

outreach

The New Horizons Newsletter

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Our Active Faith

Once again God is reminding us of the essence of our faith. The God-appointed spring festivals are imminent, with the *Passover season* just weeks away.

As we participate in the *Lord's Supper* we recall the suffering, life and death of our Saviour—the ever-living Lamb of God, sacrificed so cruelly for each of us. Every Bible-based ritual centres on him, has its fulfilment in him, is superseded by him. As wrote the apostle Paul to the Corinthian brethren: *...Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven [yeast], neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth* (I Corinthians 5:7-8).

A Memorial

Ideally, all in whom resides the Spirit of God will assemble—on the evening before his trial and crucifixion—to bring to remembrance the life and the death of our Saviour and to renew our baptismal covenant with him through the simple emblems of bread and wine. Or, if this isn't possible, then with brethren of your household.

But this memorial is the crowning part of the days leading to the Supper. The apostle encouraged the Corinthians to prepare themselves to participate: *...as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (ch 11:26-27).

The *Lord's Supper* is, in other words, a solemn memorial and not a 'party' as the Corinthians perceived it! In contrast to

Lord's Supper:	Fri evg March 26
Unleavened Bread	March 28-April 3

the joyful celebration of our deliver-

ance at the *Supper*, the seven *Days of Unleavened Bread* which follow, starting the next afternoon, call for a time of introspection.

[*Passover* refers to the seven-day festival including and following the sacrifice of the lambs (Luke 22:1)]

Our Life in Christ

Leaven (a raising agent) is a symbol for all forms of corruption, and during the festival we remove it from our homes in symbol of purging our own inner corruption.

The apostle reminds us that *'...you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God'* (Colossians 3:3). In other words, that corruption in us is covered by Christ's sacrifice. In God's view we are 'holy', we are—*now*—God's Family, and as such we seek, with His help, to emulate the life of Christ, to be transformed into his image, to *'... mortify therefore [our] members which are upon the earth'* (v.5).

It's a time perhaps to focus on our personal 'leaven', *'...the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us'* (Hebrews 12:1). To conquer our sinful traits we must co-operate. Said the Psalmist: *'...I kept myself from mine iniquity'* (18:23). And the patriarch Job: *'...I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?'* (ch 32:1).

Paul reminds us that *'...you have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him'* (Colossians 3:9-10).

At this festival season it's appropriate that we examine ourselves, discarding old habits and values, and putting on the true virtues of Christ-like character: *'...that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness'*. Ω

‘...with what body?’

It’s a question posed to the apostle Paul—and still puzzles many: ‘...some man will say, *How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*’ (I Corinthians 15:35).

Jesus tells us that ‘...all in their graves will come forth’ (John 5). So how could that be? Can’t even bones decay with age, get scattered? What’s left to resurrect? Of course, it’s not an issue with most in Christendom, for isn’t the soul wafted to heaven immediately on death—the substance of most funeral orations? But if that is true then surely there is no need for a resurrection. And if no resurrection then Christianity is a sham—our faith is useless (I Corinthians 15:14-17).

But, continues Paul, ‘...now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept [ie, have died in Christ]’ (v.20). A crowd of over five hundred had met with him (v.6), as had the Twelve on numerous occasions during six weeks of teaching (Acts 1:3). Jesus is the first to transform from a physical to a spirit body. He is the firstborn of many.

In the Grave

What’s going on, then, between when we die and when we are raised from the grave? The Scriptures are clear that even the most righteous don’t, when they die, have any interaction with God: ‘...in death there is no remembrance of you: in the grave who shall give you thanks?’ (Psalm 6:5). Nor can you praise Him: ‘...The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence’ (Psalm 115:17). As King Solomon sums it up: ‘...the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing’ (Ecclesiastes 9:5). So—what is going on?

In God’s Image

Mankind was created by divine fiat from the soil under our feet, from the elements found in it. As such he differs little from the lower creation. Indeed humans and animals and sea-creatures are all (Hebrew) *nephesh*, ‘creatures’.

Mankind—male and female—alone in creation is created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). But common to all species is *ruach*, spirit, even in the tiniest insect. It’s the ‘operating instructions’, the programme for every activity, and imprinted in its unique DNA.

The patriarch Job calls this added element the ‘*spirit in man*’ (ch 32:8). It is inspired by God, is subject to destruction (God alone is immortal) and is separate from the body, as is clear from the restoration to life of Jairus’s daughter: ‘...her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her food’ (Luke 8:55).

We don’t know if the human spirit passes into God’s presence, but we know it is in His care, in a state called *sheol*, until it is resurrected—and united with a body (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

With What Body?

We are assured that ‘...it doesn’t yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him’ (I John 3:2). As wrote the apostle Paul: ‘...[Christ] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself’ (Philippians 3:21).

That’s awesome—to return from the grave in a new body; not our old corruptible one but a body that is no longer subject to pain, nor subject to decay and death, and, when appropriate, shining like the resurrected Jesus. A body that is powerful, that exercises the full range of spiritual gifts, that is not constrained by physical objects.

It’s a body that has *substance*—as witnessed by the post-resurrection appearance to the disciples. Jesus suddenly appeared before them in a locked room, and not as a disembodied spirit. As he tells them: ‘...a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have’ and he then invited them to touch him (Luke 24: 36-43). Paul notes: ‘...as we bore the image of the earthy man [Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Christ]’ (I Corinthians 15:49).

The apostle adds ‘...It is sown a natural [Gk.*pseuchikos*] body, it is raised a spiritual [Gk.*pneumatikos*] body; there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body’ (v.44). Not some kind of wraith, not a disembodied spirit, not a ghost! They will be visible but inherently shining as does Christ.

The Scriptures, by analogy, portray angels both in a glorious form inspiring awe (Revelation 22:8), and as a stranger in a visible body you might entertain in your home (Hebrews 13: 2). Recall that Abraham provided hospitality (unleavened bread, steaks, water) to ‘three men’—in fact the LORD and two angels’ (Genesis 18:8).

The Creator placed Earth and all on it under the dominion of the newly-created and perfect mankind (ch 2:8), but through our sin we lost that authority, yielding it to a fallen angel. Our destiny is to regain that authority, with angels assisting us.

The return of Jesus will be to an earth decimated by man’s destructive activity and by the judgments of the LORD. A remnant of Israel will return to the land of promise in shock but in repentance. The resurrected saints will be assigned to supervise the refurbishing of our planet, to rebuilding the waste places, to implementing the divine legal, administrative and economic systems, to preventative health and environmental care. All under the guidance of him in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The saints, clothed in their spirit body, will be visible to this remnant, tangible: ‘...yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but your eyes shall see thy teachers’ Isaiah 30:20. Ω

Insight from Paul

The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God

Sometimes it's what is *unspoken* that is highly relevant—like Sherlock's 'dog that didn't bark'. Thus we find the apostle strangely silent on key elements of modern Christian beliefs. Yet any believer in modern Christendom who rejects these elements is at best tolerated—or even scorned out of their fellowship.

The body of beliefs revealed directly to him by Jesus is '...*the faith once for all delivered to the saints*' (Jude 3), and as he advised the church '...*follow me as I follow Christ*'. Which at that time the church at large did, despite the all-embracing pagan culture of that society. In referencing the Lord's Supper, for example, Paul warned that by their form of worship the Gentiles were in fellowship with devils, disloyal to the Creator (I Corinthians 10:14-21).

Our pattern of worship, says Paul, is a reflection of our allegiance—whether to the one true God, or to 'devils'—to any of the myriad 'gods' spawned by mankind during the millennia. '*Flee idolatry*', he says. Don't follow in the tracks of ancient Israel: '*...They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not*' - Deuteronomy 32:17.

Paul, therefore, never aligned himself with the heathen practices prevalent in his world—idolrous practices (now known, for example, as Christmas and Easter) that have become the mark of modern Christendom. We express our loyalty to the true God by following his example. Ω

Letter from England

Greetings all,

The so-called practice of *mindfulness* teaches that we 'live in the moment'. It has merit—if we can disassociate from the doom-laden news reports. I rather prefer the words of the apostle Paul: '*...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*' (Philippians 3:13-14).

And what a glorious calling that is. It is our salvation, our integration with the Godhead, our eternal destiny. To be ever serving our Saviour not just for a thousand years but endlessly and in the awesome presence of our Father. It defies imagination!

John tells us that '*...we shall be like him*'. His vision of the resurrected Jesus so awed him that he '*...fell at his feet as dead*' (Revelation 1:17). And Paul: '*...as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*' (I Corinthians 15:49). He describes the resurrected body: '*...It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power*' (v.43). We will inhabit a world where '*...the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him*' (ch 22:3). For ever! Let's set our minds daily on our stupendous future in God's family: '*...whatsoever things are true, things are honest, things are just, things are pure, things are lovely, things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*'.

James

Adam and the Ant

Every species recreates itself in some manner. Of them all, only humankind, created in the divine image (Genesis 1:27) is born with the potential to live forever. Every animate species, even the tiniest speck of an insect, is driven by an indwelling spirit which has inherent limitations governing its activity. We call it *instinct* in the lower creation. In humanity we are uniquely equipped with a spirit that can transcend the physical and communicate with our Creator.

The father of mankind, Adam, was settled in a guarded paradise and could indeed have lived forever, gradually extending his domain beyond its walls. But having been persuaded that there was a way of life superior to what the Creator offered, our first parents lost all—their perfect environment, their intimate relationship with their Creator, their lordship of the planet. And an unending life with the potential to be transformed to a mighty spirit body.

The Lower Ranks

What, then, of the rest of creation? It's a popular myth—defying logic—that they, too, lost their lives only when Adam sinned, with the implication that they were created to live unending lives. But think of it. The entire eco-system is dependent on life, on the vast variety of living creatures inhabiting the soil - and dying. And are we to believe that bees, essential for fertility but with a brief life-span, (or wasps or rabbits!) would remain alive forever?

Can we believe that Abel's herd of sheep would breed endlessly but never die? Recall that the first recorded animal death was in the Garden—by God's own hand (Genesis 3:21). Isn't healthy soil fertility dependent on organic deposits and remains from the animal, bird and fish creation—in life *and* death?

When Adam sinned death did indeed enter the world—but the world of sentient humanity only: '*...as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*' (Romans 5:12). The lower creation does not sin, is not held accountable: '*...the wages of sin is death*' (Romans 6:23).

Humanity—all of us—will be held accountable before the Creator: '*...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*' (II Corinthians 5:10). Ω

Prophetic Insight

When we set out to explain prophecy the key-note must be to acknowledge *'I'm probably wrong'*. Down the centuries Bible pundits *have* been wrong—wrong more often than right, often embarrassed by the passing of an unfulfilled predicted date.

Time and again it's the date for the return of Jesus Christ that is wrongly predicted. So we wait. That will be a pivotal date for all of mankind, for it signals the overturn of our present civilisation; and it is an inevitable and momentous event, an awesome event. But its timing is locked in the counsel of the Father.

Inevitable—so at some point in our trajectory through time Jesus *will* return. The divine plan will advance into a new phase. But that golden era is predicted to be preceded by a time of turbulence. The 'wolf' will come and will seek to devour what's left of our civilisation.

It would be naïve to think that the ground-plans for such a coup have not been laid over many years, even

centuries. Since earliest times despots and the 'elite' have sought to control their fellows, to build a world empire: Babylon, Alexander, Rome, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Hitler to name a few. Our own era witnesses the rise of so-called *globalism*—proposed as the solution to all our challenges.

Mankind, however, doesn't willingly trot into slavery. We must be seduced to comply—slowly, quietly, clandestinely, but ultimately by a manufactured fear that induces submission to those claiming to have the answer to lethal threats from man or from nature (or the 'gods').

Under human jurisdiction such schemes begin benignly but inevitably end in despotism, in draconian control of all resources (including human lives) to advantage a global elite motivated by dark spiritual forces. Such are still 'out there' and—however long delayed—we must each be constantly aware: *'...Be on the alert therefore, for you do not know the day on which your Lord is coming'* (Matthew 24:42).

next column

THE HIDDEN RULER

One 'coincidence' too many and we're tempted to think 'who's pulling the strings?'. The reality is—someone is! Here's what US president Woodrow Wilson wrote

(1913):
What the President wrote (an whoever he refers to) is a clear reflection of the Christian Scriptures.

"Since I entered politics, I have chiefly had men's views confided to me privately. Some of the biggest men in the United States, in the field of commerce and manufacture, are afraid of something. They know that there is a power somewhere so organized, so subtle, so watchful, so interlocked, so complete, so pervasive, that they had better not speak above their breath when they speak in condemnation of it."

There is indeed an unseen force that controls and manipulates all of human activity—its commerce, its education, its culture, its religion. It does, of course, have a human face—the countless thousands through time who listen to his whispers and implement his destructive and deceptive policies.

The Adversary's greatest weapon, however, is scepticism, for he has persuaded mankind that he is a myth, a figment of wild religious imagination. The Bible, however, unveils his true identity. It is man's adversary, the Devil, who has deceived all mankind. Warns the apostle Paul: *'... the god of this age [who] has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the brightness of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, should not dawn on them'* (II Corinthians 4:4). John, in reference to the Adversary, adds: *'...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world'*

That 'brightness', the good news of deliverance, sheds light on the way of life for which man was designed and created (by Christ), with the ultimate goal of our transformation from flesh to eternal spirit as members of the divine Family. It is a whole new way to live, totally opposed to the designs of this evil being. The depths of his intelligence, born out of unknown ages in God's service and six millennia to learn every human foible, mustn't be downgraded.

Having coveted godhood and been cast out of God's presence and seeing the new creation, mankind—destined to be God's sons—he then plots to usurp man's God-given (Genesis 1:26-28) sovereignty over the planet. He seduces our first parents to accept his leadership and—at least initially—to reject divine guidance, and claims mankind is under his jurisdiction: *'...I will give all these things [all human kingdoms] to you [Jesus] if falling down, you will worship me'* (Matthew 4:8-9) - a claim Jesus didn't dispute.

The Adversary still stalks the earth. Peter warns his hearers: *'...the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking . whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith'* (I Peter 5:8-9). Ω

We must be 'preppers', always prepared—but a continuing *spiritual* preparedness, ready to greet the Master when he returns. Ω