

Happy New Year!

As another year draws to a close, we often hear and express our best wishes for the next—“Happy new year!” For Christians, there is truly a hope for a very happy new year. Certainly, Christians know sorrow. Scripture reminds us over and over again that there are appropriate times for those types of emotions. However, Christians have reason to be the happiest people on this earth, from any place, and from any generation. I give heartfelt thanks to God for all of my spiritual family and trust you do, too. Without question, I give all my wishes for a “happy new year!” in the best and most appropriate ways possible.

I wish you happiness ...

1. As you study and dwell on God’s word. The Psalmist put it very simply: “*I rejoice at Your word*” (**Psalm 119:162**). And also, he writes: “*I have inherited Your testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart*” (**Psalm 119:111**). Jeremiah states, “*Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts*” (**Jeremiah 15:16**). How wonderful to recognize God’s word and accept it! How blessed we are by God to have His standard, encouragement, guidance, and instruction!

2. In your salvation and in having your name written in heaven. When the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing (**Acts 8:39**). When the Philippian jailor and his house were baptized, they rejoiced (**Acts 16:34**). They had reason to rejoice, for in their obedience to the gospel, they had been baptized into Christ, where is every spiritual blessing (**Ephesians 1:3**). They had become new creatures in Christ—cleansed and redeemed from sin by the precious blood of the Lamb (**2Corinthians 5:17; 1Peter 1:18,19**).

When the seventy returned, whom Jesus had sent out two by two, they returned with joy, for the devils were subject to them through the name of Christ. However, Jesus told them to rejoice not that the spirits were subject to them, but that their names were written in heaven (**Luke 10:17-20**). Paul spoke of those whose names are in the book of life (**Philippians 4:3**). They would be those who had obeyed the gospel, who had served the Lord faithfully, who are “*the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*” (**Hebrews 12:23**).

3. In your sustaining hope. Paul told the Christians in Rome that “*we exult in hope of the glory of God*” (**Romans 5:2**). Later in the same letter he told them to rejoice in hope (**Romans 12:12**). He showed them that they were saved by hope, that is, that their hope of eternal life would be a powerful motivation in their doing the will of God, that their hope—their desire with the expectation of receiving—would ultimately become reality. But he let them know that they had eternal life in prospect, not in reality in this life—he added: “*but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it*” (**Romans 8:24,25**). The faithful have eternal life in promise: “*This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life*” (**1John 2:25**). As Paul wrote to Titus, we have “*the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago*” (**Titus 1:2**).

Just before his crucifixion Jesus said to His disciples, “*You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the*

Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Christians can rejoice because Christ does not have to taste death again, that instead of having to suffer at the hands of men, he can be in the heavenly home at the right hand of God, serving as high priest, and as our advocate, pleading our cause before the Father in heaven. He does this and we have hope to be with Him. Can you find happiness in this?!

4. In finding the lost through teaching His word. The fifteenth chapter of Luke is the story of sorrow that ends in joy when that which was lost was found. There was great joy when the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost boy were found. As there is joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner who repents, there is also rejoicing on earth among the faithful who see a sinner turn from his soul-destroying course to obey and submit to the will of God. This means that the lost have been saved from an eternity of punishment without relief to the prospects of heavenly bliss without end. Paul said that those whom he led to Christ were his *“joy and crown” (Philippians 4:1).*

While Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he rejoiced that the gospel was being preached (**Philippians 1:18**). One could rejoice in the preaching of the gospel because it is *“the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16)*. It is the power God has provided to save every person from every sin in every generation as long as the world stands. In the great commission Jesus said that His disciples were to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (**Mark 16:15**). There is reason to rejoice when this commission is carried out, and the word of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

5. In finding souls faithfully walking in the truth. John in writing to the *“chosen lady”* said, *“I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth” (2John 4)*. Then to Gaius he wrote, *“For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth” (3John 3-4)*. Not long ago my family returned from an trip through part of the western United States, and we can indeed join with John in saying that we rejoiced greatly in finding the faithful walking in truth. They were an inspiration to us, and we hope that we might have been an encouragement to them.

In writing to the Philippians Paul said that their rejoicing might be more abundant in Jesus Christ because of his coming to be with them, and that they might rejoice also in the coming of Epaphroditus (**Philippians 1:26; 2:25-28**). It is a joyful occasion when the saints can be together.

6. In being counted worthy to suffer dishonor for His name. The apostles were arrested in Jerusalem for preaching the gospel of Christ. When they were beaten and finally released, *“they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41)*. Earlier, Jesus had said, *“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11,12)*. I wish that happiness for us all.

7. When Christ comes for His bride. *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7)*. *“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen” (Revelation 22:20-21)*.