

Be Still!

Peace and Rest

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Please turn in your Bibles to Daniel 12; and we will read verse 4, to start the sermon. This is a scripture that most of us probably know pretty well.

Daniel 12:4 "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

As the church has said for a long time, this describes our society to a T; and it is a very convincing proof that we are living in the end time. The book of Daniel was shut up, until the time of the end. Now conditions are similar to what is described here, and the words have been opened up; and we understand (through Mr. Armstrong's teaching) just what the book of Daniel is all about.

We know that human knowledge doubles every few years, it seems, as millions of people have gotten higher education. They study. They explore. They investigate. They experiment. They research. And then, when they are all done with that, they publish their findings—for as many as are interested to take a look at, and to use.

This age, then, has been dubbed by futurist Alvin Toffler (who is the author of *Future Shock* and other trend-watching books) as "the information age;" and we can just see that it is awash in increasing knowledge. You cannot go a day without hearing something "new" that man have discovered. You hear it on TV, or hear it on the radio, or read it in a newspaper.

But it is the other factor—"running to and fro"—that I am going to focus on today. Everyone is in a hurry. I do not know if you have noticed; but it sure seems that way. We are all scurrying about. Many of us, just to get by, have had to enter the rat race. And that rat race is such a demanding life that to keep up (to keep from falling behind), we have to pick up the pace of our lives and devote more time and energy just to scratching by.

To use another analogy, the whole world is like six million plus ants—all scurrying about the anthill, trying to set as much aside (in store) before the winter sets in. Think about it. The pace of life is maddening almost—frenetic, pulsating, unstoppable. Everything is "twenty-four hours" these days—it seems. Everything is "go, go, go." And I personally

find it very wearying to watch all this activity.

If you cannot see this where you live, then just turn on the television. Look at the pace of television—especially the commercials. The theme, the angle, the viewpoint is constantly changing. Every few seconds, something happens. The camera pans or it moves in, or they change the entire scene to something else. It seems like something has to be moving all the time, to keep our attention.

Even the speech in television and radio ads is fast. It is like a machine gun. They have to get all that information in. It is non-stop. And you know that, on radio, "dead air" is a mortal sin. You have to have something being said, or being played, all the time.

Do you think God's Kingdom is going to be like this? Do you think God's Kingdom is going to have a frenetic pace? Maybe I am naive, but I cannot imagine God endorsing a society that is merely a 'more righteous version' of this one. It just does not seem to be parallel to His character.

If you stop to think about it, many components of this society would just simply vanish if most of the people in it were righteous. Just take one element (one sin) that, if it were corrected, would totally change the pace of society—like covetousness, or keeping up with the Jones'. Take that out, and *the pace of life* would **slow** considerably—because people would not be so ambitious to get ahead of their neighbor. They would not be trying to climb up the ladder. They would not be trying to climb over the person who is ahead of them, on the ladder. Things would slow down, and people would be more content—because they would not have this driving need for "more."

So, my own personal conclusion is that this life's rush tempo is not something of God. He did not intend for us to live in such a fast paced world. It produces stress—and that is certainly not good for us. Although a certain amount of stress is needful, more stress than we can handle is wearying and debilitating; and eventually it will wear us down.

It is full of *fear*. Not necessarily full of fear of something bad happening all the time, or something tragic happening; but there is a fear of slipping behind everybody else. There are fears and anxieties that this world produces. There is the adversarial competition that this society throws us into—where it is not just that we are competing, but we are competing with an edge (to be better than the other guy, to put the other guy down).

There is *confusion*. Mr. Armstrong used to say that that is one of the hallmarks of Satan's society—that it produces confusion. God, obviously, is *not* the author of confusion—as I Corinthians 14:33 says. But what else does that scripture say? It says

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that He *is* the author of *peace*. And in a frenetic society "peace" is almost impossible to achieve. You have to come out of that frenetic lifestyle (that rapid pace, that pulsating lifestyle) before you can have peace. This mad, pell-mell way of life certainly does not produce peace. In fact, if you listen to the modern way of doing things, this life that we live is a war to be waged—and won, no matter what the cost.

We are, basically, three days from Passover. That night is a night that we commemorate the perfect sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ. One of His names is the Prince of Peace. And He has told us that He has left *His peace* with us. How do we imitate *His peace* in ourselves? A full answer, of course, would be way too much for one sermon; but we are going to look into one vital component of Christ's peace today. And it is the opposite of "*running to and fro*."

It is, what I call, *being still*. Only when we are still do we have the time and the perspective to have peace; and, as we will see, that is the only way (that is the only environment) that really works in helping us to come to know God.

Now, before anyone jumps to a hasty conclusion, I have to make somewhat of a disclaimer. I am not saying (and I want to emphasize the word "not") that to be a true Christian, if you are in one of these fast paced jobs (or, industries), that you have to quit it—in order to be righteous. I am not saying anything to that effect.

What I am saying is that we have to find time to slow down, *be still*, and pull out of the rat race (on occasion) to recharge our batteries and get back into sync with God and His peace. We have to remember that this is not God's world. And, if we are going to be like God, we on occasion (even though we have to live in this world) have to learn how to pull out of it every once in a while—and get back into sync with Him and what He is doing.

What is *being still*? It is pretty much just what it says. Stopping our frenetic lifestyle occasionally—regularly, and purposefully. I am going to make an analogy here. *Being still* is to our mental, emotional, and spiritual health as fasting is to our physical health. Just as fasting has spiritual benefits, *being still* has physical benefits as well. There is some overlap. Of course, my focus today will be on the spiritual aspects of being still.

Now, *being still* deals primarily with two main areas of human activity: (1) movement and (2) speech. Most of this time, up to this point, I have been talking about movement. And, in a way, that will be my illustration throughout the sermon. But it also has to do with speech—having your lips still, as well as your body.

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When we are still, we are physically at rest. We are relaxed. Most of the time, we are immobile. We are not rushing to get somewhere, or to do something. We are not engaged in some other activity.

Some people enjoy thinking while they are doing something fairly mindless—like walking. They take a daily walk, and they spend their time thinking through what they are going to do during the day. Some like to pray, during times like that. Other people think deeply about spiritual troubles that they are having or problems that have come up. I know that my dad loves to go out and do something physical—like cut the grass. It helps take his mind off of the important things; and sometimes it helps to spur other thoughts. This qualifies, pretty much, as *being still*—because those activities do not necessarily distract us. However, the best way to *be still* is literally to be still.

The same is true for speech. Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to speak about one thing and think about something else totally different? It usually does not happen that way. Usually when we think and speak simultaneously, we are thinking about what we are going to say next. Also, it is difficult to think while someone else is speaking (if you are engaged in a one-on-one conversation) because our minds are occupied with thinking about what the other person is saying. Or, many of us are thinking about how we are going to respond to the other person.

This applies to any kind of sounds, or noises. After a while, even listening to music can be distracting. Some people find it extremely distracting to listen to music and try to do something else—while other people find it relaxing. I believe, if I have read the studies correctly, most of the time if you do something with music—the effect of the music being helpful only lasts for a short while. Then it begins to either be distracting, or you totally tuned it out. Be that as it may, the best thing to do is to be quiet.

The object, then, of *being still* is to find a place, a time, and an atmosphere free from distraction, interruption and noise. At this point, though, we are only halfway to our destination of *being still*.

Some of the eastern systems that advocate this sort of thing (whether they are called yoga, or transcendental meditation, or what have you), they tell you to empty your mind at this point. But the godly way is *not* like that. It requires only that we rid our minds of the aspects of this present world that fogs the way we think.

God does not want you—when you are still—to be mindless. God wants you to empty yourself of those influences that Satan sends out and to fill your mind with good thoughts. He wants you to think (and to think clearly)—to think as He does. To think free

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of Satan's influence. He wants to think about right things and good things, when you come into this peaceful still environment. You might want to jot down Philippians 4:8—where Paul says that we are to meditate on things that are good, and right, and noble.

Psalms 23:1-2 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; [Now, notice this.] He leads me beside the still waters.

It is very interesting. I want us to notice two things here. The first one is that God desires to lead us to *still places*. That is one of the things He (Christ) does, as our Shepherd. Not only does He provide for us, not only does He make us to lie down (that is, be at peace and have rest), but He also leads us to places that are *still*. (That is, "still waters.") He wants us to be in places like that.

The second point is about sheep. This is a psalm that is written as if a sheep wrote it. Now, what is it about "still waters" that a sheep would think is a blessing? "Still waters" is literally a pond, or a lake, or a lazy stream or brook, or creek—anything where the water does not rush. Sheep do not like to drink from rushing waters. They prefer to drink from "still waters." The reason why is that they are very skittish creatures. They would be very frightened of a rushing stream.

It is not the best for them. It frightens them. It agitates them. They prefer a very placid, still environment. And that is the kind of environment that a good (true) shepherd provides for his sheep. Now I am sure if sheep were thirsty, and had not had a drink for a long time—they might brave a rushing stream. But, if it was up to them, they prefer "still waters"—peaceful waters.

Let us say that we have found a "still place"—a quiet time, where we are at peace. What do we do? Just because we have found this nice pleasant environment does not mean that we have completed this *assignment from God to be still*. What do we do when we find this "still place"?

Let us turn just a few pages back, to Job 37. If you know anything about the book of Job, you will know that Job had been joined by his three friends—after all the calamity that had happened to him. Job maintains that he was righteous before God. And he had been righteous before God. Job had done just about everything that God wanted him to do.

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But his friends were convinced that Job had sinned, and that there was something that Job had not recognized as being sin in him. And so they kept trying to convince him that he was a sinful man and he needed to do something about that. After a while of hearing Job justify all that he had done, they kind of gave up. And then this young man, named Elihu, came on the scene. He apologized to them; and he said, "I know I'm a young man; but maybe you could hear some wisdom from me." And he began to answer Job.

This [in Job 37] is part of his answer. Elihu is trying to get Job *to see*—trying to get Job to see God, trying to get Job to see his personal problem from God's perspective. Trying to make him not look at his own works and all the things he had done (to justify himself), but to look at God. And to try to turn things around so that he saw himself from God's perspective. But Job was so full of argument. He was so agitated. He was so frustrated and full of questions, that he could not see the crux of the problem. So this is what Elihu begins to tell Job:

Job 37:14 "Listen to this, O Job; stand still and consider the wondrous works of God."

That, in a nutshell, was his answer. "Job, **be still** and consider what God has done." And then he goes and tells him, in the rest of the chapter there, what God had done in the heavens and what He does with men. He tells him to, "Calm down! **Be still**, Job. And ponder God's wondrous works" —in nature, in man, His purpose, His plan. Look at what God is doing!

In other words, we could say, "Job, compare yourself and your little pitiful works (that you take such pride in) to God and His utterly magnificent works that He does every day." In a way, I do not know that I could say that God picks up on this; but, when He speaks to Job, He tells him basically the same thing. He said, "Job, what in the world have you done in comparison to Me? *Be still*. Listen. Be silent and hear all the things that I've done. Were you there, Job, when I hung the earth? Look how little you are, Job, in comparison to Me."

Once we see ourselves in comparison to our great God and Father—and His Son, Jesus Christ—we find ourselves in the proper attitude to receive instruction, correction, direction, or whatever God wants us to have. So when we get to a still place (a silent place), one of the things that we need to do is to consider God and what He has done to bring us into the proper attitude.

Let us go a few books back to I Samuel 12. We are going to be reading most of the

chapter here. This is very interesting, from the standpoint of *being still*. Maybe I should give you a little background. In chapter 8, the people had demanded a king from Samuel. Samuel was very distressed at this. He did not want to do it. But God said, "Go ahead, Samuel. Listen to the people. They have not rejected you. They have rejected Me."

So, Saul was anointed king; and chapter 12 is his coronation. Saul makes an address there. But before that happened, the people of Jabesh Gilead had been attacked by the Ammonites. They had been put under siege. They told the Ammonites, "If you'll give us a week, we'll give you an answer about what we are going to do. We'll either place ourselves under tribute to you, or we'll get help from our brethren in Israel."

The Ammonites said, "Okay, fine. We'll do that." So the people of Jabesh Gilead sent a note to Saul saying, "Come help us. We're in distress." Saul slaughtered a yoke of oxen. He cut them into pieces, and he sent the cut pieces to the tribes of Israel. And he said, "I'm going to make you like this slaughtered ox, if you don't come help me deliver the people of Jabesh Gilead."

So the men of Israel rose up; and they descended upon Jabesh Gilead; and they slaughtered the Ammonites, until they were pretty much not there any more. It was quite a resounding victory on the part of Saul and the Israelites. Then came Saul's coronation.

I Samuel 12:1-5 Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you. And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and gray-headed, and look, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you. " And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand." Then he said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they answered, "He is witness."

Samuel just made sure that everybody understood that he had treated them properly. He had not done anything that was underhanded. He had been straight with them throughout his entire life. This is an interesting introduction, because it leads to what he says next. Basically, what he had done was he had just established his

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credentials—that he was someone that could be trusted, and that what he said was worthy to be listened to. What are his next words?

I Samuel 12:6 Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LOORD who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.

Maybe I should explain this verse too. He is also setting the stage for what he says next, by making sure that they understood that God was behind everything. It was God who had raised up Moses and Aaron. And, in a way, he was also saying that it was God who had raised him up as judge and prophet. So he is continuing to establish his credentials, saying that he has the full backing of God.

I Samuel 12:7 Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LOORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LOORD, which He did to you and your fathers.

He is saying, "Okay, Israel. Find that peaceful place. *Stand still*. Quit being so excited." Here they were crowning a new king—their first king. They had just come off a huge victory over one of their enemies—the Ammonites. And so they were all excited. This was a new age for the land of Israel—that they would be united under a king. But Samuel says, "Fellows. Ladies. Calm down, and let me reason with you."

Then he goes through several verses here, where he reiterates what God had done with them in the wilderness, how He brought them out of Egypt. And then, when they got into the land, they had been having trouble with oppressive foreign governments (first this one, and that); and God had raised up judges to give them victory and bring them out of oppression. And then they would forget God again for a while. Then they would go into slavery. Then He would have to rise up a judge again, and they would fight off the enemies.

And over and over and over, this pattern of God helping; the people being righteous for a short time; and then slipping back into apostasy and idolatry; and then going into slavery; and God having to send a judge—and all the rest.

I Samuel 12:13-15 "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the LOORD has set a king over you. If you fear the LOORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LOORD, then both you and the king

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who reigns over you will continue following the LOORD your God. However, if you do not obey the voice of the LOORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LOORD, then the hand of the LOORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers."

He said, "The same thing is going to happen, unless you continue to follow the Lord."

I Samuel 12:16-18 "Now therefore, stand [*"Stand still,"* again.] and see this great thing which the LOORD will do before your eyes. Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LOORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive [meaning, "understand"] and see [also meaning, "understand." You can look at it from both directions. Not only would they see with their eyes, but also they would see with their minds.] that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LOORD, in asking a king for yourselves." So Samuel called to the LOORD, and the LOORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LOORD and Samuel.

What this miracle did was show them that God backed up every word that Samuel had said. This was a true saying, from a trustworthy prophet of God. *If* they would listen to reason, *then* they could take instruction from this and use it to their benefit. *If* they would remain faithful to God, *then* the system that they had asked for (with a king) could work—just as it had worked under the judges that were righteous. But, *if* they failed (if they went into idolatry, if they did the things that their fathers had done), *then* this system was no better than the last system—and they would end up being oppressed; they would go into slavery; they would be scattered. (You name it.)

I Samuel 12:19 And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LOORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

Once they stood still, they began to see what they had done. Then God added his "ka-boom" from the air—with thunder and rain; and they were frightened.

I Samuel 12:20 Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LOORD, but serve the LOORD with all your heart."

"Look. It's not too late. You acknowledge your sin. Now, do what is right."

I Samuel 12:21-25 "And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the LOORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LOORD to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LOORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the LOORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

This is a very serious, sober warning from Samuel. But notice that twice in this chapter he told them to *be still*. The reason he said to be still was because—in their agitated, excited state—they would not hear Him. It took *being still* so that they could see godly reason. So Samuel tried to get them to see that—even though they had a king—God was still in charge; and they would have to still give account to Him. That was the reason that he wanted them to see. Evidently, from their response, they at least got that much. The point is that Samuel first told them to be still, so that they could see reason.

Let us go back further in the Bible to Numbers 9. This is an occasion where Moses uses those words to some of the men of Israel. This has to do with taking the Passover. What God had done here was tell them that the children of Israel needed to keep the Passover—at its appointed time, that He gave them. This should be done on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight; and they were to keep it according to the instructions that God had given.

Numbers 9:6-7 Now there were certain men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron that day. And those men said to him, "We became defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the LOORD at its appointed time among the children of Israel?"

This reads rather plainly. But, because of what Moses says next, we come to understand that these men were not just excited. They were probably close to terror! They came rushing up to him saying, "Moses. Why can't we take the Passover—even though we are defiled by the body of a dead man?" They probably thought that they were facing the death penalty. They did not want to miss the Passover. If they were able to keep the Passover and did not, it says that that person should be cut off from the

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congregation. So, here they are saying, "Look, Moses. What are we going to do? We're going to miss the Passover, and we are as good as dead men."

Numbers 9:8 And Moses said to them, Stand still [Now, listen why he said that.], that I may hear what the LOORD will command concerning you."

And then the Lord spoke to Moses, and He gave him the instructions that we now know as the instructions for taking the second Passover. One month later, in the second month, on the fourteenth day—a second Passover is possible if one is defiled, on a journey, or sick.

The lesson here, in Numbers 9, is that Moses needed *stillness* (both in movement and in speech) for him to hear God's instruction. We cannot hear God speak when we are distracted by other things. Moses knew, that to hear God, you have to give Him your full attention. And that is best done when one is still. The best place, the best time, the best environment to hear what God commands is to *be still*.

Now, let us go back a little further to Exodus 14. Many of you probably thought that I would hit this verse at some point in this sermon. This is the incident at the Red Sea—where God opens the Red Sea, and Moses (People know him as Charlton Heston) says these famous words. We will set the stage with verses one through three.

Exodus 14:1-3 Now the LOORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.'

What had happened here was that they had put themselves into kind of a boxed canyon—actually, God had led them exactly there. They had mountains on two sides, the Red Sea on the third side, and (as we will see in verse 4) the armies of Pharaoh closing in on the fourth side.

Exodus 14:4 Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LOORD." And they did so.

Exodus 14:10 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted

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their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LOORD.

Now we are beginning to see that they were, at this point, very far from *being still*.

Exodus 14:11-14 Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LOORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LOORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

It is very interesting what happened here. Here the Israelites were in terror that they would be slaughtered by this professional army of Pharaoh. They had no defenses. They were not an army. Probably the best they could do were a few swords, which they probably had because of spoiling the Egyptians. But they were slaves. They did not know how to use them. So they were in terror. They could see no way out of the situation.

Moses, being a righteous man and knowing what he had to do (and also knowing the psychology of people)—he told them to calm down, to *be still*, to not be so afraid. Why? So that they could see the salvation that God was bringing to them. If there were all riled up, they would miss it. Notice he says, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LOORD, which He will accomplish for you today." And then he brackets it with another "You shall hold your peace." You shall be still—so you can see, so you can observe, so you can understand, so you can witness the things that God is doing for you.

If you are busy, all harried, all upset, all frenetic, moving at a hundred miles a minute—you miss a lot, because your mind is focused on doing what you are doing. If you are fearful, your mind is focused on your fear. You are not watching the deliverance that God may, very well, be working out for you! Sometimes—in our trials—we get so wrapped up in the trial and all the bad things that are happening, that we do not see God's salvation. I am not talking about the spiritual salvation of being in His Kingdom. I am talking about *the deliverance from your trial*.

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When we are in trials, the best thing we can do is *stand still* and try to *observe* what God is working out in our lives. An agitated state makes us blind, most of the time, to what God is doing—because our agitated state is very selfish (centered on ourselves, on our fears, on our anxieties, on our worries, on our situation). *Being still* is being at a place where our minds can relax from all that and see the broader picture of things.

You might want to jot down II Chronicles 20, which has another situation where this sort of thing happened again; and one of the prophets told the people to **stand still** and see the salvation of the Lord (almost the exact same words that Moses uses here). It is pretty much the same thing. God fights for the people of Israel, and they win a great victory over their enemies.

But I want to go to Ruth 3, and see a situation that is a bit calmer than these war-like situations. Most of you probably know the story of Ruth, where Ruth and Naomi came back after losing their husbands. Ruth wanted to be married. She did not want to stay single. She was still a young woman. And she decided to go glean in the field of Boaz; and Boaz, of course, helped her. He gave her a lot of grain and special privileges.

And so Naomi came up with a scheme to get Ruth married off to Boaz. She tells Ruth what to do (in the early parts of chapter three); and Ruth does them exactly as Naomi told her. And it all works out. Boaz is a very good man, and maybe even a very predictable man. He does exactly what Naomi had figured he would do. And this is his response.

Ruth 3:11a And now, my daughter, do not fear.

It is interesting that he said that. That is just what Moses told the Israelites. "Don't fear."

Ruth 3:11b-18 I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman. Now it is true that I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be that if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you—good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning. " So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. [It was still very dark, before the dawn.] Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Also he said, "Bring the shawl that is on you and hold it." And when she held it, he measured six ephahs of barley, and laid it on her. Then she went into the

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city. When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, "These six ephahs of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" Then she [Naomi] said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.

Think about this situation. What sort of emotions are young lovers in, who have just been (in a way) betrothed to one another? You might say "excitement"—and that is probably just the edge of the emotions that are going through a bride's mind. Ruth was ecstatic, probably. She was a Moabitess in the Israelite land. She probably never thought it would work; and, besides that, she had just been given six ephahs of barley.

Now, we might say, "Whoop-dee-doo—six ephahs of barley." Well, six ephah of barley was a rather generous gift. It meant that she and Naomi would not go hungry for a long while. Six ephahs of barley are 4 1/2 bushels, or 132 liters. That is a lot of barley. It was, actually, quite a bit of wealth to them—because not only could they eat it, but they could also sell it. But that was probably the least thing that she was excited about. She was probably all atwitter; and here she was spilling this story out to Naomi—tripping over herself with excitement, trying to get all this out. And Naomi, being the older and wiser woman, said, "Ruth, just **sit still** and see how this turns out. Let's see how God works this situation out."

Now the reason I said that is because Boaz is a type of Jesus Christ. And what was he doing for Ruth? He was redeeming her. He was, in a way, (you might call it) preparing the bride. He was smoothing the road for himself to take her as his wife.

Naomi is a type of the church, in a way. She was the one that instructed this young "Christian" who was coming into a relationship with Christ (Boaz), to sit still and see how God was going to redeem her. (*Sit still*, and understand how God works.) Only when we are still, and we are focused, can we see God's involvement in our affairs.

Let us go to Psalm 46. I looked, before I came up here, to see the songs (that are in our hymnal) from Psalm 46; and, if I understand this right, there are more songs in our hymnal from Psalm 46 than from any other—except maybe Psalm 23. There are four different songs in our hymnal from Psalm 46: "Come And Behold The Works Of God" and a few others. I think they are pages 36, 37, 98, and also 123—which is based on Psalm 46 ("Glorious Things Of You Are Spoken").

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Psalm 46:1-11 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The LOORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. [It means, "Think about this. This is important."] Come, behold the works of the LOORD, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LOORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. [Think about this.]

At first glance, this "Be still and know that I am God" may seem to be the same as "Be still and see the salvation of the Lord"—but it is not. On closer inspection (on deeper thought), it really should carry us to another conclusion. When we are still, we are *enabled to know God*. When we are still, we are not distracted by other things. God wants a one-on-one relationship. And distractions, and noises, and interruptions, and tumults, and catastrophes, and trials and all of that stuff that comes into our lives—they tend to drive us apart, away from God. They tend to get in the way.

We tend to think that trouble drives us toward God; but, in reality, troubles are so distracting that they tend to make us self-centered. We tend to get absorbed in the trouble, and not on God—who is working things out for our salvation. You may think that is not true, but let us go back to James 3. This is one of my favorite scriptures. (I have a lot of favorite scriptures, but this is high up on the list.) Notice how James describes God's wisdom, God's way of doing things.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

When you think of those traits, those adjectives that describe godly wisdom—they are not harsh things. They are not things that set one on edge. They are peaceful, calm, tranquil traits. They are placid virtues.

Now, notice what God says this does.

James 3:18 Now the fruit [That is, the harvest, what you gather.] of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

The fruit of righteousness is not sown in war. It is not sown in trouble. It is not sown in trial. It is not sown in a frenetic pace of our lives. It is sown in peace, by those who make peace—by those who carve out a peaceful environment for themselves; by those who try their best to live in a *still* place. The harvest of righteousness is sown—and it will eventually be reaped—in an atmosphere of peace.

That is why God said, in Psalms 46, "Be still and know that I am God." It is only when we are still that we can really concentrate on that relationship with Him. When our lives are upside-down, there is confusion and chaos, things are rushed, there is turmoil—the chances of us *growing spiritually* are actually rather slim. In most cases, we are just barely hanging on—because we are distracted by the circumstances that we are in. We are trying to solve the problem (and that is good, that is fine); but we are not projecting our minds very far from our own concerns. Like Job, we are not seeing the bigger picture of what God is doing.

We need to find that still place—that still environment—so that we can figure out just what God is doing and let Him work. So, only in *peace* do we have the time and the space to take stock and work on improving things—ourselves, and our relationship with God.

I do not know if you were writing things down, but these scriptures that we have just been through are five necessary spiritual activities that being still helps us to do. I will name them now, and I will number them:

1. >From Job 37:14, ***being still*** helps us to *get in the right attitude*.
2. This was from I Samuel 12. ***Being still*** helps us to *see righteous reasoning*.
3. The scripture that we went to on this was Numbers 9:6-9. ***Being still*** helps us to *receive instruction*. (Remember that was Moses giving instruction on the second Passover.)
4. This was Exodus 14 and Ruth 3. ***Being still*** helps us to *see God at work in us and for us*. This is where we see God working out salvation.
5. This was Psalms 46 and James 3. (This is the most important one.) ***Being still*** helps us to *come to know God*.

Now, I want to take you to the best example of *being still* that there ever was. Of course, I

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speak of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I could have gone to several places in His life where He was still, where He went off to be alone, He went up to a high mountain to pray, He went here, He did this, He went out of the Sea of Galilee. But I thought I would give you probably the most "severe" of all His attempts to *be still*.

Luke 4:1-2 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan [This was just after His baptism.] and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, he was hungry.

Drop down to verse 13. In the intervening time, Satan tempted Him.

Luke 4:13a Now when the devil had ended every temptation. . .

This gives you the impression that he had tempted Him much more than what is recorded here.

Luke 4:13b-15 . . . he [Satan] departed from Him [Christ] until an opportune time. Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

And then His ministry begins with a bang. This Man (our God and Savior, our Redeemer) was so still during those forty days that He did not even let food and water distract Him. He was so *focused* on preparing for His ministry—for the great work that God had given Him to do—that He went to be by Himself for forty days, without even the distraction of eating, to get His mind *fixed* on what God wanted Him to do!

The result of this was that, when He came out of the wilderness, He came with power and strength to do His work. He went on that "power" and "strength" for a long time. And He frequently *recharged* it—by going to a still place, and getting refocused on His job. The result of *being still*, and of doing this right, is to be filled with spiritual power to do the job at hand.

Let us go to Hebrews 4. This section has two points that I want to make here.

Hebrews 4:1-11 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let

us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them [meaning, the Israelites]; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works;" and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest [when he took them into the Promised Land], then He would not afterward have spoken of another day [in the Psalms]. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

Now, what are the two points? The first is a long-ranged point, and the second is a short-ranged point.

1. The long-ranged point is that we need to be diligent to enter *the rest* that is *the Kingdom of God*. That is the rest we are looking for. That is when God will cease from His spiritual labors, when we have come into His rest in the Kingdom.

2. The short-ranged point is in verse 9: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God." That word "rest" is "sabbatismos"—the Sabbath rest. In fact there is another translation that says: "We must therefore keep the Sabbath as the people of God." (I am not saying that is right or wrong; but it seems a good translation to me.) But the point I am getting at is that *the Sabbath* is a type of GOOD's rest.

We have a weekly, twenty-four hour period of time when we can *be still*. God gives us one day in seven as an opportunity to be still and come to know Him. That is one of the reasons that we have the Sabbath day. People of God *need* this one day—to pull out of the world, to take it easy, to get out of the rat race, and to get into communion with God. We need to use this time, on the Sabbath day: to get into the right attitude, to see godly reasoning, to receive instruction, to see God at work, and to get to know Him. (Those are the five points that I just mentioned a few minutes ago.)

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We have the Sabbath day to *be still*; but it is not just limited to the Sabbath day. Those of us, who are lucky, find time during the week (and, during the year) when we can be still. This time of the year is one when we need it the most. That is, to be still before the Passover—to get our minds in the right attitude and get the right instruction so that we are in the proper way of thinking (in the proper mode) for the Passover and the holy days.

It is not restricted just to now. Also before Trumpets and Atonement, and the Feast, is another time when it would be good for us to find a time of *stillness*. Any time, when we are in need of self-evaluation, is a time when it is best to be still.

Let us conclude in John 14. We will be reading these verses on the Passover. In verse 27, our Savior says to us:

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

If we learn to be still, then we will have Christ's peace in us.

So, let us all remember these things. Let us all find *a still place* (in these three days between now and Passover) so that we can take Passover in a worthy manner.