, if we hold on to God...to His wisdom and His power...then we **will** succeed in this coming year...

I want to close with a reference to that famous chariot race in the epic movie Ben-Hur.

In the spirit of authenticity, Charlton Heston actually learned to drive the four-horse vehicle, but after weeks of practice, he expressed concern about the final shoot. He took the director aside and said, "I can drive the chariot, but I'm not sure I can win." The director said, "Chuck, you just make sure you stay in the chariot, and I'll make sure you win the race."

And that is exactly what God is saying to us... Brothers and sisters, I am honoured to be here with you in this chariot, as we learn together how to cherish the partnership we have – the partnership between you and me, and God. As we walk together, may God's wisdom be constantly with us as we look for the right path for our church moving forward, not just the easy way...

*AMEN*