

GNITN
#287
The Year Of Distractions

Miami Vice

On January 1st of the new year, an incident in Miami somehow sparked a rumor that very tall being was seen walking the streets while an altercation of some sort was also happening at a mall. How one connected to another resulted in a flurry of internet videos and the usual conspiracy theories about UFOs, Nephilim and much more. I chose to let it play out rather than join in the talk since I had a feeling it would blow over. The amount of attention it drew actually made for one bizarre police statement from the Miami police force as we read in this [article](#) from the *Miami Herald*:

On Friday, the Miami Police Department released an Instagram video to put the rumors to bed, sparking another flood of online conversation. It was more tongue-in-cheek this time since police revealed a bombshell truth in its video — aliens did not invade Bayside. “There is now video going viral of 8- to 10-foot aliens walking around Bayside,” police say in the now-viral video. “It is just a person walking with a shadow. So I can confirm to you all here today that there are no aliens in Miami [or] Bayside Marketplace, at the moment.”

The Miami Police Department actually created a video that they posted online to explain things, but that still didn't stop people from calling it all a coverup for an alien invasion. Going back to the article we read what really happened:

On the night of New Year's Day, 911 callers reported hearing what they thought were gunshots at Bayside Marketplace, 401 Biscayne Blvd., Officer Michael Vega, a police spokesman, told the Miami Herald earlier this week.

The incorrectly reported gunshots were 50 or so juveniles shooting fireworks at people, with some looting also occurring, police said in its Friday video.

Police called a city-wide emergency as officers already at Bayside were not able to contain the situation. That alert, called a “City-wide 3”, tells all active officers in the city to respond to the incident location.

“Some officers were heavily armed and approached the crowd displaying high-powered rifles, reflecting the fact that officers were initially erroneously told the situation involved an active shooter,” the Downtown Neighbors Alliance, an organization that represents residents of several condos in the area, said in an earlier news release.

That night, four teens — a 14-year-old, two 15-year-olds and a 16-year-old — were arrested on charges ranging from burglary, third-degree grand theft, battery, and resisting arrest without violence, according to their arrest reports.

It was the eyewitness reports that started the buzz as they said that it was actually mall goers who shot at the 8 – 10ft tall creatures.

No Wait, It Was Really Bigfoot

By that headline you can tell I am a tad skeptical of this specific account, but it brings up a trend that I think will not go away anytime soon. When we have so many other more important things to keep up with like say, the war in Israel, the World Economic Forum taking over the world, or some list of people going to some island being released so we can know how depraved our leaders are, or a popular singer going to a football game. In all seriousness, the first two are very important, and the next one is concerning if it ever actually gives us names and the last one I recommend you just shake it off. With the advent of instant news, we should expect what would capture our fancy as we glance at a tabloid rag as we check out in a grocery store to now be an alert on our cell phones which then opens an article or a video. In less time that it takes us to change our minds about what clothes to wear starting our day, we have 30-60 second videos capturing our attention as we scroll from one conspiracy theory to the next. Instant doesn't mean we are more informed, but that we are more distracted. Is this going to be the year of the distracted Christian?

Now That I Have Your Attention

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"
4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. (Matt 24:3-4, NKJV)

Let's look at verse 4 in a few other translations:

Jesus said to them, "Be careful that no one leads you the wrong way. (NLV)

Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you...(NLT)

Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone fool you. (TLB)

The keyword in verse 4 is the Greek word *planaó* (plan-ah'-o) and it means *to cause to wander, to wander, I lead astray, deceive, cause to wander*. It also means *properly, go astray, get off-course; to deviate from the correct path (circuit, course), roaming into error, wandering; (passive) be misled*.

I'm not saying that a little levity in our lives is a bad thing, but the propensity to get off course for whole chunks of our time is very real thing. Television used to be a mild distraction and simple waste of time when it was just broadcast programming, but it has become a behemoth of brainwashing, propaganda, and constant confusion and chaos. Add to that the burgeoning presence of the Internet and social media and you have the perfect storm of everything I just mentioned. But at it's base, this distraction is a plot by the enemy of our souls to focus on things that aren't important at all. Which begs the question what we can do about it.

Focus, Focus, Focus

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:1-2, NIV)

I do believe that there is merit to being informed and being able to give an answer for the questions presented to us. Studying to show yourself approved as workman who doesn't need to be ashamed is right there in the Bible. But what are we studying? In a time of chaos as I believe

this year is shaping up to be, we can't afford to be diverted by shiny, sparkling lights that make for fun conversations unless there is a point to them. The greatest diversion is for both the believer and the unbeliever to lose focus of Jesus. Here is how an [article](#) from [gotquestions.org](#) puts it:

To focus is to direct one's attention or concentrate on something. If we are focused on Christ, then He has our attention; we are concentrating on Him and His word; He occupies the forefront of our minds. Such a focus is only fitting, because Jesus "is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy" (Colossians 1:18). By rights, He should be our focus.

The article goes on to tell us how to do this:

Colossians 3:1–4 contains much that can help us stay focused on Christ: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." We are to focus on "things above," remembering that Christ is seated in the place of glory and power (verse 1). The reason for the command is also given: because we have been raised to new life with Christ. To focus on the things above, we must consciously remove our focus from "earthly things" (verse 2), and the reason is given: we have died to self, and Christ is our very life (verse 3). Helping us stay focused on Christ is the reminder that Jesus is coming again, and when we see Him we will know glory (verse 4).

Let Him Give Us Focus

Here is the coping skill for overcoming this distraction growing all around us. Focus on Jesus first and then let Holy Spirit lead us where He wants our focus next. Will He tell you to read up on demons posing as aliens? He might if He needs you to address it in a witnessing opportunity. Will He tell you to become an expert on the coming one world government? Again, if it will further His kingdom, sure. It is when we just randomly entertain all these topics that the potential for wasting our time and energy can and most likely will occur. Jesus took the time to prepare His disciples about the end times in the three Olivet Discourses found in **Matthew 24**, **Luke 21**, and in **Mark 13** and they are filled with all kinds of larger than life topics like false prophets, wars, pestilence much more. He also gave the Apostle John an extremely detailed look into the future when He gave Him what would become the book of **Revelation**. But note when He did it: *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet ... (Rev 1:10, NKJV)*

John was in the spirit, which many commentators describe as being heavily influenced by Holy Spirit. In other words, very close to Him and ready to hear what He will say. You might say that John really had nothing else to do since he was on a barren, secluded island, but he could still have talked to a volleyball, well I suppose I digress there, but you get my point. Regardless, he disciplined his focus to the point that he could hear what Jesus wanted to tell him.

Set Your Mind On Things Above

Going back to what Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:2** we find a key that John also knew. So instead of letting the news cycle or scrolling and watching endless loops of fads, conspiracies, or even meaningless gossip, let us be determined to talk to Jesus first about the things He is concerned

about and go where He points us. I like how *Barnes Notes On The Bible* brings the phrase of *set your mind on things above* to life:

Set your affection - Margin, "or mind." Greek" think of" - φρονεῖτε phroneite. The thoughts should be occupied about the things where Christ now dwells, where our final home is to be, where our great interests are. Since we are raised from the death of sin, and are made to live anew, the great object of our contemplation should be the heavenly world.

Not on things on the earth - Wealth, honor, pleasure. Our affections should not be fixed on houses and lands; on scenes of fashion and gaiety; on low and debasing enjoyments.

And I also like how *Gills Exposition of the Entire Bible* addresses this as well:

Set your affections on things above,.... For unless the affections are set on them, they will never be sought after in a proper manner. The word signifies to mind them, and think on them, to favour and approve of them, to be affectionately desirous of them, and concerned for them; for where the treasure is, the heart should be; and as the saints' best things are above, their minds and affections should be there likewise; their contemplation should be on those things, and their conversation should be in heaven; nor should they regard anything but what is there, or comes from thence, for they belong not to this world, but to another and better country: their citizenship is in heaven, and there, in a short time, they must have their everlasting residence; and therefore should seek after, and highly prize and value heavenly things, and set their affections on them...

So let us focus on and make the main thing the main thing and then explore what the world thinks is important.