

CHAIM TIMES

The Newsletter of CHAIM, "CHristians Announcing Israel's Messiah"

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Spring 2018
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THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SLEEPERS

When you receive this newsletter it will be Passover season. Most Christians know (we hope) that Jesus was crucified at the Passover and that the Last Supper was a Passover Seder. Jesus used the wine and unleavened bread of the Passover to proclaim himself as the Passover Lamb. How wonderful that God has provided a Lamb for all nations and for all time! Because of the sacrifice of Messiah for those who believe God's wrath can "pass over" us. Because of Him we can be accepted as God's people.

But the story does not end there, of course. There are several more Jewish Holy Days involved. The day on which Jesus slept in the grave was a Jewish Holy Day, the Sabbath, which he kept perfectly. He rose from the dead on the third day, and that day was also a Jewish Holy Day, the Day of Firstfruits, or Bikkurim.

After Israel came into the Promised Land and reaped a harvest they were to offer the firstfruits of their various crops to the Lord and recite Deuteronomy 26:5-10. This passage reminded them of their origin, their enslavement, the Passover, the Exodus, and coming into the Land.

In the spring, after celebrating the Passover, they were to offer the first sheaf of the barley harvest to the Lord (Leviticus 23:10-11). It was to be brought to the priest in the Temple and waved before the Lord on the day after the Sabbath. So the very day when the sheaf of the firstfruits was waved was the day Jesus rose from the dead as "the firstfruits of those who slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Amazing!

Then seven weeks later, the wheat harvest was brought in and two loaves of bread were waved before the Lord as the firstfruits of that harvest (Leviticus 23:15-22). Of course this was the great day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out and thousands of Jews and Jewish converts from many nations came to faith on that single day (Acts 2).

Do you see the tremendous significance of the day on which Jesus rose? He was the firstfruits of those who slept, risen on

the First Day of the week, the day after the Sabbath. Then after seven sevens the Holy Spirit was poured out, establishing a new sabbatical pattern. This is why the early Jewish believers began to meet for worship on Sunday, the first day of the week. One of the early groups of Jewish followers of Jesus as Messiah were the Ebionites. Some of the Ebionites were less than orthodox about the deity of the Messiah. All of the Ebionites believed Jews who believe

Jesus is the Messiah should follow the Ceremonial Law. But what is amazing about this sect is that they observed not only the Saturday Sabbath, but they also celebrated Sunday as the Lord's Day because it was the day Jesus arose! (Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1974, page 113. See also the writings of Justyn Martyr, Polycarp, the Epistle of Barnabus and the Didache regarding Sunday worship in the First Century. See: <http://chaim.org/shabbat.html>)

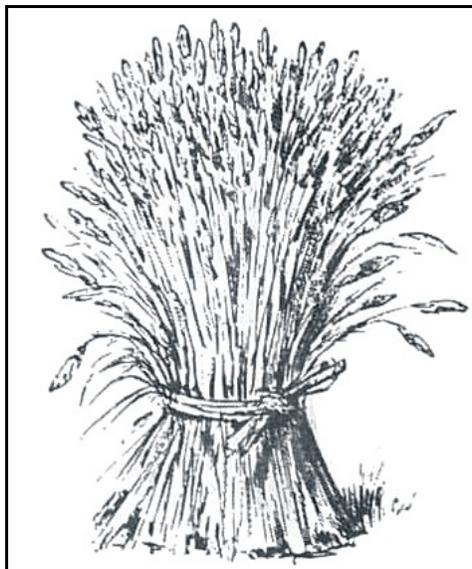
The harvest of the nations began in Jerusalem and continues to this day. Paul said the firstfruits are holy and this implies a full harvest. This is true of both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 11:16). There will be a full harvest of both (Romans

11:25-32). That should encourage us to go forward proclaiming the good news of the risen Messiah, in confidence that God has a full harvest which we have yet to see completed. Every day is a day for harvesting.

Jesus told us to open our eyes and pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers because the fields are ripe for the harvest. Will you pray with us for future workers in our field? Please pray specifically for some from the next generation to join our ministry and for volunteers to help in street evangelism in July.

Jesus is risen as the firstfruits of the sleepers! As we participate in God's harvest we anticipate, with a great and living hope, the full harvest and that great day of resurrection when all who sleep in Messiah will awaken.

—Rev. Fred Klett, Director



CHAIM Ministry Updates

Recently a friend of our ministry, who has Jewish ancestry, sent me this. We think it is worth sharing:

"I am a fan of an English pastor of the 19th Century, his name is Samuel John Stone. He was a literary man, but only served, at his choice, churches in East London, the illiterate part of town. He was a prolific hymn and poem writer. His most famous work is something called the Lyra Fidelium and contains a hymn for each of the articles of the Apostles Creed. It's intent was to help his illiterate flock better understand the biblical teaching behind the articles of the Creed... In that work is Stone's greatest triumph, *The Church's One Foundation*. I am always on the lookout for more I can find on Stone, and ran across this gem this morning. It deals with Jewish Evangelism and was written for the East London Mission to the Jews. I do not know what tune was used, but it is a hymn entitled, Unchanging God. I thought you might enjoy it. –Neil Bech"

Unchanging God, by Samuel John Stone

1 Unchanging God, hear from eternal heaven:
We plead Thy gifts of grace, forever given,
Thy call, without repentance, calling still,
The sure election of Thy sov'reign will.

2 Out of our faith in Thee, who canst not lie,
Out of our heart's desire, goes up the cry,
From hope's sweet vision of the thing to be,
From love to those who still are loved by Thee.

3 Bring Thy beloved back, Thine Israel,
Thine own elect who from Thy favor fell,
But not from Thine election! O forgive,
Speak but the word, and, lo! the dead shall live.

4 Father of mercies! these the long astray,
These in soul-blindness now the faraway,
These are not aliens, but Thy sons of yore,
O, by Thy Fatherhood, restore, restore!

5 Breathe on Thy Church, that it may greet the day;
Stir up her will to toil, and teach, and pray,
Till Zionward again salvation come,
And all her outcast children are at home.

6 Triune Jehovah, Thine the grace and power,
Thine all the work, its past, its future hour;
O Thou, who failest not, Thy gifts fulfill,
And crown the calling of Thy changeless will.

Passover season is upon us and CHAIM team members will be doing Passover Seders for churches in several states, as far west as Wisconsin and as far south as Florida. Please pray for these events. There are always "not-yet-believers" present who will hear the good news! Here are some tips for sharing the good news through the Passover:

1. Read Exodus 3-12; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Isaiah 53; John 1:29; Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-23; and I Corinthians 5:6-8 & 10:14-22.
2. Ask your Jewish friends what Passover means to them and what their families do for Passover. (Maybe you'll even be invited to a Seder.)
3. Prepare a 1-2 minute testimony of how Jesus is the Passover lamb and how important this holiday is to you.
4. Attend or have your own Passover Seder celebrating Jesus as the Passover lamb. Encourage your church to recognize the Passover setting of the Lord's Supper. (CHAIM has a Passover haggadah and instructions online for download.)
5. Send a Passover greeting card to Jewish friends.

PASSOVER DATES: 3/30/18, 4/19/19, 4/8/20

Remember the Passover Seder takes place in the evening. March 31, 2018 is the first day of Passover, but the Seder begins the night before.

JOIN US FOR EVANGELISM IN PHILADELPHIA JUNE 30 THROUGH JULY 4

Work with the CHAIM team in some street outreach in Philly, the Cradle of Liberty! We will be training you & working side by side with you in sharing the good news.

We always have a great time during the Independence Week events. Contact us for more info and to schedule times to join in.

THE BUDGET FOR THE STREET CAMPAIGN IS \$1200. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP SPONSOR THE CAMPAIGN SEND IN A DONATION DESIGNATED: CAMPAIGN 2018.