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THE BREAD AND THE CUP

Matthew 26:26-30

Our Lord Jesus instituted a new Memorial upon the old foundation of the Jewish Passover, when he said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

We recall the circumstances of the first Memorial--just before our Lord's trial and crucifixion, in the upper room with the eleven disciples who had remained faithful to him. We read of the blessing of the Bread and of the Cup, the fruit of the vine; and our Lord's declaration that these represented His broken body and shed blood. Which was sacrificed to pay the ransom price for all of mankind. The price, a perfect human being, was required to pay the debt for Adam's sin and the subsequent death sentence that came upon all mankind.

Let us take time to look at the significance of the emblems, the bread and the wine that our Lord used to remind us of his great love towards us in presenting himself as a living sacrifice to his Heavenly Father.

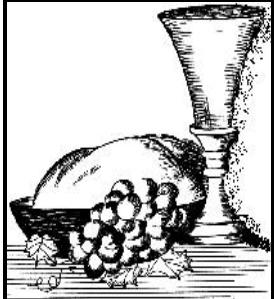
The Bread:

The bread we remember was part of the food used for the Passover. It had special significance in that it was unleavened bread (leaven was a symbol of sin under the Law, and the Jews were commanded to remove all leaven from their homes during the Passover season). The unleavened bread (pure, unfermented) represents to us our Lord's sinless flesh which He gave for us.

We are told in Hebrews 7:26 that our Lord Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners" -i.e. without any contamination from Father Adam, and hence free from sin. This enabled Him to become

the Redeemer of Adam and his race, this permitted Him to give His life "a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."--1 Timothy 2:3-6.

Our Lord earlier in his ministry alluded to the bread representing his body in John 6:48 "I am that bread of life." Later in the chapter (50-51) He tells us "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." (NAS)



The disciples and those around our Lord would not have understood the significance of his statement. It was not until after his death and resurrection, and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the disciples would understand the meaning of His words.

The partaking of the unleavened bread at the Memorial season, means to us the appropriation to ourselves, by faith, of justification to life --a human life--with all its privileges, which our Lord at His own cost procured for us.

The Apostle Paul, through direct revelation, (not being present at the first Memorial), explains our special relationship to the bread in 1 Cor 10:16-17 "...Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." (NAS)

The Cup

This cup held the wine that was at the feast of the Passover, . Our Lord took the cup of wine and gave it a new meaning. The fruit of the vine symbolizes the blood that our Saviour' s ~~shed~~ for us, His human life, His being, poured out unto death on our behalf.

In This Issue

The Bread and the Cup	1
Entered into Rest	2
Reflecting our Lord's Image	3
As ye see the day Approaching	7
The Peace of God	10

The grapes must submit to the pressure that will extract all their juices, they must be crushed and lose their identity as grapes, if they would become wine. Our Lord had to give up his will and was crushed, shedding his blood for us before he could become the Redeemer, not only for us but for all the world that was condemned in Adam.

Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Cor 10:16 “Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?...” We therefore have the privilege of sharing in Christ’s sacrifice, not through our own merit, but through Christ’s merit. We have the privilege of sacrificing our all, however poor or insignificant it may be, to the glory of our Heavenly Father.

Our Commitment

In the next chapter he adds “For as often as you eat

this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” 1 Cor 11:26 (NAS). This request to remember our Lord’s great sacrifice was made without the threat of penalty for the Apostle knew that all that trusted and appreciated the great sacrifice of Christ, placing faith in his Ransom would gladly celebrate the Memorial each year.

Concluding thought

“He blessed it” These words set apart the loaf and the cup from the rest of the Passover for a new purpose by prayer and thanksgiving. We do not find any set form of words of prayer used by our Lord upon this occasion. No doubt Matthew could have included the words of the prayers in his Gospel. By leaving them out, we as individuals have to take time to reflect on their significance before we approach our Heavenly Father in prayer on this special occasion.

ENTERED INTO REST

Brethren were previously advised of the passing of our dear Brother in Christ, Malcolm Price on 24 November 2001. Further personal details have now been provided by Bro Greig Tosh who officiated at his funeral service.

“Malcolm was born in 1947 to Brother Wilf and Sister Rae (Rachel) Price, thus benefiting from the warmth of a Christian home. Malcolm attended his first Bible Study class in 1989 and was baptized in 1991 (in Western Australia), which delighted his father but was an event which he regretted that his by then deceased mother could not witness. His father gave him a good foundation in the basic fundamental truth doctrines and this proved a blessing to the Nambour class which he joined in 1995.

The Nambour class also benefited greatly from his musical abilities and was introduced to a variety of new hymns. Bro Malcolm served as chairman of studies and with addresses which he gave at Conventions until ill health reduced his opportunities of service. The diagnosis of cancer and inability to work gave him the opportunity to review the priorities of his life and he came to the decision to close his workshop for good in order to serve the Heavenly Father only.

While there was still a glimmer of hope for recovery, he planned various possibilities for publishing the precious “Good News”. Meantime, Bro Malcolm listened to taped addresses from American and local brethren and this sustained and nourished his spiritual life until his concentration failed and his sustenance was reduced to the “Manna” text in the morning, a “Precious Promise” at noon and a later “Song in the Night” as

well as hymns. He was ready to go home, peacefully falling asleep on the 24th of November at 12 noon, after a “precious promise” was read to him. He was aged 54.

Bro Malcolm Price had a great reverence for the Lord God and thus was zealous over not mingling the holy with the common, of which his parents and particularly his mother Sister Rae were examples. He will be greatly missed”

(Bro Greig’s funeral address outlined the plan of God for His present people and for all mankind and included the lovely words of Rev 21:3,4 and portions of BSH hymns 232 and 391.)

**MANY sleep, but not for ever;
There will be a glorious dawn;
We shall meet to part, no, never,
On the resurrection morn.
From the deepest caves of ocean,
From the desert and the plain,
From the valley and the mountain,
Countless throngs shall rise again.**

BSH 232

**There's no place where earthly sorrows
Are more felt than up in Heaven;
There's no place where earthly failings
Have such kindly judgment given.
Search the Scriptures, search and see,
God in mercy judgeth thee.**

BSH 391

REFLECTING OUR LORD'S IMAGE

Think of us embarking on our course along the narrow way. We're running for the high calling in Christ Jesus. And what a calling that is - an opportunity to be on the throne with our dear Lord and Master up in the heavens to share in his inheritance. The thought of sharing that kind of position of immortal life is, I think, simply mind-boggling to all of us. What an honour to have been called to run for such a position. We can appreciate that it's going to require the utmost testing through consecration. The Creator of the universe has deigned to call each of us to come. Can we accept the thought that the grand Creator of this universe will look down upon a small corner of the galaxy, one tiny little planet, one speck of the enormity of space and select one small creature, fallen, mis-shapen and broken as we are, and say, Would you like to become a son of the Creator of the universe and share His very nature? Could we ever accept the concept and believe it without the assurance provided through the scriptures and, of course, enormity of faith?

It takes great faith to accept the course that is laid before us. We have sacrificed our earthly life-rights and through consecration received the robe of Christ's righteousness, and our failings, our faults, and our shortcomings have been covered. Through that lens of Jesus we're observed by the very Creator of the universe as though we're actually perfect. What a thought to have the faith that it takes to really accept this. As we look at our many problems, the problems that beset every one of us, we tend to concentrate so much on our failures and not on our successes. If we're overcome by our failures, perhaps we aren't letting our faith in Jesus have its full effect. We won't be whole unless we take hold upon that which our dear Lord provided for us. Our eyes have been touched and according to our faith we see things the rest of the world only dream of. What we have, the whole world is still looking for, and we've got it! We should surely appreciate it.

“To you it is given”

Matt.13:16-17: *“Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”* The religious leaders of Jesus' day should surely have turned to the Lord and said 'This wonderful man of miracles can teach us much' but in spite of what they saw they said he cast out devils through the prince of devils. They shut the door on their own opportunity. Imagine to see the dead raised in the name of God and

not believe that here was one that had much greater power than any of them, and declare that the Son of man and of God did it through the power of the devil. That's a terrible indictment.

In Matt.13 we have the parable of the sower who spread forth seed on certain types of ground and verse 8 says: *‘But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.’* Our ears have been unstopped so that we can hear and see as no others have ever been able to see that revealment of the divine messenger. And having seen it, what are we motivated to do? To grow, to bring forth fruit, the fruits of the Spirit, in order that we might be profitable servants of our dear Lord. We should see ourselves grow in grace and truth and understanding. This should motivate us to be more pleasing to our Heavenly Father day after day.

We recall how the disciples came to Jesus and said to him: *“Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And he answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given”* (Matt.13:10,11). Have you ever thought that what you have is truly a very rare privilege. It isn't a common thing at all. We're almost like being members of an exclusive world society. We can be active in proclaiming God's plans to everyone but it seems that very few understand or appreciate it except a very few of the present society. So it's indeed a rare privilege to have been drawn by God himself to understand His divine plan and run in the race for the high calling. It is certainly an opportunity that we must take full advantage of.

In Matt.13:12, it says: *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”* This is rather an odd way of saying it. Normally you would think that if a person doesn't have very much, he would be the one you would want to give more to, or if a person has a lot you wouldn't want to give him more. But that simply isn't the arrangement of God. Here we have the truth, we have His blessings, and are we taking full advantage of them? Are we proving our worthiness and our loyalty as God's people? If we don't, perhaps it will be taken away from us. They are too precious, too grand, too wonderful, to be lightly thought of.

In the next verse, our Lord said: *“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing hear not, neither do they understand.”* That's

really the way it is generally with the world. They will hear us and perhaps some even appreciate the truth to some measure, but unless they have the hearing ear and the Lord has touched their minds to see these things, they will not see them. That's really a miracle, isn't it? That is proof to you that you have been touched by the very mind and heart of God himself because you share these inmost secrets, because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. God is really so generous in the things He has provided for us. It is really beyond comprehension. We surely must, in some measure, be worthy of it, therefore we must strive constantly to pay attention to the Lord's overruling, His leadings in our lives, to be sensitive to all that He would have us do.

In Col.2:1-3, we read those words of Paul: *"For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* We have not seen Paul's face but we fully appreciate his admonitions and we are really knit together in love. The one common bond is love for the truth and love for the Lord, without which we would probably not be together. We've received an understanding of God's plans and purposes, the mystery of God, the opportunity to be a part of Christ's body. Teaching every man in all wisdom was Paul's concern. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge and Paul wanted to present every believer perfect in Christ Jesus.

“So walk ye in Him”

The Apostle achieved complete maturity in Christ Jesus and he presents some very important considerations in this letter to the Colossians.

- ◊ *Encouragement*, that their hearts might be comforted. Our English word 'encourage' means 'with heart'. To encourage people is to give them new heart. Shallow sympathy makes others feel worse, but true spiritual encouragement makes them feel better.
- ◊ *Endearment*, being knit together in love. The mature Christian loves the brethren and seeks to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker. He is part of the spiritual unity of the church. The immature person is selfish and causes division.
- ◊ *Enlightenment* means full assurance of understanding. The mature child of God has assurance in his heart that he is indeed a child of God. The spiritual knowledge that he has acquired constantly enlightens him and directs him daily.

- ◊ God wants His children to have *understanding, wisdom and knowledge*. The word that Paul uses in the 3rd verse translated 'understanding' literally means 'to be placed together'. It's the ability to assess things. Wisdom implies the ability to defend what we understand. Knowledge suggests the ability to grasp truth.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk ye in him." (Col.2:6) And how can we do that? How can anybody follow in the footsteps, in those very perfect footsteps? Only through faith in His sacrificing merit, confidence in our Lord's help, will we ever be able to follow in his footsteps. Col.2:7 says: *"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving"*. When you are really rooted as one of God's people, the winds may blow, even break a branch or two, and do all superficial injury, but if those roots go deep they will feed the trunk no matter what the damage. They will grow and continue abounding with thanksgiving. We should always be thankful for what the Lord has provided for us. How much of God's plan would we know without those studies in the scriptures? I think it would be very little. And I think it is the way the Lord has arranged for us at this end of the Age, the way that He has seen for us to receive spiritual instruction.

In 1 John 3:14 we have a very important scripture that we should always keep in mind: *"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."* Think of the impact that scripture should have on us. Here it is said to be so important that we know we have passed from death unto life because we love them; that if we don't love our brethren we are still dead, we are abiding in death. If we love the brethren we would do all that we can on their behalf and demonstrate that God's love has come into our hearts because we're able to pass it on to others, that we indeed love our brethren. If we're busily engaged in helping our brethren, the very action of doing so will cause us to ignore many of our own problems. We might find that our own problems are not so important after all as we are so intent on helping our brethren.

Jesus Christ is the standard of love for Christians. *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34). Then he repeats, *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you."* (John 15:12). We are not to measure our Christian love against the love of some other Christians and actually pick someone whose love is more of an excuse than an example, but against the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord. The old commandment becomes new as we see it fulfilled in Christ. In 1 John 2:9-11 we have these very important words of the Apostle of love: *"He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness"*

even until now. *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*" Here we have an illustration of light and darkness. If a Christian walks in the light and is in fellowship with God, he will also be in fellowship with others of God's family. Love and life go together, just as hatred and darkness go together. It is very easy to talk about love for the brethren but it's so much more difficult to practise it. For one of God's people to say or sing that he loves the brethren while he actually hates another believer, it is for him a lie. With this sobering thought, it is impossible to be in fellowship with the Father and out of fellowship with another Christian at the same time. This is the reason that God established the church and the fellowship of believers. You can't be a Christian alone. A person cannot live a complete and developing Christian life unless he is in fellowship with God's people.

What we say should be an expression of our character. We should not need extra words to fortify what we say. Our yes should mean yes and our no should mean no. So if we say we are in the light, we will prove it by loving the brethren. Many of God's people need to be encouraged, loved and accepted. When we practise Christian love we find life getting much brighter. Hatred is what darkens life. When true Christian love flows out of our hearts, we will have greater understanding and greater perception of spiritual things. I think this is suggested by Apostle Paul in Phil.1:9-10: "*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.*" I think these verses have much greater impact from the amplified version: "*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and in all keen insight that your love may display itself with greater acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment so that you may surely learn to sense what is vital and approved, what is excellent and of real value, recognising the highest and best, distinguishing the moral differences that you may be untainted, pure and blameless so that your hearts may be sincere and certain and unsullied so that you may approach the day of Christ, not stumbling or causing others to stumble.*"

"In His Steps"

In 1 Peter 2:21 it says that Christ has left us an example that you should follow in his steps. I like the modern translation that says: "*He left you an example that you must be following in his footsteps.*" And if we follow in the footsteps of another, we will always arrive at the same destination. So if we follow in the footsteps of Christ, we can't go astray, we will never be lost, we will always be with the Lord – here, now and hereafter in that heavenly kingdom. It is recorded in John 12:26

that: "*If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*" What an honour to contemplate for each one of us that divine nature, glory, honour and immortality. When the Master called the disciples to follow him, he meant that they should follow his precepts, his commandments, his example of faithfulness to His Father.

The first step the man Christ Jesus was advocating was consecration. We have given up our own will, as Jesus did, and we substituted for it the will of our heavenly Father. We have given up all earthly treasures and ambitions and presented our bodies as "*a living sacrifice, that we may be holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.* (Rom.12:1). It was a reasonable service for Jesus then, and it certainly is for us now. It would be unreasonable to accept God's marvellous favour and then neglect to live up to the conditions attached to it. We should always seek to know and to do the things which constitute a reasonable service. The constant study and appreciation of God's word is vitally necessary. When Jesus had taken that first step of consecration, He received the Holy Spirit. Do you have evidence that you have received the Holy Spirit? Don't be too quick to say No. Consider these factors: Do you understand the deep things of God's plan? Do you understand the significance of the fall, the ransom, the coming restitution of all things? Do you appreciate the high calling and your participation in the sin offering and in the blessings of all the families of the earth? If you do, then you have the strongest evidence of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor.2:10,11 says: "*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.*" Of course, there are other evidences of the Holy Spirit such as the fruits of the Spirit given to us by the Apostle Paul in Gal.5:22-24: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*" The possession and development of these qualities is certainly an evidence of the Holy Spirit. We must constantly review our daily actions to see if we are making progress in the development of these growth factors. Our lives pass by very quickly, just a speck of time in God's timetable. We must take full advantage of every waking moment to conscientiously develop these graces.

I like the thoughts presented to us by Peter in 1 Peter 2:5: "*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*" As consecrated children of God we are living, small stones, rough by nature and out of harmony to a large extent

with that chief cornerstone, that top stone laid in heaven. We must be chiselled and polished to prepare us to be duly united with all these in one grand glorious temple, the temple of God beyond the veil. We must fully co-operate with the Lord in our own development which includes these graces of the Spirit. It is so easy for us to react in a negative manner to the development of these growth factors under the pressures of various experiences of our lives. God lays great stress on loyal, loving obedience on the part of all of His children. In Rev.3:12 we read: *"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."* This is really a description of the consummation of our hopes. The temple of which we are living stones is shown complete. We want to be a part of that new Jerusalem that will rule and bless all the world of mankind in the name of Christ.

Rev.3:21 gives us this promise: *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."* If Christ sits on the throne of God and we are granted to sit on Christ's throne, we will surely have rulership of all things. And I think this is confirmed in Rev.21:7: *"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall be my son."* What a fantastic reward is held out for the overcomers! This isn't really the only reason we want to be overcomers. We want to be overcomers because we know it pleases God, because Christ, our example, has overcome and we want to follow in his footsteps. We want to be with Him, we want to be where He is. In Rom.8:17 it says: *"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."* And in Phil.1:29 Paul wrote: *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."* From our studies in the life of Jesus and the apostles we realise that they endured much in the way of physical suffering in the service of God and also a great deal of persecution.

"To suffer for His sake"

A study of our lives reveals a dissimilarity. Why should this bother us? Are our lives to be just the same as Jesus and the apostles? Does the expression 'suffering for Christ' mean only direct persecution in God's service? The sufferings of Christ have a very broad meaning far beyond physical suffering and direct persecution in God's service. Pastor Russell suggested any sufferings we have because of our membership in His body are a part of the sufferings of Christ. Whatever it has cost you to give up your own will, to keep your own will submissive to God, to be faithful to the principles for which Christ stands, are all a part of the sufferings of Christ.

That's a quotation from the 1915 Question Book, page 679. After quoting 1 Peter 5:10 Pastor Russell made this remark: *"We think that the suffering takes in all of present life's experiences"* (Reprint 4750). He therefore suggests that the meaning is endurance of all hardship and difficulty necessary in maintaining our standing as new creatures and our standing for the truth. As to what this would mean would vary according to each individual circumstance.

The original meaning of the word 'suffering' is very important. From Strong we find that the definition is 'something undergone that is hardship or pain'. That would be hardship of any kind endured for the sake of the truth, for God's service, for the sake of ourselves as new creatures. I'm sure that over the years we have heard brethren in the truth use the expression 'We're not of the world'. That's taken from John 15:19. *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."* Our Lord said to the Jews recorded in John 8:23 *"Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."* Jesus said to Pilate just before His crucifixion: *"My kingdom is not of this world."* (John 18:36) and in a sense we are identified with outer space. Our Lord said in John 6:38 and in several other places: *"I came down from heaven"* so we who are in Christ are of a different world. And what a fantastic thought! What a position we're in! We are in effect a separate nation living in the midst of the people of this world. We're a peaceful nation. We keep their laws except where there is a violation of conscience involved.

We're told in Rom.13:1 to be subject to the powers that be, and the Apostle Paul said in Titus 3:1: *"And remind them to be submissive to Governments and Authorities, to obey rulers, and to be ready for every good work."* We realise that the Lord has permitted these governments to keep a measure of order in the world and we can be thankful that for the most part we have been protected by the police powers of the world's governmental bodies. We have seen the drastic results where governmental control has been abused or lost. Government control has made it possible for us to carry on the harvest work. We have been able to proclaim the gospel message for the most part without hindrance. Let us not fail in our determination to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil and let us go about enthusiastically despite all the obstacles and all the opposition we encounter. It can be done. Our Lord said in John 16:33: *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* He showed us the way. Let us follow in his footsteps. Let us reflect His image

(Convention Address E L)

“AS YE SEE THE DAY APPROACHING”

On 11th September in the year which we have known as 2001 the sense of security of the western world was shattered by the greatest act of terrorism the world has ever known. As you know, on that day airline aircraft were hijacked. Two of them were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City, one in the north tower and the other in the south tower. A third aircraft was flown into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US defence network. A fourth aircraft crashed in the countryside of Pennsylvania, apparently after a struggle on the flight deck. In all, several thousand people were killed. The events of that day were so dramatic that several world leaders have said the world will never be the same again. The world will never be the same again. What a momentous statement!

Those events raised questions in the minds of Bible Students worldwide. If indeed the Bible is the Word of God, if indeed the Bible contains God's plan for mankind, then what does the Bible say about the events of 11th September? Surely events which world leaders recognise have changed the face of the world forever, surely those events would be mentioned somewhere in the Scriptures. I know that many of you have done your research, and I have done mine. Well, I can't find anything which can in any way be construed to mean that the events of 11th September are prophesied in the Bible. That fact raises another question. What then did Jesus mean when He exhorted His disciples to watch? We are watching. World leaders are watching. We have seen events so dramatic that the world will never be the same again, and yet we can't find anything in the Scriptures which directly relates to those events.

What then did Jesus mean when he urged His disciples to watch? His exhortation has even greater moment when we realise it was not just a passing comment. It wasn't just a remark. No, he devoted a whole parable to His disciples exhorting them to watch. We often refer to it as 'the parable of the wise and foolish virgins'. I know we sometimes try to read into the parable symbolism but whatever symbolism you wish to read into the parable, to my way of thinking the primary purpose of the parable is contained in the last verse. In Matt.25:13 He says: '*Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.*' And so I thought perhaps at that time, in view of the events of the last twelve months and 11th September in particular, it would be profitable for us to refresh our minds regarding a couple of aspects of our watching.

God's Timing

The first aspect we should refresh our minds about is the speed with which God moves. We all know that

God moves slowly, at least in human terms. In my correspondence with some brethren overseas, one of the texts which we all know well indicating that God moves slowly is in Hab.2:2,3 which reads: '*And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*' And so those verses clearly indicate that there is going to be a time of waiting. Though it seem to tarry, wait for it. That's all very well, but what does it mean to us? Will it tarry a day, a week, a month, a year, ten years, twenty years? What does it really mean that it will tarry? Do we have anything that we can use as some sort of time stick, a time measure, as to what it means to tarry?

I would like to suggest to you that we do have a passage of Scripture which shows us quite clearly what it means for the vision to tarry. It's a vision with which you are all very familiar, and that is Nebuchadnezzar's dream recorded for us in Daniel chapter 2. Let us take a few moments to note a couple of points from the record of this dream. We all know the story, how he had this dream and couldn't recall what the dream was about. It was revealed to Daniel what the dream was and also the interpretation of the dream. He saw the image of this great man - head of gold, breast and arms of silver, thighs and belly of brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. And he beheld until there was a stone, cut out without hands, that struck the image on the feet and the image collapsed, and the stone then grew to fill the whole earth. In order to help us appreciate what it means for the vision to tarry, let us think about the time-frame included in that vision.

We have the starting point of the vision because in Daniel 2:38 it was revealed to Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar was that head of gold. So we have the starting point. We know that the Babylonian empire was superseded by the Medo-Persian and so, in Daniel 5:28, once again the breast and arms of silver are identified for us by name, the Medes and Persians. No question! We further know about the belly of brass. That was the Greek empire, and that is told to us very clearly in Dan.8:20,21. The fourth empire is not named, however I think it is a very reasonable assumption that the fourth empire was the Roman empire. Let us just think about the timeframe between Nebuchadnezzar and the end of the Roman empire. What happens then? The stone cut out without hands strikes the image on the feet, and all parts of it crumble together. In verse 35: '*Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away,*

that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.'

If you think of the timeframe between Nebuchadnezzar's day and the end of the Roman empire, that gives us how many years? I leave you to come to your own conclusion about how many years. Considering the time for that part of the vision to be fulfilled, how many years will it take for the stone to grow and fill the whole earth? That vision conveys to me some meaning to the thought that the vision will tarry. Yes, God is outside time, and one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

"Watch Therefore"

But Jesus' exhortation was to watch, '*Watch, therefore*'. Do we have any other signposts along the way? We have Daniel's prophecy and we can wait for the stone to grow and fill the whole earth. But do we have any other signpost to tell us just where we are on the stream of time? We know that no man knows the day nor the hour, and so my comments from now on are not meant to infer that we do know the day and the hour, because we don't. Nevertheless I want to suggest to you that we do have some signposts to tell us where we are on the stream of time, perhaps in more detail than the dream recorded in Daniel 2. One of the signposts which I wish to suggest to you is the time of Jacob's trouble recorded for us in Jer.30. A second signpost would be the vision of the valley of dry bones recorded for us in Eze.37. A third signpost would be the vision of the valley of Jehosephat in Joel 3, and a fourth one the time of trouble given to us in Matt.24. So, Jacob's trouble in Jer.30, the valley of dry bones in Eze.37, the valley of Jehosephat in Joel 3, and the time of trouble in Matt.24. I suggest to you that those four prophecies can be signposts to us.

Now just a couple of comments about using signposts. There are two very important points when we come to read a signpost. First of all we have to know what we are looking for. If you don't know that you are looking for Smith Street or Church Street, the Freeway or the city, you could easily pass the signpost without knowing that you have passed it. So with any signpost we have to know what we are looking for. Do the Scriptures indicate that we should know what we are looking for? Yes, they do. Let's look at Jesus' words in Luke 21:25-28 where Jesus said: '*There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*' That infers to me very clearly that Jesus intended that His followers

would know what they were looking for '*when these things come to pass, then look up*'. In other words, we should see them. They have been prophesied, so that when they do come we realise that they are beginning to come to pass. Yes, we should know what we are looking for.

For the sake of time I would like to pick out just one more verse which to me clearly indicates that we should know what we are looking for. That verse is Heb.10:25: '*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*' How do we know that it is the day that is approaching unless we know what constitutes the day? I suggest to you that we do need to know, and we are told we will know, and we are able to know the signs of the coming of the day. That is not to say we know the day or the hour but we do know the signs.

The second important point about using signposts is to keep ahead of the game. If you are using a street directory and you are looking for Smith Street or Church Street and it's already passed, and you are concentrating on looking forward to the sign which is already behind you, would you see it? No, you won't. Also, you might very well miss other signs which are there for you to see but because you have been concentrating on the sign that has passed, you in fact overlook the sign that is just coming up. In aviation there's a very tragic story of an accident that occurred in the Gibson Desert where an aircraft returning to base flew past the actual destination but the pilot didn't realise it. So they flew on and kept looking out for what they thought was their destination, but the destination was well behind them. There were other signs in the desert which indicated to them that they had passed their destination but because they were so far from their destination they didn't realise the later signs. The aircraft flew on, ran out of fuel, crashed in the desert and the whole five crew perished. The same thing applies to us. We need to keep ahead of the game.

Four Signposts

So then, try to keep ahead of the game. What about these four signposts – Jacob's trouble, the valley of dry bones, Jehosephat and the time of trouble. The question is, has any of them come to pass at this point of time or should we still be looking for them to come? This is a very good question. I want to suggest to you that maybe some of the events have passed. I would like to suggest that maybe even Jacob's trouble is past. I cannot give you all of the reasons for my suggestion in the time allowed but what we can do is have a quick look at Jeremiah Chapter 30 and take just four verses there which I will leave you to think about because these verses seem to me to describe the outcome of Jacob's trouble.

Beginning in Jer.30:3 we read: '*For, lo, the days come,*

saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. That was the promise. And in verses 4-6: *'These are the words which the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus, saith the Lord, we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child. Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness.'* I suggest to you there is considerable meaning in the fact that a man was travailing with child and not a woman, although we haven't time to discuss it today. Then in verse 7: *'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.'* Then verse 10: *'Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.'* The question is, do we see evidence today of Jacob having returned? Even the beginning of Jacob having returned? Certainly we cannot say that he is yet in rest and in quiet. No, God takes time to work out His purposes, but that is the consequence of Jacob's trouble. Verse 11: *'For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.'* Yes, He will make a full end of all nations whither He has scattered them, not yet fulfilled. Is 11th September part of that?

I now want to refer to the time of trouble referred to in Matt.24. I know that the time of trouble described in Matt.24:21-22 has always been projected into the future. I understand there is substantial justification for that point of view, but let us just stand back again and have another look at this. In Matt.24:21,22 it says: *'For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.'* Frankly, I have always had trouble with that, *'For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened'*. I had trouble with that because hitherto I have always regarded that to refer to the church and these days of tribulation would be shortened because of the church. But I have to ask myself two questions: first of all, why would God shorten those days for the sake of the church? And secondly, who really are 'the elect'? You see, in Matt.24:24 we read: *'For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect..'*

I'm well aware that in the past I have felt quite comfortable about making a distinction between 'the elect' and

'the very elect'. With all respect to the King James Version, the later translations don't justify the use of the word 'very' there. Strong's Concordance does not say that the use of the word 'very' there is substantiated. The NIV uses the words 'even the elect'. And so it may be that 'the elect' of verse 22 and 'the very elect' of verse 24 are one and the same. I believe we have to test everything, test all things, hold fast that which is good. But who are these elect? Let's just look at the translation in Mark 13:20. The same passage there has a point which comes out: *'And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.'* Now who has God chosen? There is no question that He has called and chosen the members of the church. No question about that at all! But when you read Isa.45:4 and chapter 43, we see that Israel was in fact God's elect. Let us just read the verses in Isa.45:4: *'For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou has not known me: My suggestion is that the elect of Matt.24 could well be the nation of Israel and not the church. If that's the case (each one to his own thinking), have we not seen in history a period of time when the extermination of the nation of Israel would seem to be an absolute certainty, but the days were cut short? The Third Reich! And what happened shortly after the days were cut short? We have Israel regathered to its own land. I suggest to you that that might be another signpost to realise where we are on the stream of time.*

"Knowing the Time"

We haven't got time now to go into the valley of dry bones and the vision of the valley of Jehosephat, but if you have time pursue the significance of Jehosephat. 2 Chron.20 is a good starting point, but we haven't got time to discuss it today. What I'm saying to you today is really nothing more than what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans. In Rom.13:11-12 he said: *'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.'* I ask the question, is it possible that the night is further spent and the day is nearer at hand than we perhaps realise.

Let us then take to heart the exhortation to the Hebrews: *'Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together ... and so much more as ye see the day approaching.'* (GS)



THE PEACE OF GOD

'The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' (Phil.4:7)

The word 'peace' in the New Testament is from Strong's 1515 and means 'quietness, rest, to set at one' again'. In the Old Testament it is from Strong's 7965 and has the meaning of 'safe, well, happy, to be at peace' and from 7999 'to be safe in mind, body and state, to make complete, make restitution, restore'. Peace is here then defined as a state of quiet and tranquility, freedom from disturbance or agitation, calmness, repose. Such a state of mind in the text quoted is affirmed of God, it is a mind tranquil, calm, undisturbed, never agitated nor even wearied or perplexed by any of the cares of His vast dominions. As the Creator of all things and the Originator of all law, our Heavenly Father comprehends all causes and concerns with precision and all effects, and consequently knows the end from the beginning.

As it says in Deut.32:3-4: '*I will proclaim the name of the Lord, and praise the greatness of our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect; and all his ways are just; a faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*' God's peace is based upon man obeying His commandments. We go back to when He created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden. The tranquility and beauty in perfect surroundings would have filled their hearts with awe towards their Creator. Our Heavenly Father had provided for Adam and Eve everything they would ever need. God as a father shows that he has a father's love for all his intelligent creatures, the whole family in heaven and in earth, and that for His pleasure they were and are created. He created them in His own likeness, with the same mental and moral aptitudes, that they might have communion and fellowship with Him as children and they with Him as a father. Thus, in mutual fellowship and communion the Creator and the creature might find pleasure, happiness and delight.

God, in His infinite wisdom, knew that the first parents also needed to be tested if they would be worthy of this paradise and peace that He had provided for them. In Gen.2:16,17 we read: '*And the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When you eat of this you will surely die.*' Then came the temptation of Satan through the serpent and Eve ate of the fruit, and then Adam did. They had disobeyed God's commandment, and therefore the penalty was given for their disobedience.

ence.

In Gen.3:9 we read: '*By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.*' Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and were estranged from God. If we could for a moment put ourselves in their place and imagine the heart-wrench they must have felt and the longing to be back in the garden to be once again in harmony with God, enjoying His peace. From this standpoint we can realise that man has desired peace but because of sin has not been able to obtain it. We see Satan as the foe against mankind. Our Heavenly Father gives us in Gen.3:15 the key to his destruction. We read: '*And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.*'

Since Adam, God has overruled lives of righteous men. Because of Abraham's faithfulness and obedience to God, he was given this promise in Gen.22:17: '*I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore; your seed will possess the gate of his enemy, and through your seed all the nations of the world will be blessed because you have obeyed me.*' From Abraham came the nation of Israel and they were also to be given blessings if they would observe and do all of God's commandments when coming into the promised possession of the land of Israel. In Deut.28:12 we read '*The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and bless all the works of your hand*' and in Psalms 29:11: '*The Lord will give strength to his people; God will bless his people with peace.*' But because of their sin, the desired peace was not given to the nation of Israel. We remember our Lord's words in Luke 19:42 when He wept over Jerusalem, saying: '*If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.*'

"Peace with God"

So we can see that there can be no peace to man except in the re-establishment of the relationship between himself and God. Since this relationship of sons can only be re-established through Christ, there is no peace to anyone out of Christ. '*There is no peace, says the Lord, to the wicked*' (Isa.48:25) and '*the whole world is under the control of the evil one*' (1 John 5:19). To have the peace of God then, we need to be at peace with God through justification. Rom.5:8-11 reads: '*But God demonstrates his own*

love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us. 'Since we have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him; for if when we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation.' And in Rom.5:1: *'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

To these justified children of God, sons and heirs of this Age, God has not only granted His recognition but also His special favour in offering to them exceeding great and precious promises. Our Heavenly Father has drawn us with a heavenly calling and invited us to be part of the body of Christ, His Bride, and to be joint heirs with Jesus in His Kingdom, and all the gracious work of that Kingdom. It is to these new creatures begotten and led by the Spirit of God that are promised peace and mercy. Mercy because our best efforts to walk after the leading of the Holy Spirit will be imperfect but God, who judges our hearts, desires and efforts, is merciful and will not expect from us more than we are able to perform. He gives His blessed peace to these begotten ones who are led by His spirit.

MORNING PRAYER

Lord, in the quiet of this morning hour
I come to Thee for peace, for wisdom, power
To view the world today through love-filled eyes,

Be patient, understanding, gentle, wise;
To see beyond what seems to be, and know
Thy children as Thou knowest them and so
Naught but the good in anyone behold.
Make deaf my ears to slander that is told,
Silence my tongue to aught that is unkind,
Let only thoughts that bless dwell in my mind,
Let me so kindly be, so full of cheer,
That all I meet may feel Thy presence near.
O clothe me in Thy beauty, this I pray,
Let me reveal Thee, Lord, through all the day.

(Ella S Schenck)

Rom.8:6 declares: *'For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.'* Our Lord, on the last night of His earthly life, bestowed on His beloved disciples His parting blessing, His legacy of peace. *'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.'* (John 14:27) The promise was for that rest and peace of mind which Jesus himself possessed, the peace of God. It was the same peace which the Father has always had. Jehovah's peace comes from within Himself because He has all power and wisdom, and knows the end from the beginning. The peace of Christ came through His faith in God, faith in His wisdom and power and grace. So, also, if we would have the peace of God, the peace of Christ, it must be centred in God by faith.

Peace that endures

The peace promised is not the short-lived peace of the world, which is sometimes enjoyed for a little while, but it is the peace of God which Christ by faith enjoyed. Although He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. He lost friend after friend, and in His last hour was forsaken by all the friends who remained. His was the peace that endured through loss, persecution, scorn and contempt, and even amidst the agonies of the Cross. If we would know the foundation and security of this abiding peace which is able to survive the heaviest storms of life, we can see it in the teaching and example of the life of our Lord and the Apostles.

We have many instances recorded in the Book of Acts of the sufferings of the Apostles and followers of Christ. Because of the jealousy of the priests and Sadducees they were put in jail and beaten but when released they rejoiced because they had been accounted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name of Jesus. And we have the account of Stephen, who although falsely accused, gave a courageous witness to his faith, and when being stoned fell on his knees and prayed, *'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'*. Herod had the Apostle James put to death by the sword, and the Apostle Peter arrested and put in prison, but the people of the church prayed earnestly for him and the Lord sent an angel to rescue him. The Apostle Paul, in defending his ministry, in 2 Cor.11 speaks of his experience saying: *'Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes minus one, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move; I have been in danger from rivers, dangers from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and often gone without sleep. I have known hunger and thirst, and of*

ten gone without food. I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressures of my concern for the churches.'

What was it that held them so firmly and gave them such rest of mind while they suffered? It was their faith, their faith in the love, power and wisdom of God. They believed that what God had promised he was able also to do, that His righteous and benevolent plan would know no failure. Isa.46:9-11 says: '*Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure: Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*' In Jehovah their faith was anchored and on His assurances they rested. So the Apostle Paul was able to say in Rom.8: '*If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or dangers? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us, for I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers from the height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*' It is only through steady, unwavering faith that the peace of God, the peace of Christ, will abide with His people.

1 John 5:4 says: '*This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith.*' The blessed peace that comes from the knowledge of the fact that God accepts us as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ if we continue to faithfully follow in His footsteps is the basis of our peace. No matter how heavily the storms of life may assail us, we must never let go our anchor. Always remember that the foundation of God stands sure. His truth is our shield and buckler, that what He has promised he is able to perform, and covering our human imperfections we have the imputed righteousness of Christ. Jesus' peace is in true reconciliation with God, purchased with His death. It is the supreme remedy for all fears and the legacy left for his heirs. Even as we see the sad state of affairs in the world today, we can have peace knowing that He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

We look forward to and pray for the establishment of the Kingdom when the beautiful Old Testament promises of Psalms 37:11 have their fulfillment: '*The meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*' and in Isa.32: '*Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness and princes shall*

rule in judgment.... and the fruit of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in thee in peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.' So, in conclusion, '*When He gives quietness who then can make trouble?*' and '*You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.*' Who but He, the God of all comfort, can give quietness in the midst of trouble when we can come to our loving Heavenly Father in prayer, not asking for all disturbances to be removed, because it is not always the divine will to bring peace in that way, but asking for a loving, trustful submission to the will of God. (BL)

**'May Thy will, not mine, be done;
May Thy will and mine be one.
Peace I ask, but peace must be,
Lord, in being one with Thee.'**

THE BLESSED SECRET

"Be all at rest, my soul!" O blessed secret
Of the true life that glorifies thy Lord;
Not always doth the busiest soul best serve Him,
But he who resteth on His faithful word.

"Be all at rest!" for rest is highest service,
To the still heart God doth His secrets tell;
Thus shalt thou learn to wait, and watch, and labour,
Strengthened to bear, since Christ in thee doth dwell.

"Be all at rest!" for rest alone becometh
The soul that casts on Him its every care;
"Be all at rest!" so shall thy life proclaim Him
A God who worketh and who heareth prayer.

"Be all at rest!" so shall thou be an answer
To those who question, "Who is God, and where?"
For God is rest, and where He dwells is stillness,
And they who dwell in Him that rest shall share.

(Freda H Allen)

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