

## **Brethren, Be encouraged.**

Oh, when we look at this world sinking down and down day by day we are wont in weariness and sorrow to sink down ourselves even into despair. But then we remember Jesus: the Light of the World; the Hope of the World. And that Light and that Hope which shall be in all the world is already in our hearts. The Kingdom is already here, and regardless of the kingdoms and petty fiefdoms of this world hell bent on destroying themselves, we witness within, a distance, an estrangement from them and their doings, and a membership in a Royal Household whose workings are truly the antithesis of everything of this world. Therefore, we see all the great sorrows in the world with compassion yet hope.

The Lord said, and His Word is true that: “All these (catastrophes) are the *beginning* of sorrows” (Matt 24.8 KJV). In the world it is going to get worse. Let us, forewarned by Him, arm ourselves with the Mind of Christ to accept that in the world it will be so. “It must needs be that offences will come.” We witness the disintegration of a system of fallen man and wicked spirits in its death throes. And the rising of a Kingdom of Righteousness that will have no end. Somewhat inaccurate is the KJV translation of Matt 24.8. It reads in the Greek: “All these (sorrows) are the beginning of throes. Throes are birth pangs, labor pains. The Lord says – look up – don’t see all the tumult as death throes but as birth pangs, because a new heaven and a new earth is being birthed, and birth involves travail. (But joy follows travail that a Man is born into the world).

## **Firstfruits**

A curious thing happened in my garden about three years ago. At one end there is a tree stump old and cracked, and growing beside it were two plants that I hadn’t planted, and wondering what they were, I decided to let them grow to see what would come of it. They grew so incredibly fast that each day I could measure their increase. It soon became apparent that these were passionfruit vines. Around this time, in the middle of the garden there suddenly appeared five little trees. These also grew at an amazing rate and soon enough they could be recognised as papaya or paw-paw trees. Then I noticed two little tomato plants springing up. I didn’t plant any of these. I had planted other things in the garden but these came to nothing. The tomatoes turned out to be vine tomatoes and grew to about eight feet long. They produced so many tomatoes I used to give them away to neighbours in bags. The papaya also I had to give away. The passionfruit bore a reasonable first season crop, and now they are bearing the second season which is enormous.

About two months ago they bore the firstfruits – only about two dozen fruit which grew and ripened all at the same time and were the size of cricket balls (that may not mean too much to you; about one and a half times the size of a tennis ball). The ideal time to pick passionfruit is off the ground. Unlike other fruits, they do not ripen off the vine, but if mature, they will sweeten further. The thing that impressed was that all these firstfruits matured together – they were all ready for harvest together. Then, after this, there was nothing. One could think, well, what a poor crop that was! But soon after this barren time there appeared the secondfruits. Some of these I've already given away, as there is just so many I'm laden down with them. On this vine there must be over a thousand passionfruit, all at different stages of growth and new blossoms every day. These secondfruits don't mature together unlike the firstfruits which suddenly together manifest their maturity. The Lord impressed me with these realisations today. Some few years ago He had said to me beside this same garden: "All creation is your bible". I believe that the time of the firstfruits is near at hand. You may say, and I with you: Lord, I'm not ready. But, if we stayed here another thousand years, we'd still be saying that. The final change will be "in a moment; in the twinkling of an eye".

There may be much more interpretation here, but for now, abide in the vine. We will not live and mature outside of the vine, but we, like those passionfruit, don't need to do anything to come to maturity except to hang in there – abiding.

John Joseph