

April 2011

Dear Brethren:

Although I started writing this letter in its rough draft form on the day the world calls New Years, I intended to reserve my greetings for the exact time that God calls Nisan 1. Time flits by so fast that before we have thoroughly prepared for it, we are on the final day to *examine ourselves*: ". . . and so let [us] eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not *discerning the Lord's body*" (1 Corinthians 11:28–29) [emphasis is mine throughout].

So, my warm greetings again, brethren—beloved in the true union of one blood and body of the Lord Jesus Christ. At this time, as you are now reading this *Monthly Letter*, I extend to you the right handshake of fellowship and a wish for a happy and solemn Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

A series of Bible study lessons have been developed here since the onset of 2011 to share every Sabbath among the baptized and non-baptized (prospective) members. Having this group in consideration, more detailed and basic lessons were planned in simple, meaningful terms. Such is the nature of this "meat in due season."

Preparation for the Passover cannot be overstated. It is a lifelong endeavor. When during the year, immediately after the Last Great Day of the Feast, we said with a jubilant spirit, "Wow, that was the most joyous Feast ever" and rushed on our journey home to the "world," we should have been implementing the next Passover preparation. With the tempo of life in these last days, we are as one running a race with indefinite goals or stations to reach, and so we get wearied and faint on the way. But if we have the Passover discernment and introspection before we arrive at the Passover season, we gain our strength and stamina to continue "the race which is laid before us" by putting into action Hebrews 12:1–2:

. . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *Looking unto Jesus* the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

What could be a more important focus of our Bible study for the year? What are the vital benefits from it? Does it motivate all to "give diligence to make your calling and election

sure"? (2 Peter 1:10) For those who have been baptized, their needed preparation for the Passover is to be worthy to partake of the flesh and blood of the Lord—discerning the Lord's body—while for the "prospectives," it is to realize God's calling to the Lord's body.

Discerning the Lord's Body

What it means to "discern" or "*not* discern" the Lord's body highlights strong differences in opinions and claims of so-called Christians today. The former reveals the way one determines what is right and to always do that which is good. It manifests one's priority in life to bring it about with definite purpose and diligent action. By way of example, the regular observance of the Sabbath is a particular manifestation of discerning the body. No matter how long you have been a member of the church or how knowledgeable you are of the fundamentals of belief, your proper observance of the Sabbath reflects the degree to which you discern the Lord's body in it. Sabbath services are observed in worshipful perspective, not in any way tainted with a form of "show" or any pretense (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:19–25).

The tithes given willingly from a loving heart—motivated by the spirit of gratefulness and praise—is another example (Proverbs 3:9; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Willing obedience to the laws, statutes and commandments is the desire of the converted heart.

The latter group (not discerning) offers a form of religion but is "denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:2–5). Lack of discernment of the body was the cause of division in the early church (1 Corinthians 1:10–13; 3:3–9). Members who fail to recognize the role and authority of the faithful ministry manifest utter failure to recognize the body of Christ. How about those who fail to maintain the sanctity of marriage and have divorced and remarried? Can they point to the husband as head of the family and so apply the whole metaphor in Ephesians 5:22–30?

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body . . . so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . . (Ephesians 5:22–23, 25).

Failure to recognize this apostolic injunction is also a failure to recognize the body of Him who says at Passover, "Take, eat, this is my body . . . this is my blood . . ." and consequently the succinct reprimand: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

Cognizance of the truth manifested in the Passover is an indication of a "calling" in these last days, including for those "prospectives" who have ears to hear the words of God. Discernment of the body of Christ, the Son of the living God, leads us to a focus on "the race set before us." Knowledge of the revealed truth about the Father and His Son, when lived by us, is the fulfillment of what He said in John 6:44–48.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Everyone, therefore, who is coming to listen is being taught of God, and so is learning of Him and is drawn to the Son by the guidance of His Spirit. Indeed, He is the living bread alive in us and is "come in the flesh" today (1 John 4:2). Then we come together in this appointed time and place to keep the feast, not with the "old leaven, . . . but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8).

The Spirit of Discernment

The capacity to discern spiritual things is not an innate capability in man. No matter how brilliant, or wise and noble, a man is not capable of knowing the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:11–16).

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save [by] the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but [by] the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:11–12, 14).

So, without the gift of the Holy Spirit we cannot discern the body of Christ; we cannot understand God's *calling*; we cannot see His master plan and purpose; we cannot utilize His ever-sustaining power to bring us through "the race which is laid before us." It makes all the difference to have the gift of the Spirit, which God is willing to give to those whom He is calling today.

Because of our natural tendencies, we can only become inclined to spiritual awareness when we receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5–9). Whereas,

before we could not discern spiritual things, they now become interestingly well-defined in our sight. The scriptures that we read before as a "jigsaw puzzle" are now a complete portrait of meaningful instructions: to correct, to reprove and to inspire us to action.

Our prayers reveal our view of God because we perceive the body of Christ as our only mediator to approach His throne of grace. While the world, by habit, is prayerful only in times of disaster and natural calamities, in the Spirit our prayers are unceasing with "groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). While they repeat memorized prayers, we pray with purpose from the heart.

Keeping an All-time Attitude

We are now in the final days when we ought to be examining ourselves: so eat of that bread and drink of that cup worthily; *discerning the Lord's body*. After all of those days of preparation, we realize that the time from the Last Great Day to the next year's festival season, is barely sufficient to thrust ourselves into a continual—all-time—discerning attitude. In this way, we continue to remember His death until He comes: the same attitude with which we confess "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"—overcoming the notion that He came once upon a time in human history, emphasizing His birthday rather than His death. Denying that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh today is a failure to discern His body as both human and divine. Let us not overlook that human purpose for existence we learned in the early days. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong often fondly quoted 1 John 3:1–2 to substantiate his teaching on that "God-family plan potential."

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Brethren, the *all-time attitude* of discerning the Lord's body in every moment of our lives can be a functional "armor" against the wicked one.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10–11).

As we continue reading the whole passage, do we discern the Lord's body in it? Notice verses 14–17: the *truth* that girds our loins, the *righteousness* as our breastplate, the *gospel of peace* with which our feet are shod, the *faith* as our shield, and *salvation* as our helmet. Will we not overcome the *self*, the *world* and the *Devil* with the whole armor of God and the *sword* of the Spirit in our hand? Surely we can if we recognize each part represented in the whole armor.

1. The *truth* that girds our loins.

What is implied in the truth covering that most vulnerable part of the body? Christ, the manifestation of absolute truth, covering the most vulnerable part of the body, suggests His faithfulness in protecting the very elect remnant during these perilous times (2 Timothy 3:1–5; Matthew 24:22). We need that protection from the subtlety of a mixture of truth and error, and the attraction of compromise and ecumenical trends.

Both of these ploys are the Devil's tactics in presenting his wares today. As they are broadcast on our "wavelength," let us be wary and recognize the absolute truth that girds us with the effective armor of God.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God . . . Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:1–3).

2. The *righteousness* as our breastplate.

The Lord is our righteousness. He is our Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). His righteousness is the only badge that we need to gain entrance into God's Kingdom. In these last days of peril, He is the breastplate that protects us from the wiles and flatteries of this world. We need to discern His constant presence in our lives and fellowship with Him in the light. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

How easily do we harbor self-righteousness when we do not discern the body of Christ in us! How easily do we assert ourselves, trying to out-do the other person when talking about ourselves and our family. How often do we satisfy ourselves before others?

But whenever we truly discern His presence, we can depend upon His righteousness rather than our own.

3. The *gospel of peace* with which our feet are shod.

Part of the whole armor of God includes the feet being shod. It is the protection of our feet as we walk the rugged road to bring the good news of peace. The gospel of peace is the personification of Christ our Savior. In Romans 10:12–16, we read:

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Can you discern His presence here? Our protection is from head to foot. Only in our own personal weaknesses and negligence do we fail to overcome.

4. The *faith* as our shield.

This is not our own personal faith. The faith once delivered to the saints—the faith of Jesus Christ—is our shield (Romans 3:22). It is that "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). It is that faith manifested in works (James 2:14–22). It is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:4–8), not our own. It is the righteousness God revealed from faith to faith (Romans 1:17).

That sounds like a perfect shield for our divine protection. Whom shall we fear? Please read more to confirm our assurance: Romans 8:31–39.

5. *Salvation* as our helmet.

The helmet is an effective protection to keep the brain from being jarred or damaged. That which happened to the church as early as 1974, and grew momentarily beyond 1986, was a test of great intensity, jarring the minds of those who have failed to discern *the Body*. Let me assure you, brethren, the *helmet* is as effective as ever to

protect us for our common salvation. But we need to discern the Lord's body in our daily existence as the Holy Spirit guides us. Let us not be swayed by our own understanding, neither be misled by the cunning craftiness of the "reprobate" mind (Romans 1:28–32).

6. The *sword of the Spirit* which is the Word of God.

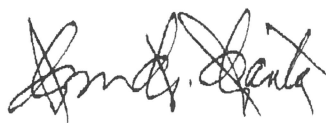
Discerning the Word of God—personified in the body and blood of Jesus in the Passover symbols—is essential to our overcoming.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart . . . (Hebrews 4:12–13).

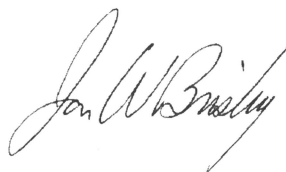
The efficacy of overcoming the enemy was demonstrated in Christ's titanic battle to resist Satan, the Devil (Matthew 4:4–11). He quoted the Scriptures to parry every thrust of His enemy. He is the living Word, the word of life: *the sword of the Spirit*.

Brethren, keeping the *all-time attitude* of discerning the Lord's body daily as we wait for His coming, is using the whole armor of God. It becomes, therefore, an effective lifestyle of overcoming. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

Affectionately yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corsino C. Canta', with a stylized, cursive script.

Corsino C. Canta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon W. Brisby', with a cursive script.

Jon W. Brisby