

Chapter 30

Into a New Millenium

We entered the year 2000 at our daughter's home in Canberra, Australia. As the international date-line is just to the west of Australia, that country was among the first to welcome in the new millennium. The apprehension felt by many, that great tragedies would sweep over the world due to computers crashing and the unreadiness of businesses, never materialized and great celebrations from all around the world were witnessed on television. Australia did itself proud as being the first great nation to broadcast its welcome. Sydney harbour was featured as the hour of midnight approached. Suddenly, all went dark before wonderful fireworks lit up the night sky, ending with a dazzling display across the whole expanse of the famous Sydney harbour bridge. One word stood out – *ETERNITY*. Most Australians would know the significance of that word though most others would not. For many years, as one would walk through the streets of Sydney, you might find written on the pavements in chalk, this one word. It was the work of an old man, once an alcoholic street dweller, who had wandered into a Mission Hall and heard the speaker declare, "If there was only one word I could write in the heavens for all to consider, it would be the word 'eternity' – where will you spend it?" His life was changed as a result of considering that question, so he committed himself to writing 'eternity' wherever he went as a witness to others. It was amazing that the Australian government should use the same word to welcome the new millenium, knowing its significance to so many of their people!

As I look back over four decades of my Christian walk, I am always thrilled at God's faithfulness to me. He has taken me to many high mountains with Him, and used me in ministries I could never have dreamed of when a young believer. Every decade has had its special ministry, so I wondered just what the 21st century would have for me. In the '60s I had the privilege of ministering to Gurka soldiers in Hong Kong; in the '70s the Lord used us in what many came to call, 'a revival' among the young adults of Bridgend, Wales; in the '80s I taught at the Jewish Academy in Toronto with its wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel with the students and Rabbi Saknovich; in the '90s I was on board the M/V Anastasis with the special joy of conducting pastors' conferences in West Africa, especially Sierra Leone. These were all 'mountain peaks' in a high mountain range. What would the '00s of the new millennium bring?

In 2000 I was involved in a new ministry started by Ade Ajala, a dear friend from Nigeria who now pastored a church in Denver, Colorado, USA. It was named "Hands On" and had as its intention, the planting of churches in Nigeria. I was to develop the teaching program for this ministry, so I spent some weeks in Denver working through some of this. On my second visit in 2001, I was also invited to come on the staff of the YWAM base in Colorado Springs as the base pastor. This seemed a wonderful opportunity but, as I considered all the ramifications, I realized that the dreams of those leaders were unrealistic and, having a check in my spirit, I declined the invitation. In no way was I able to manage both these ministries at the same time. Sadly, the dreams of "Hands On" also never came to fruition though Ade still has a vibrant church in Denver.

Further visits to Baja California and Brazil came in the next two years, each as encouraging as my previous visits. The highlight of 2001, however, was a second trip to India, this time to Chennai in the south, to minister at another YWAM base. Imagine my surprise on finding that five of the students in the school came from Vancouver Island, and they did not know one another before coming! I was impressed by the Indian students, some from high caste and some from low caste families, who sat and fellowshiped together. One young lady had a price on her head for converting to Christ from her Hindu family background. The cross of Jesus always challenges such evil cultural barriers. I was even more impressed by the harmonic singing of some young Indian men, so asked them where they had learned to sing like that – it almost sounded as though they were Welsh! They told me they were from Nagaland in the north, and that the believers there had been taught to sing this way, by the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries that brought them the Gospel after the Welsh revival of 1904/5. I ministered at two different YWAM schools during my three-week visit, spoke to the YWAM leadership at a seminary on St Thomas' Hill, site of the martyrdom of the apostle Thomas, visited slum areas where they do much work, and took the opportunity to visit and have a short stay at Ebenezer Home. This

orphanage is one that Anne's cousin Martin proudly sponsors and is led by a fine man Pastor VeeJay. About 100 young children gathered around me trying out their limited English and giving me great joy. I played cricket with them but failed to impress. One thing that didn't bring me much joy was the daily diet of rice and curry sauce. I like curry but this was 'very' hot – and, as I was warned not to drink the local water, it was always served with Coca Cola, not the best accompaniment for curry!

Among the churches at which I spoke was Maranatha, a church for the Tamil people. The pastor here was a fine man but a man with a history. He had tried twice to commit suicide as first his wife and then his eldest son had contracted cancer and were both given a short time to live. Each time he was unsuccessful, being found by neighbours before he could complete his task. As a result of his narrow escape, he turned to Christ from his Hindu background, crying out to see if the Lord could help him. Not only did the Lord deliver him but both his wife and son recovered from their cancers. He began to open churches wherever he could, among those people he was leading to the Lord, and by the time I was there, he had started over ten churches. His eldest son was now an evangelist in southern India while his younger son was my translator. At the end of my message on *The Upper Room*, I made an invitation to which some people responded. Then the pastor stood to speak to his people. About eight women and ten men stood to their feet and came forward. I asked my translator just what had his father said and why these people had come forward, to which he replied, "My father said that it was time they got off the fence, wavering between their Hindu gods and the Christ. Now was the day they must decide whom they would serve." "All these have come forward to make a commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour." My heart leapt for joy at the privilege of speaking in such a church.

In November of 2001 I received an invitation to speak at the University of Victoria Intersvarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) on a Friday evening. I turned up on time but my host, the staff worker, greeted me with embarrassment as the students had invited another student from another college to minister that evening. "I've asked him to limit himself to twenty minutes" the staff worker said, "so that you will have plenty of time for your message." I assured him that I'd rather him allow the student speaker to share what he wanted to say, and that it would not matter in the least to me that I was not to speak that evening. I would delight to listen to the young man. Naturally, as a result, I was invited to come again shortly afterwards, the first of many such invitations to speak to that wonderful group of students. There followed invitations to speak at IVCF Christmas banquets, four out of the next six years. I wonder if I would have had such favour among those students if I had insisted on speaking that first Friday evening! Little did I realize that such favour would play a major part in my coming to the mountaintop God had planned for this decade!