

A PASSOVER ARTICLE

We must keep in mind that the Passover symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. The Scriptures tell us that initially the disciples found it impossible to accept the fact that Jesus was going to die - - and die in as horrible a death as occurred. They really thought that He was about to establish the Kingdom of God on earth at that time. Yet, they witnessed Him being beaten and whipped until he did not even resemble a human being but looked more like a pile of ground hamburger meat. The Scriptures also tell us that Christ was murdered and was really dead and when placed in the tomb they LOST ALL HOPE. Peter said, "I am going to return to my fishing job!" They literally thought that all their hopes were gone forever because the person they had trusted was now dead and buried. They really had not grasped nor understood most of what He had taught them for over three years. They merely had experienced some very exciting events as they traveled with Christ. But, now all their hopes were dashed by His death and burial. They thought they had to go back to what they were before they were called by God the Father.

Then supernatural events began to occur that startled not only the disciples but the people in Jerusalem and elsewhere. The very first of these supernatural events occurred at the moment Christ breathed His last breath. Matthew 27:51-56 reveals that at the time of Christ's death THE VEIL IN THE TEMPLE WAS RENT IN TWAIN. [As Paul explained in Hebrews 9, this signifies that Christ, through His death, OPENED THE WAY FOR HUMANS TO COME DIRECTLY BEFORE THE VERY THRONE OF GOD IN PERSON AND NOT THROUGH A PRIEST].

The next supernatural event that occurred was a great earthquake and rocks were rent. Then we find that some people who had recently died were actually resurrected to physical life again as a sign that Christ's death had opened the way to the resurrection. After His resurrection these people who had come to life again entered the city and witnessed to many (verse 52).

The centurions guarding Christ's tomb feared exceedingly saying, "Truly this was the Son of God." We must bear in mind that the entire event of Christ's trial, beatings and eventual death was not done quietly but was a public spectacle. It did not take long for the entire city of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas to know what was occurring.

This then is the setting for the events that were about to unfold before their eyes first in Jerusalem but also erupt into the entire western world and eventually to the rest of the earth. At this point let me quote from The Bible Handbook written by H. H. Halley, pages 556-557 and 598-600.

THE RESURRECTION

[Quotes from pages 556 and 557 of Halley's Bible Handbook]

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the ONE MOST IMPORTANT item in whole fund of human knowledge: the grand event of the ages, toward which all previous history moved, and in which all subsequent history finds its meaning. The story of it has plowed through the centuries and changed the face of the earth. (See notes on 1 Corinthians 15 on pages 598 – 600). [Footnote # 1: All of history has moved toward the fact that humans were created to ultimately become SONS OF GOD, HEIRS OF GOD AND JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST (Romans 8:16-23)].

Was it a fact? Did he really rise from the dead? If he did not, what became of his body? If enemies stole it [as some have claimed], they surely would have produced it, for they stopped short of nothing to discredit the story, even to the murdering of those who told it. If friends stole it, they would have known they were believing a lie but men do not become martyrs because of what they know to be false. [Footnote # 2: As is found in Hebrews 11:13, “These all died in faith not having received the reward promised” because that reward is not given to God’s saints UNTIL Christ returns to this earth (See 1 Corinthians 15:42-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 20:4-6)].

One thing is certain: those who first published the story that Jesus had risen from the dead BELIEVED it to be a fact. They rested their faith, not only on the empty tomb, but, on the fact that they themselves had SEEN Jesus ALIVE after his burial; not once, nor twice, but at least ten recorded times, and not singly, nor alone, but in groups of two, seven, ten, eleven and five hundred.

Was it a hallucination? Could it have an ecstasy? a dream? A fantasy or an excited imagination? an apparition? Different groups of people do not keep seeing the same “hallucination.” 500 people in a crowd would not all dream the same dream at the same time. Moreover, they were not expecting it. Considered it an “idle tale” at first (Luke 24:11). They did not believe it until they had to!

Was it only in a swoon? Could it be that Jesus was not really dead when they buried him, and that he came to again? In that case, weak and exhausted, he could scarcely have removed the heavy stone door and gotten out of the tomb [Footnote # 3: Neither could he have escaped from his own burial clothes]. Besides, he demonstrated new powers - - to appear and disappear through locked doors. The eleven (or the 120), in a group, personally saw him slowly rise from the earth and disappear behind the clouds.

Were the records tampered with? Could it not be that the resurrection was a later addition to the story of Christ? - - One that was invented years later to glorify a dead hero? It is KNOWN, from historical records outside the Scriptures, that the “sect” known as Christians came into existence in the reign of Tiberius, and that THE THING THAT BROUGHT THEM INTO EXISTENCE WAS THEIR BELIEF THAT JESUS HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD. The resurrection was not a later addition to the Christian faith, but THE VERY CAUSE AND START OF IT. They rested their faith, not on records, but on WHAT THEY HAD SEEN WITH THEIR OWN EYES. The records WERE THE RESULTS OF their faith, NOT THE CAUSE OF IT! Had there been no resurrection, there would have been no New Testament and no church!

What a halo of glory this simple belief sheds on human life and human destiny. Our hope of a resurrection and life everlasting is based, not on a philosophical guess about immortality, BUT ON HISTORIC FACTS.

Halley’s Handbook has further comments on the resurrection as follows:

“Chapter 15 (of 1 Corinthians) THE RESURRECTION:

“The fact that some of the Corinthian church leaders were already denying the resurrection (12), is an indication of the extent to which FALSE TEACHINGS of the worst kind HAD CREPT INTO THE CHURCH.

Paul insists, in the strongest language of which he is capable, that except for the hope of the resurrection there is no excuse for the existence of Christianity (13-19)

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the one unvarying refrain of the apostles (see page 562). In the meaning it gives to human life it is the most significant and grandest single chapter in the Bible (i.e. 1 Corinthians 15).

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a fact attested to by actual witnesses who had seen Jesus alive AFTER HIS RESURRECTION. Paul himself had personally seen Him. There is no other explanation to the phenomenon of Paul’s life. The occurrence on the road to Damascus was no hallucination. Jesus Himself was there.

Besides, a number of appearances to the apostles singly, or in groups, Jesus had appeared to a crowd of 500 people at one time. It had been 27 years and more than half of those 500 were still alive (1 Corinthians. 15:6). It must have been a reality. A crowd of people would not just imagine the same thing (and then base their lives on it).

The disciples at first were slow to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. But they were finally convinced that it was a fact that Jesus has actually BURST THE BONDS OF DEATH and had come out of the grave ALIVE. It out such a new meaning into life that NOTHING ELSE SEEMED WORTHWHILE. They knew the resurrection of Jesus to be a fact. Believed it EVEN UNTO DEATH. And they went u p and down the highways of the Roman Empire telling the story of it with such earnestness and sincerity that unnumbered THOUSANDS BELIEVED EVEN UNTO DEATH.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the one most important and best established fact in all history.

And the story of it has come down to us through the centuries BEAUTIFYING HUMAN LIFE with the halo of immortality; making us to feel sure that BECAUSE HE LIVED AGAIN WE TOO SHALL LIVE; making our hearts to thrill with the thought that we HAVED BEGUN AN EXISTANCE THAT SHALL NEVER END - - that nothing can harm us; that death is merely an INCIDENT IN PASSING FROM ONE PHASE OF EXISTENCE TO ANOTHER; that millions of years after the sun has grown cold we ourselves shall still be young in the ETERNITIES OF GOD. The most exhilarating thing in the whole range of human experience is the thought that we will become immortal, that we (once changed) cannot die, that WHATEVER HAPPENS TO THIS BODY, we ourselves shall live on and on and on.” (Pages 598-600 of Halley’s).

The foregoing quotes from Halley’s Handbook should enable us to grasp more fully the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and where we personally fit in this plan of God. It is through the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ [PICTURED BY THE PASSOVER] that we have access to life after death in this flesh (see Acts 4:12). By our acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior we then become SONS OF GOD, HEIRS OF GOD AND JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST (See Romans 8:16-17). Then as verses 29-30 show, humans were PREDESTINED to this purpose. In fact, the entire creation is anxiously awaiting the time when God finishes His work with what God calls the FIRSTFRUITS so that they enter the spiritual family of God. Then God will use these FIRSTFRUITS to bring the rest of mankind out of bondage and into the glorious family of God (see verses 19-21).

Thus, it should be clear to any reading this article what you must understand and envision before you partake of the Passover. This then is the true meaning of the LORD'S SUPPER or PASSOVER. As Jesus said Himself, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you (John 13:12-15). And, "Do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:19) and "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death TILL HE COMES" (1 Corinthians 11:26). These are specific instructions from God Himself. May God grant all of you reading these articles the insight you need on this subject and the faith you need to follow God's way in your personal life. You can then receive the blessing of eternal life as a Son of God, and heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ!

Thus, now we should readily see why the New Testament grew as rapidly as it did. There were too many witnesses to these supernatural events. Jesus had spent over three years pointing out to the Jews that they had rejected the truths God had revealed to their forefathers and had even killed God's messengers who were sent to correct them. Among these Jewish leaders was a man from Tarsus named Saul. He had refined his hatred of Jesus and His followers so much that he obtained letters from the Jewish elders to authorize him to destroy this new "sect." Saul was directly responsible for the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (See Acts 6:6 through Acts 8:1).

But Saul was about to encounter the UNEXPECTED. Acts 9:1-2 shows his dedication to destroying this new "sect" that was called "THE WAY" [meaning the way of life God intends that humans live]. Saul's unexpected encounter is recounted in Acts 9:3-19. Then we find that this great champion of the Jews is suddenly PREACHING and confounding the Jews PROVING THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST (see verses 20-22).

Then an amazing turn of events occurs. Suddenly we find this former enemy of the infant church being persecuted by the Jews who has authorized him to persecute that church (see verses 23-25) was now a member of this "sect" and confounding the Jews with the wisdom by which he spoke.

Next we find that the new "Christians" were themselves suspicious and fearful of Saul (whose name had been changed from Saul to Paul). (verses 26-30). The Scriptures tell us that "Saul" was highly respected in the Jewish community since he was highly educated and studied under the great Jewish scholar Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). To have a prominent leader of the Jews as this suddenly become a spokesman for this new "sect" was a powerful witness that confused the Jews and others. It is examples like this that led to the rapid spread of this "new" religion. Besides, there were miracles that accompanied the ministry and Jesus and miracles that had continued among His true followers. Thus, there was no way anyone could honestly disbelieve the account of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. It was an event well known in all quarters. All those in this New Testament church KNEW these facts were true and were willing to give up their human life for these truths. This fact is well established in the quote we read from Halley's Handbook as well as many other secular sources.

At this point I am compelled by God's Holy Spirit to relate to you the meaningful words found in the first chapter of the book of 1 Peter. Beginning with verse 8 [in The Living Bible translation] we find: "You love Him even though you have never seen Him; though not seeing Him, you trust Him, and even now you are happy with the inexpressible joy that comes from heaven. And your further reward for trusting Him will be the SALVATION OF YOUR SOULS. (verses 8-9).

"This salvation was something the prophets did not fully understand. Though they wrote about it, they had many questions as to what it all could mean [NOTE: The Old Testament Scriptures - - which the Jews have and use- - clearly foretold the coming of Jesus Christ as a child born of a virgin and being sacrificed for the sins of mankind] They wondered what the Spirit of Christ WITHIN THEM was talking about, for He told them to write down the events which, since then, have happened to Christ: His suffering, and His great glory afterwards. And they wondered WHEN and TO WHOM all this would happen. (verses 10-11)

They were finally told that these things would not occur during their lifetime, but long years later, during yours. And now at last this GOOD NEWS has been plainly announced to all of us. It was preached to us in the power of the same heaven sent Holy Spirit who spoke to them and it is also so strange and wonderful that even the angels in heaven would give a great deal to know more about it. So now you can look forward soberly and intelligently to more of God's kindness to you WHEN JESUS CHRIST RETURNS. (verses 12-13)

Continuing Peter's quote: "Obey God because you are His children; don't slip back into your old ways - - doing evil because you knew no better. But be holy now in everything you do, just as the Lord is HOLY, inviting you to be His child. He Himself has said "You must be HOLY, for I am HOLY!" (verses 14-16)

"God paid a ransom to save you from the impossible road which your fathers tried to take, and the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver as you very well know. But He paid for you with the precious LIFEBLOOD OF JESUS, the sinless, spotless LAMB OF GOD. God chose Him for this purpose LONG BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN, but only recently was He brought into public view, in these last days, AS A BLESSING TO YOU. (verses 18-20)

"Because of this, your trust can be in God who raised Christ from the dead and gave Him great glory. Now your faith and hope can REST IN HIM ALONE. Now you can have real love for everyone because your souls HAVE BEEN CLEANSED from selfishness and hatred when you trusted Christ to save you; so see to it that you really do love each other warmly, with all your hearts. For you have a new life. It was not passed on to you from your parents, for the life they gave you will fade away. This new one (life) will last forever, for it comes from Christ, GOD'S EVER-LIVING MESSENGER TO MEN. Yes, your natural lives will fade away as grass does when it becomes brown and dry. All our (human) greatness is like a flower that droops and fails; but the Word of the Lord will last forever. And the message is the GOOD NEWS that was preached to you. (verses 21-25)

"But you are not like that (like the stubborn stones that reject Christ), for you have been CHOSEN BY GOD HIMSELF (see John 6:44 as a comparative text) - - you are PRIESTS OF THE KING, YOU ARE HOLY AND PURE, YOU ARE GOD'S VERY OWN - - all this SO THAT YOU MAY SHOW OTHERS HOW GOD CALLED YOU OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT. Once you were less than nothing; now you are God's own. Once you knew very little of God's kindness; now your very lives have been changed by it." (2 Peter 2:9-10)

Thus, we should be able to see how our lives have been changed by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We should be able to see more clearly the true meaning of the Passover and what it should mean to us personally and individually. No one can properly and correctly partake of the Passover unless and until he or she PROPERLY DISCERNS THE LORD'S BODY. As Paul said, many are weak, sick and some have died because they have not properly discerned this Passover sacrifice (! Corinthians 11:23-32)..

A person should seek counsel if he or she is not certain this sacrifice has been properly discerned and accepted. Under age children are not spiritually mature enough to either *discern* the Lord's body and blood or fully *accept* the actual meaning of the sacrifice Jesus made by His body and blood. These spiritual symbols are for spiritually mature people who have been *convicted* of their sins, *converted*, *baptized* and *received* the Holy Spirit. As Paul also said, to do so unworthily is to eat and drink judgment to the person, which is a dangerous sin against the body and blood of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 11:27) We, of *The Living God Ministry*, are here to help anyone to better understand these vital subjects.