

TEXT - Exodus 28:34-35.

*"A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not."*

We see these instructions from the Lord to Moses that bells had to be placed on the robe of Aaron so that when he walked, all of God's people would hear the bells ringing and would know that their high priest was to intercede for them to God. It was designed to attract the people's attention to make them realize that a great blessing was to be done on their behalf by their high Priest. Prayers would be offered, atonement made for their sins, thanksgiving offered on their behalf, and blessings dispensed on them. So that the people would not worship Aaron the Lord instructed that he had to wear a gold plate inscribed "Holiness to the Lord". Almost 1,600 years later the prophet Zechariah again spoke of these bells, and he saw them on horses being taken to different parts of the world, and he still saw that they were associated with the words "Holiness unto the Lord"; chapter 14:20. This was signaling that a universal High Priest was to come into the world for all people, and we know that came to pass when Jesus Christ become our High Priest forever. That is why to-day, we sing the Hymn:-

"The Gospel bells are ringing,  
Over land from sea to sea;  
Blessed news of free salvation,  
Do they offer you and me.  
For God so loved the world,  
That His only Son He gave;  
Whose'er believeth in Him Everlasting life shall have."

When we hear the Church bells ringing out each Sunday and festivals it should also be to us a way to attract our attention, to alert us that our High Priest, Jesus Christ is about to once again intercede for us to offer our prayers, to offer atonement for our sins by the dispensation of Grace, to accept our thanksgiving offerings, and dispense to us many blessings. An extra blessing is also heralded by these bells tolling out, and this was seen by the Apostle John in Rev. 19, almost 500 years after Zechariah saw the horses, the Apostle saw the horse come forward with a faithful and true rider, and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood and his name is called "The Word of God." We see that we also receive from answering the call sent forth by those bells, the opportunity to partake of the Word of God so we can shape our lives to that Word and not fear judgement by that word. The Apostle saw also that a name was written in the vesture as in the beginning, but those words were "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

The next time we hear the bells ringing to attract our attention, let us all think a little longer on their meaning to us in our lives and to remember into whose presence we are being summoned.

Apostle Cliff Flor  
North Queensland.

TEXT- Luke 2: 9-11.

*“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

The joyful news of the angels was not only meant for those shepherds who were keeping watch through the night over their flock, it was to bring joy to all people. When in Bethlehem the shepherds found the confirmation of what the angels of the Lord had told them so clearly, they did not remain silent about it. Praising and glorifying God they left the place of divine revelation and spread the words of the angel among the people. Luke 2:16-20 *“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”* They testified of what they had witnessed. The people of Israel were referred to the newly born Christ child, in whom they were to recognize salvation and the One who was to be Lord of His chosen people (Micah 5:2 *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”*

The souls constituting the prepared Bride of the Lamb, however, are being referred to the One who brings them salvation, but who moreover is their Bridegroom, who will come and fetch them to reward their loyalty and to crown their faith. The souls belonging to this Bride can in their trials and temptations lay claim to the comforting words: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by the name; thou art mine" (Isaiah 43: 1).

Let us not be put to shame by those shepherds who testified of the Saviour's birth. We can testify of the imminent return of the King of kings, for the Spirit of the Lord has revealed it to us. This will be a day of indescribable joy for the people of God, this surety is our greatest joy at Christmas.

Bishop Edwin Riaz  
Canada & USA.

TEXT- 1 John 3:16-18.

*"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him. How dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue: but in deed and in truth."*

To try to understand this teaching, following is a heartfelt story that appeared in a recent newspaper:

In the city of Chicago, one cold, dark night, a blizzard was settling in. A little boy was selling newspapers on the corner, the people were in and out of the cold. The little boy was so cold that he wasn't trying to sell many papers. He walked up to a policeman and said, "Please Sir, you wouldn't happen to know where a poor boy could find a warm place to sleep tonight would you? You see, I sleep in a box up around the corner there and down the alley and it's awful cold in there, for tonight. Sure would be nice to have a warm place to stay."

The policeman looked down at the little boy and said, "You go down the street to that big white house and you knock on the door. When they come out the door you just say John 3:16 and they will let you in."

So he did, he walked up the steps to the door and a lady answered. He looked up and said "John 3: 16: the lady said "Come on in, Son". She took him in and she sat him down in a split bottom rocker in front of a great big old fireplace and she went off. He sat there for a while, and thought to himself. "John 3:16 I don't understand it, but it sure makes a cold boy warm."

Later she came back and asked him "Are you hungry?" He said, "Well, just a little. I haven't eaten in a couple of days and I guess I could stand a little bit of food" The lady took him in the kitchen and sat him down to a table full of wonderful food. He ate and ate until he couldn't eat any more. Then he thought to himself "John 3:16 Boy, I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a hungry boy full".

She took him upstairs to a bathroom to a huge bathtub filled with warm water and he sat there and soaked for a while. As he soaked, he thought to himself, "John 3:16 I sure don't understand it, but sure makes a dirty boy clean. You know, I've not had a bath, a real bath, in my whole life. The only bath I ever had was when I stood in front of that big old fire hydrant as they flushed it out."

The lady came in and got him, and took him to a room and tucked him into a big old feather bed and pulled the covers up around his neck and kissed him goodnight, and turned out the lights. As he laid in the darkness and looked out the window at the snow coming down on that cold night he thought to himself, "John 3:16 I don't understand it, but it sure makes a tired boy rested".

The next morning, she came back up and took him down again to that same big table full of food. After he ate she took him back to that same big split bottom rocker in front of the fireplace and she took a big old Bible and sat down in front of him and read John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". She asked him did he understand?

He said, "No, Ma'am, I don't. The first time I ever heard it was last night when the policeman told me to use it." She opened the Bible to John 3:16, and she began to explain to him about Jesus. He sat there and thought, "John 3:16 I don't understand it, but it sure makes a lost boy feel safe".

Later in life that boy became a powerful teacher in the Christian Church.

If we are all honest, we too, find it difficult to understand the love of God in sending His Son to die for us and also how Jesus agreed to do it for us. We do not find it easy to understand but it sure makes life worth living.

Apostle Cliff Flor  
North Queensland.

TEXT – Acts 1:9.

*"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."*

Benedikt XVI. writes: For us who have always lived with the christian God concept and are indifferent towards it, the acceptance of hope which exudes from the real meeting with God, is hardly noticeable". Is this a false proclamation by me or a frightening reality? Is the acceptance of hope noticeable for me? Noticeable during the meeting with God! This is an actual fact. How do I see the real meeting with God?

What did the disciples experience after Jesus had risen from the dead? In Acts 1:3 we read: *"To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."*

Jesus told His disciples that they would be baptized by the Holy Ghost and they would receive the power of the Holy Ghost which would descend on them and they would be His witnesses Acts 1: 5-8). It is an inevitable sequential process: By virtue of the Holy Ghost we become witnesses! On the other hand, we have to realize that if we are not witnesses we have not received the power of the Holy Ghost! Self-criticism is required! Every day, do I really live in expectation of Jesus being present? Experiencing His presence, does it raise the longing for being closer" to Jesus?

Luther writes:"Faith connects me closer to Christ than any husband would to his wife. Therefore faith should be taught properly, so that through the same faith you will be united and connected with Christ that you and He will be one person so to speak."

Let us see what really happened: Some 2000 years ago Jesus was actually seen ascending to heaven and a cloud removed Him from in front of their eyes. Since then He has gone, He is with His Father. Contact can only be made through the Holy Ghost. A real meeting with Jesus is impossible. We cannot look into His eyes, cannot hear His words, cannot see Him directly in His glory. There are images, experiences, a presentiment. Do we think we have a real substitute in worship and devotion, in prayer, in the holy bible and many other things and are we happy with that? If we consider our current relationship with Jesus is it not inevitable to develop a huge longing which culminates in a great longing to express the wish:"Lord Jesus, let more of you come into my life. Come into my life completely. Let me see you, Lord Jesus. Let me touch you, Lord Jesus. Let me hear you." I am convinced that only such an honest petition will change my life and a real Jesus-yearning will come into this world through me. Meeting Jesus must still remain our hope. And that is why revived Christians pray since the ascension: Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, come soon! Because we are longing for a personal meeting with the Ascendant, we are living in anticipation of the One to come - in anticipation of the rising of the Power and the Glory of Jesus and are longing for the day of His manifestation!

Today it is necessary to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not only a private firm belief or an abstract teaching but that He is a real person whose appearance in history with the power to change the lives of everyone. "This was also written by Benedikt XVI. To change lives - but how? So, that I am on the way to this special event. In one of the hymns written in 1874 the christians sang:"Give me your hand, I am giving you mine. The password is, we are travelling to heaven, it is the aim to walk the narrow path; the fear is to stay in childlike faith, the joy is to dedicate our lives to the Lord; the honour is to be born of God" (Hymn Book No. 423). Yes, we are urged to remain on our way and to move forward. Therefore we must encourage others to join us by introducing them, supported by the power of the Holy Ghost, to the longing for the coming of Jesus.

Is there a reason why communities die, personal faith diminishes and that there is such little joy in the life of Christians because the reason for the joy is attached to the life of Jesus Christ?

**Live with the Resurrected and Ascendant, that revives lives – yours + others.**

Apostle Gert Loose  
Germany.

TEXT – 1 Corinthians 15: 20-23.

*“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”*

We must never doubt that the resurrection of this body will take place, and it will take place only because the same power that was within Christ, that power of the Holy Ghost must remain within us, for it is the only power that can bring us out of the grave. That was shown very clearly by the Prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel Chapter 37 verses 1-10: *“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”* We see therein that the church can prophesy of this resurrection. It can give an assurance that our bodies can be made whole, that everything will be put into place that is necessary, and in the hearts of the believers they can believe and visualise it happening, but nobody within the church, no living man has the power to bring breath back into those bodies. We have to call upon the wind, the Holy Ghost, that spiritual wind that God has sent into the world to stay and dwell with us, and live within us. It is the only power that will bring about the resurrection from the grave. That is why we must make our bodies a dwelling place for this Holy Spirit at all times. That is why repentance and remission is so important within our lives, so that the Holy Spirit can dwell therein. What is the purpose of this resurrection? - we might ask. Our Lord told what the purpose of the resurrection was when He spoke to Nicodemus, and we find written in the Book of John Chapter 3 verses 1-8: *“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* We see the purpose there is that we have to be re-born to be as Christ. Flesh cannot achieve this. Nothing we can do in this life will allow us to be born of water and spirit, and change our make up. It is once again as Christ said, it is only by that wind, the Holy Spirit that comes and we do not know where it goes, and when we are resurrected from the grave and our spirit and soul goes back into our bodies, then we are indeed born of water and of spirit for we will be as Christ, spirit first and body second. It is not a dream. It is the truth of God. Let us all cling to it and make ourselves always available for the Holy Spirit to work through us. Psalm 51:11 *“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.”*

Apostle Cliff Flor  
North Queensland.

TEXT - Psalm 138:3.

*"In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."*

Today we continue to experience that praying helps. Praying provides rest, peace and great strength to our soul. Praying will also bring about a change, at least in the sense that it is easier for us to bear that which has been placed on us. It is necessary to always consider that God helps when it is necessary. Our Heavenly Father will probably not fulfill all our wishes and petitions, some of these would perhaps not further our soul's maturity and completion or there may be other reasons for them not to be fulfilled. Every prayer nevertheless eases the concerns and burdens which we must bear. It is important to recognize the answers which God provides. We must remain enthusiastic about God and His work. Those who continue steadfastly in prayer will move the powers of heaven and have their prayers answered at the right time. Those who love God the Father and the Son have hope, are patient and pray.

Apostle Paul states that this love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. *"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."* (Romans 5:5). Therefore, we all have a beautiful divine foundation for demonstrating an active love. Love also urges us to be faithful. This will enable us to receive a crown. *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* (Rev.2:10).

The text further states: and strengthenedst us with strength in our soul. God our heavenly Father has wonderful sources of strength for us. This includes His word which is an edifying source of strength and His grace which provides strength through forgiveness. The Holy communion which provides life preserving strength (John 6: 53-56) *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him;"* and through which we experience the fellowship of God's children with the Lord Jesus, the peace of the Christ which constitutes the power to reconcile. We get the comfort through the Holy Spirit and the assurance that we are safe and secure in God's love and the knowledge concerning the eternal life. And being assured that we have an abundance of blessings.

However, we must make use of these sources of strength by assimilating everything which comes from the Triune God with an open heart and a longing soul. For this our innermost being must always be sanctified. *"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy".* (1 Peter 1:16). This sanctification is possible for those who live and experience their faith and accept the majesty of God, our heavenly Father.

Bishop Vinod Bediawala  
India.

TEXT – 2 Corinthians 5:17.

*“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

As we gather for the last service in the year 2016 to give thanks, to reflect and to make a new resolve. Or is the fact that we are numbered to the people of most high and receive grace incessantly not worth thanking for? The children of God who have personally experienced the truth of the words in one of our hymn "When all things fail, God will still prevail. He can safely lead thee thro the darkest vale" give thanks.

Yet some feared they would perish in the tempest of adverse circumstances. In despair they cried out as did the disciples, *"Carest thou not that we perish?"* (Mark 4: 38) But this strong helper did not forsake them. Even those among us who threatened to collapse under their cross were helped by God at the appropriate time. The pressure of a cross is never pleasant, but it had to be carried by those who wanted to prove themselves (1 Peter 1: 6 - 7) *"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."* Those children of God who are still waiting for help for which they prayed had to admit that they can-not always understand God, but they continue to trust Him. Let us examine ourselves whether the words of our text, which was given to us at the beginning of this year, have been fulfilled upon us.

Where all things have become new

- The oneness is cultivated in the family and among the Brothers and Sisters in the community.
- One does not blame the other (James 5: 9) *"Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door;"* but they all pray for one another.
- One does not rebel against God's will but surrenders to Him in the knowledge that God never makes a mistake.
- The return of Christ has become the hub of life, and one leads a life *"like unto men that wait for their Lord"* (Luke 12: 36).

If we have not succeeded in every respect we continue to strive to achieve this complete renewal. Let us therefore resolve to keep the new commandment of Jesus (John 13: 34), *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."* To wait for the Lord who always gives us new strength (Isaiah 40: 31), *"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"*. To honor our new name even more (Revelation 3: 12) *"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."* so that we can joyfully enter our new home on the day of the First Resurrection.

TEXT- Ecclesiastes 12: 1.

*“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”*

We are reminded in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes which is a book written as we know by King Solomon. It was a very important book to the children of Israel, for it was put into a scroll and every year at the Festival of Tabernacles that book, particularly that last chapter would be read by the priests day in and day out, so that all the people could hear this final message as they left that place, a message that reminded them of the frailty of life and the necessity to depend on God's blessings through this life, because at the end of it as they wrote there the body will go to dust, but the spirit returns unto God. It was important that they be reminded to have their faith in God and trust in Him absolutely, particularly in His commandments.

We today live in the period of grace and we have a greater hope than those people in those days. We have the blessings of grace where we can become reconciled unto God, but that reconciliation will be meaningless if we depart from the commandments of God without understanding that the end result is still the same. We do not get judged as we go through life as they did, but there will be a day of judgment when the Lord returns, when He will separate the sheep from the goats, and we need to prepare for that. The very first words are very important for us today when we see what is happening in the world and we view statistics. The message was - Remember thy Creator in thy youth. It did not say to remember God as the Creator of the world and everything therein. Specifically it reminded the people to remember their Creator, the creation of man and out of man woman, this remembrance that this must always be the foundation or the beginning of following our faith. If we cannot accept that God has created us, then all the rest can easily be argued against. It specifically left its message to the youth, that they should at all times remember their Creator in their youth, for after that will come times of distress and darkness, and times of evil within the world. We see that happening in the world today. We see a move to have them forget their Creator, to look to other philosophies on how they came about and more importantly to look to what their rights are, and that can be without referring back to their Creator. Statistically, this sadly shows that young people who enter university studies, that many of them as they register for university studies believe in the Creator and they believe in Christian morals. Sadly out of those ones who exit from university the percentage has dropped. They are taught that they have to forget this business of a Creator, that they have to forget this business of obeying God's commandments, that they are now of the age where they can make their own mind up. Many claim to be agnostic or even atheist. The link is that they have forgotten the Creator from the days of their youth. At a Youth Camp we saw a video presentation of a doctor who is now going around the world, and he is teaching and talking at universities to urge them to not forget the Creator in their lives. He relates his own story. Hewas brought up in a Christian family, he went to the university believing all this, but within three years he did not believe in

God as the Creator anymore because of the influences. He became a doctor and he was travelling out to see a patient and was involved in a horrific motor vehicle accident that left him in the hospital for over two years. All the parts of his body had to be re-built. They were giving him these bone transplants, and after many of them he said to the surgeon – “Why are you always opening me up and taking the bones from my ribs?, it's becoming quite sore.” They told him it is the only bone in your body that will re-grow under its own efforts. He was lying in bed thinking - I have heard that before. His mind was taken back to when he was a young person and he learnt of the Scriptures, and he learnt of the creation - the Book of Genesis, where he remembered that God opened man, took a bone from the rib and closed it, and it re-grew again, and out of that He cloned a woman. Because he had that seed implanted to remember his Creator in his youth, he then suddenly realized the truth, and he made a commitment from that time, that if God spared him and got him back into mobility again he would commit his life to warn young people to never forget their Creator that they learnt of in their youth. We see therein the necessity particularly for parents, grandparents and the church to plant deeply into the hearts of our children and young people this wonderful doctrine that we find in the Book of Genesis of the creation of the world, but most importantly the creation of mankind, made from the dust of the earth with the breath of God placed in and man became a living soul. Hebrews 11:3 *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of thing's which do appear.”*