

April 2017

MESSENGER

FULFILL YOUR DESTINY

"Your lamb
shall be
without
blemish..."

Exodus 12:5

"And they
overcame
him with the
blood of the
Lamb..."

Revelation 12:11

"And this
day shall
be unto
you for a
memorial..."

Exodus 12:14

"...this do in
remembrance
of Me."

Luke 22:19

SHOULD CHRISTIANS OBSERVE
the
Passover?

cogmessenger.org

MESSENGER

Magazine

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It's widely acknowledged among Biblical scholars and historians that Jesus and the early Apostles kept the Passover – as the historical and Biblical evidence clearly shows. Is there any reason for Christians to keep the Passover today? Find out in this issue!

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Should Christians Observe the Passover?

— Rod Reynolds —

The Church of the New Testament, the Church Jesus Christ founded, the Church of Paul the Apostle, and the original twelve Apostles, kept the Passover. Is it not logical that those who want to practice the true Christianity of the Bible will want to be keeping the same tradition, based not on the commandments of men, but on the commandments of God (Mark 7: 6-7, 9; 1 Corinthians 11:1-2; Revelation 12:17; 14:12)?

Yet, most Churches that claim to be Christian keep as holy days festivals that neither Jesus nor his apostles ever kept. At the same time, most such Churches don't keep the holy days Jesus and the apostles did keep. One of those festivals kept by Jesus that ceased long ago to be observed within popular Christianity is the Passover.

Have you ever asked yourself why your Church keeps Easter, but not the same Passover Jesus and the apostles of the New Testament kept, if that is the case? Why should Christians keep Passover and not Easter?

In this article I will discuss three basic reasons in answer to this question.

Jesus Christ's Command and Example

The first reason is that in keeping Passover, we are following the example, teaching and command of Jesus Christ.

The most common term used in the New Testament for a follower of Jesus is disciple (Greek: *mathetes*, a *learner*; from a root *math*, indicating *thought accompanied by endeavor*; see *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 171). "A 'disciple' was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher..." (*Vine's*, p. 171). So Christians are to be students — but more

than students. They are to be adherents — imitators — of their teacher, Jesus Christ. Their commitment to him is to be absolute, and they are to not just hear, but to follow his example and **abide** in his word (Luke 14:26-27; John 8:31).

Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples on the very same night that he was arrested, according to Scripture. The following morning he was crucified (Mark 14:26-27, 46, 50; 15:25; third hour Jewish time, 9 a.m., see Robertson's Word Pictures In the New Testament). As Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples, he sanctified the Passover unleavened bread and wine as symbols of the sacrifice of his body and blood, and commanded this to be done in remembrance of him (Luke 22:7-20).

As the last Passover Jesus would celebrate with his disciples prior to his death approached, Jesus love for them was a foremost thought in his mind (John 13:1). On the night of the Passover, as they were partaking of the sacrificial meal, He got up **during** supper (John 13:2, 4, as in ASV, Darby's, and a number of other translations). "The original means *while they were at supper*; and that this is the meaning is clear from the fact that we find them still eating after this" (Albert Barnes, *New Testament Notes*; cf. John 13:26).

The context shows that the supper referred to in John 13 was the Passover, a festival of God (Leviticus 23:4-5). The Passover is specifically mentioned in the context of the supper (John 13:1). After receiving the "sop" (John 13:26; cf. Matthew 26:17-25), Judas left the assembly. Later, after Jesus had spoken the words recorded in John 13-17, Jesus and his disciples went into a garden on the Mount of Olives just east of Jerusalem (John 18:1; Matthew 26:30, 36).

Some while later, on the same night, the night

of the Passover, the fourteenth of the first month of the sacred calendar (see our book: *When Is the Biblical Passover?*), Judas appeared with a band of armed men, Roman soldiers and representatives of the Jewish leaders. Jesus was arrested and led away to be condemned (Matthew 26:47, 57; John 18:3, 12-13).

In a letter to the church in Corinth, Paul gives the Corinthians instructions on how to properly observe the “Lord’s supper,” the Passover, not as a riotous banquet but as a solemn remembrance of his suffering and death. This was a predominantly Gentile church (1 Corinthians 11:20-28).

In the same letter, Paul tells the Church, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The lambs slain for the Old Covenant Passover were emblematic of Jesus Christ, who is referred to as the lamb numerous times in the New Testament, hearkening to the significance of the Passover sacrifice of Jesus Christ for Christians (cf. Revelation 13:8).

Evidently, the letter was written at about the time of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, for he urges the Corinthians to, “...purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened.... Therefore let us keep *the* feast; not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8, Green’s Modern King James Version).

It is through the blood of Jesus Christ that we have been purchased, redeemed from the death penalty, that we might be saved and receive the gift of eternal life (1 Peter 1:18-20). The New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine symbolize the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ associated with the death that he suffered in payment for our sins (Matthew 26:26-

28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Peter 2:24; Revelation 1:5). So following the example of Jesus Christ our savior and in obedience to his command, we keep the Passover, understanding its significance as a memorial of the willing sacrifice of his life to save our lives.

Example of the New Testament Church

A second reason Christians should keep the Passover is because in doing so we are following the example of the New Testament Church of God. The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22). Part of our mission as a Church is to restore the true Christianity of the New Testament Church — the Church founded by Jesus Christ and the apostles. All of the original

New Testament apostles followed the teachings and example of Jesus Christ in keeping the Passover. Contrary to what is sometimes alleged, none of them kept Easter, nor would they have countenanced the idea for even an instant.

The historical record is clear on this point. The apostolic New Testament Church continued to keep the Passover annually after Jesus’ death and resurrection. And it was not only Jewish Christians, but Gentiles also, who kept the Passover. Note the following remarks from the Protestant church historian J. K. L. Gieseler: “In the Christian assemblies the Jewish passover was at first kept up, but observed with reference to Christ, the true passover, (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). Thus John, too, found it in Ephesus and allowed it to remain unaltered” (*A Text-Book of Church History*, Dr. John C. L. Gieseler, Trans. Samuel Davidson, Harper and Brothers, 1857, vol. 1, pp. 166-167n.).

Note that when John the Apostle took up residence in Ephesus, a Greek city in Asia Minor,

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a church had already been established there by the Apostle Paul (Acts 19). Paul had remained in Ephesus and ministered to that predominately Gentile Church for more than two years (Acts 19:10, 21-22), and had taught the Christians there to keep the Passover in accordance with Scripture. It was not the “Jewish passover” they were keeping, but the “Lord’s Passover” (Exodus 12:11; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:10; etc.).

Gieseler goes on to comment that John in his gospel account made, “...it apparent that Christ was crucified on the 14th Nisan.” And he further states, “... if the 14th Nisan was the true Christian passover day, the fulfillment of the typical pasch [Passover] took place on the same day with it” (*ibid.*, p. 167n.; cf. Leviticus 23:5-6; Numbers 9:2-5; Ezra 6:19; etc.).

Gieseler comments that churches in Asia Minor (where Peter, Paul, John and some of the other apostles had personally ministered) were continuing to keep the Passover in the second century. Gieseler further states, “In it they ate unleavened bread, probably like the Jews, eight days through; they said...” Gieseler goes on to quote Chrysostom writing in Greek what the Christians in Asia Minor said about why they ate unleavened bread eight days (*ibid.*, p. 166n.). Translated, “Because the Feast of Unleavened Bread is with [or accompanies] the Passover” (cf. Leviticus 23:5-6; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). On the Passover unleavened bread was to be eaten (Exodus 12:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24). And for seven days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread unleavened bread was to be eaten (Leviticus 23:4-6). So unleavened bread is eaten a total of eight days during the festival period.

More information regarding the Passover in the early Church is provided in some detail in chapters 9-10 of our book: *When Is the Biblical Passover?* You can download it for free at cogmessenger.org.

Pagan Traditions Behind Easter

A third reason that we keep Passover and not Easter is that Easter is a blend of corrupted Biblical and pagan traditions.

“Easter is a convergence of three traditions. (1) *Pagan*. According to the Venerable Bede, English historian of the early 8th century, the word is derived from the Norse *Ostara* or *Eostre*, meaning the festival of spring at the vernal equinox, March 21, when nature is in resurrection after winter. Hence, the rabbits, notable for their fecundity, and the eggs, colored like rays of the returning sun and the northern lights or aurora borealis. The Greek myth, Demeter and Persephone, with its Latin

counterpart, Ceres and Persephone, conveys the idea of a goddess returning seasonally from the nether regions to the light of day” (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1949 edition, “Easter,” vol. 9, p. 506). It also mentions Jewish and Christian elements that are part of the Easter tradition.

But the real root of the Easter celebration is pagan, not Christian.

Jesus Christ never commanded the Church to have a festival observing his resurrection, but the Bible explicitly commands us to observe the Passover as a memorial of Christ’s death. It took the apostate Church several centuries to settle on a consistent date for the celebration of Easter, further evidence that it was not of apostolic origin.

There’s no doubt that the name Easter is ultimately derived from the Babylonian name (Ishtar) for the great mother goddess — the queen of heaven. This goddess was worshiped the world over under a variety of names.

In the Babylonian myths Tammuz and his consort Ishtar (Easter) were resurrected together each year “that with their return all nature might revive” (James G. Frazer, *The New Golden Bough*, p. 285). The name Tammuz is said to be a

"Jesus Christ never commanded the Church to have a festival observing His resurrection..."

Sumerian term meaning “true son.” He was also known as Adon, or Lord, among the Babylonians, and the same deity came to be worshiped by the Greeks as Adonis (*ibid.*, p. 286). In various cultures at certain times of the year there were lamentations and weeping associated with the death of the god. In the Phoenician sanctuary of Astarte (the Greek name for Ishtar) at Byblus the death of Adonis (or Tammuz) was mourned every spring with weeping, wailing and beating of the breast. But it was believed he rose from the dead the next day. Women celebrating this spring festival of death and resurrection were obliged to either shave their heads or serve a day as temple prostitutes (*ibid.*, p. 289). Temple prostitution was widely practiced in association with the worship of the mother goddess (*ibid.*, 298 ff.). And the worship of these gods was associated with the sun (cf. Ezekiel 8:14-16).

Israel, contrary to God’s explicit instructions, repeatedly forsook faithfulness toward God to worship Baal and Ishtar (referred to in the Old Testament by the names Ashtoreth and Asherah; cf. Judges 2:13; 3:7; 1 Kings 11:5; 15:13). Ezekiel describes how Israel and Judah blended the worship of such gods — including Tammuz — and goddesses with the worship of Yahweh. And God refers to such worship as an abomination (Ezekiel 8:1-17).

Along with Baal and other false gods and goddesses, the “queen of heaven,” was explicitly worshiped among the people of Judah at the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:9, 18; 44:17-19). “The Phoenicians called the moon Ashtoreth or Astarte: the wife of Baal or Moloch, the king of heaven” (*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, on Jeremiah 7:18). This worship was a major reason both the northern tribes of Israel and later the

nation of Judah were sent into captivity (2 Kings 17:7-19; Jeremiah 7:1-15; 44:19-23).

The same corrupt blending of pagan customs with Biblical themes is at the heart of the supposedly “Christian” Easter and many other practices of popular Christianity. “At the approach of Easter, Sicilian women sow wheat, lentils, and canary-seed in plates, which they keep in the dark and water every two days. The plants soon shoot up; the stalks are tied together with red ribbons, and the plates containing them are placed on the sepulchres which, with the effigies of the dead Christ, are made up in Catholic and Greek churches on Good Friday, just as the gardens of Adonis were placed on the grave of the dead Adonis. The practice is not confined to Sicily....

"There is no doubt that the name Easter is ultimately derived from the Babylonian name (Ishtar)..."

The whole custom — sepulchres as well as plates of sprouting grain — may be nothing but a continuation, under a different name, of the worship of Adonis.

“Nor are these the only Easter ceremonies which resemble the rites of Adonis” (*The New Golden Bough*, p. 296-297).

The author goes on to describe various rituals practiced particularly in Catholic churches involving effigies of the dead Christ that parallel rites associated with the idol god Adonis and similar deities. “When we reflect how often the Church has skilfully [sic] contrived to plant the seeds of the new faith on the old stock of paganism, we may surmise that the Easter celebration of the dead and risen Christ was grafted upon a similar celebration of the dead and risen Adonis, which ... was celebrated in Syria at the same season” (*ibid.*, p. 298).

Alexander Hislop, an evangelical minister of the Free Church of Scotland, courageously exposed the pagan, anti-biblical origins of many popular beliefs and practices of what had become “orthodox” Christianity, among both Catholics and

Protestants. While some of his assertions may need further examination and elucidation, the thrust of his argument that what had become accepted as “orthodox” Christianity was in reality a continuation of pagan mystery religion with a Christian veneer is sound. He describes the use of eggs, buns, etc., in ancient pagan myth and worship, adapted eventually into supposedly “Christian” worship (*The Two Babylons*, 3.2).

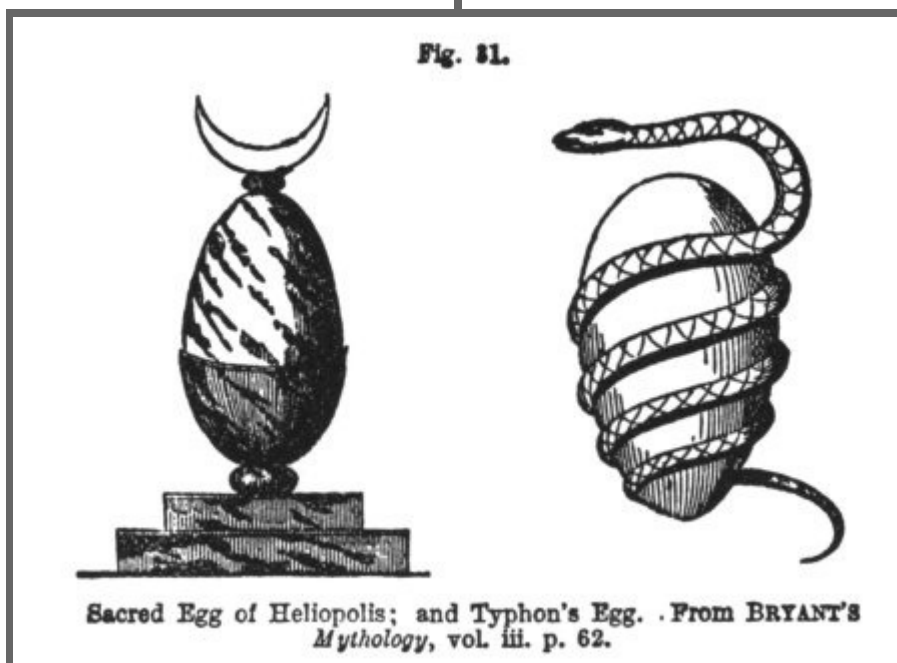
Hislop comments on the use of “sacred eggs” in various pagan religions, including the worship of Astarte (Ishtar, or “Easter”) in ancient Babylon (*ibid.*). Ralph Woodrow, in his book *Babylon Mystery Religion*, also comments on the use of “sacred eggs” in ancient Babylonian religion as one of a number of symbols of fertility associated with “Easter” (pp. 143-145). Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits the following concerning “Easter eggs,” “The custom may have its origin in paganism, for a great many pagan customs, celebrating the return of spring, gravitated to Easter. The egg is the emblem of the germinating life of early spring...” (“Easter”).

The custom of Lent, and eating fish on Friday, are also rooted in the worship of idols, not in Biblical teaching (cf. *Babylon Mystery Religion*, pp. 142-143; *The Two Babylons*, 3.2). Fish (as eggs and rabbits, or hares) were another symbol of fertility in ancient pagan religion, and were associated with a number of pagan gods and goddesses, including Freyja (or Frigg), a Scandinavian or Germanic fertility goddess associated with Venus, and the source of the English word “Friday” (en.wikipedia.org).

The Bible encourages fasting in the right spirit and attitude (Isaiah 58:3-12). But only one fast day is a **required** annual fast, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27). Eating fish, or eating anything, is not really “fasting,” anyway, in the Biblical sense. Real fasting, from the Biblical standpoint, is eating and drinking nothing (Exodus 34:28).

Where in the Bible do you read of rabbits, colored eggs, carrying idol images about in fake coffins, ham dinners, hot cross buns and the other traditions of Easter? The Bible sanctions no such practices. What we do find, on the testimony of many sources, is that very clearly most of the customs associated with Easter are a continuation of idolatrous practices associated with the worship of various false gods. God condemns the blending of his worship with the idolatrous practices of the nations (Deuteronomy 12:29-32; 2 Kings 22:14-17; Jeremiah 7:22-41; 44:19-22).

We reject the false Easter tradition as heresy and apostasy. We keep the Passover because it is part of the true apostolic faith of the New Testament Church, the faith that Jesus Christ established through his example and command.



"Sacred Eggs"
as pictured in
The Two Babylons

THE HOLY SPIRIT?

— Rod Reynolds —

One of the important questions that we must face in order to understand God's nature, and our own nature, is, "**What is the Holy Spirit?**"

In answering this question let's first ask, *what is spirit?* In any good dictionary you'll find several distinct but related definitions. And it's important to understand that in the Bible, too, you'll find the word "spirit" used in different senses.

Spirit is defined as:

(1) "The vital essence or animating force in living organisms, especially man, often considered divine in origin" (English definitions from the *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*, 1966). The Bible teaches that when a human person dies, that animating force – the spirit in man – returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 3:21). Physical life cannot exist apart from the spirit – the essence which imparts life to what otherwise is simply a collection of chemicals (Job 34:14-15; Revelation 11:11, KJV: "Spirit of life from God"). A living creature at one moment, and it's corpse at the next moment, may look the same, and all the same materials and even bodily structure may be present, but what goes missing when death occurs is the animating force – the *spirit* – vital to life.

(2) "The part of a human being that is incorporeal and invisible, and is characterized by intelligence, personality, self-consciousness, and will; the mind." In his statement, "God is my witness, whom **I serve with my spirit** in the gospel of His Son" (Romans 1:9), Paul is implying that his will, his mind, his inner being is actively engaged in serving God. Christians are instructed, "be renewed in the **spirit of your mind**" (Ephesians 4:23). The link between the spirit and will is also illustrated in Jesus'

statement concerning his disciples, "**The spirit indeed is willing**, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

From this we can conclude that one's spirit is expressed through his personality, will and mind. The indication is that the spirit in man working through the brain and related sensory faculties produces personality, mind and will.

(3) "In the Bible, the creative, animating power or divine influence of God." "You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30). The creative, animating power of God was at work in the renewing of the face of the earth and the restoration of life upon it as recounted in Genesis 1 (cf. Genesis 1:1-2).

"But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding" (Job 32:8). In this verse "spirit" is from the Hebrew *ruach*; while "breath" is a translation of the Hebrew word *neshamat*. But, in this instance *neshamat* should also be translated spirit, because it is through God's spirit that he imparts to us spiritual understanding (1 Corinthians 2:11-14).

It is through the spirit in man that God is able to know the very thoughts and intents of our hearts (Proverbs 20:27). It's through God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us that God is able to impress within us his character as we submit to his will (Romans 8:4, 13-14; Galatians 5:22-23). Through his Spirit we are able to have fellowship with God, and become one with him (2 Corinthians 13:14, Greek: *koinonia*, communion, fellowship, communication). Through that same Holy Spirit, God imparts to those who have it not mere temporary, physical life, but *his life*, eternal life! (Romans 8:11, 23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5; Galatians 6:8).

The Holy Spirit is promised to those who obey

God (Proverbs 1:23; John 14:15-16; Acts 5:32). To have the gift of eternal life imparted through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit requires believing the gospel, repentance and baptism (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13-14). Expressing God's nature in all its power, vitality, perfection and purity, Holy Spirit is distinct from other categories of spirit, such as human spirit, animal spirit, angelic spirits, or evil spirits.

(5) "A supernatural or immaterial being, as an angel, demon..., etc." "God is Spirit" (John 4:24; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 15:45). Angels are also spirits (Hebrews 1:13-14). Satan, an archangel who rebelled against God, is now a spirit who is evil (Ephesians 2:2). Other demons are also spirits who are fallen angels (Matthew 8:16; Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9). God is eternal (Romans 1:20). But Satan and the other angels are spirit beings who were created by God (Ezekiel 28:13-15; Colossians 1:16).

(6) "A state of mind; mood; temper: Success raised his *spirits*." Paul wrote of the presence and actions of certain individuals refreshing the spirits of others (1 Corinthians 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 7:13).

(7) "True intent or meaning...: the *spirit* of the law." Paul wrote of being circumcised in spirit, representing the true meaning of circumcision (Romans 2:28-29). He wrote of serving God in the spirit of the law, its true intent, and not the mere letter (Romans 7:6). The New Covenant incorporates the law of God applied in the spirit, and not merely the letter, according to its full intent and meaning (2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:10).

(8) "The emotional faculty of man; the heart: Great poetry stirs the spirit." After a disturbing dream Pharaoh's "spirit was troubled," implying he was

emotionally upset (Genesis 41:8; cf. Daniel 2:1). A psalmist wrote of his being "troubled" in a time of adversity to the point that his "spirit was overwhelmed" (Psalm 77:3). Daniel wrote of being "grieved in my spirit" due to visions he'd been given (Daniel 7:15). As Jesus testified to his closest disciples that one of them was about to betray him, "He was troubled in spirit" (John 13:21).

God created mankind in his own image (Genesis 1:26-27). Man has a body and, as we have seen, a spirit. Is the spirit of a man a different person from the man? Paul wrote to Timothy, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." (2 Timothy 4:22). Was Timothy's spirit a *separate person* from Timothy –

or within Timothy? The notion is absurd! Why then would we think God's spirit is a separate person from or within God? Paul said he was absent in body but present in spirit (1 Corinthians 5:3). Was Paul's spirit a separate person? Of course not!

Paul, a mere human being, had the capacity to be present bodily in one location, but present in spirit

elsewhere. Is God less capable?

In many places the Bible reveals that God has a body – despite what philosophers have speculated. "...there is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). Jesus Christ was resurrected with such a body. The disciples saw Jesus bodily after his resurrection (John 20:29-21:1).

John later had a vision of how Jesus appears bodily in his glorified state (Revelation 1:12-16). Although the description in John's vision is partly figurative, it nonetheless gives us an idea of how the glorified Jesus appears. We're told that in the resurrection Jesus "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21).

In Christ "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). Before he became flesh

*"Through that same Holy Spirit, God imparts to those who have it not mere temporary, physical life, but **his life**, eternal life!"*

and blood, Jesus existed “in the form of God” (Philippians 2:6). “Form” is translated from the Greek *morphe*, which signifies the essential attributes as shown in the form. “...the form by which a person or thing strikes the vision; external appearance” (*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*). This implies that God – both the Father and Jesus Christ – has form.

Jesus' statement concerning the Father, that no one had “seen His form” (John 5:37), also implies that the Father has form, and hence a body. The Greek in this case is *eidos* (the external or outward appearance, form figure, shape), derived from *eido*, meaning to perceive with the eyes, to see (*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*).

Jesus sits bodily now in the third heaven at the Father's right hand (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-34; Hebrews 10:12). But in spirit, God is capable of being everywhere at once (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24). However, it is not a separate person from or within God who is everywhere in spirit, and who specifically dwells in those who have received his spirit, but God himself, in the persons of Jesus Christ and the Father (John 14:23; 15:26; Acts 2:33; Romans 8:9-11; Galatians 2:20; 4:6).

Some have been misled by English translations of John 14:16-17, 26, where the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is referred to by the English pronouns he, him and whom. In the Greek each noun is assigned a gender, which does not necessarily imply sex or personhood. *Hamartia*, for example, is a feminine noun meaning sin, though sin is neither male nor female. *Hamartolos*, on the other hand, is a masculine noun that means sinner, though a sinner can be either male or female.

The Greek word for “Comforter” or “Helper” is *parakletos*, a masculine noun. Where a pronoun is used in the Greek text referring back to *parakletos*,

it follows the gender of its antecedent which is masculine. The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*, a neuter noun. Pronouns in the Greek text referring back to *pneuma* are neuter. Most of the pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit in the original Greek in the verses in question are neuter, since most of them refer to *pneuma* as the antecedent. These pronouns would be literally translated into English

as which or it. Translators have chosen often to use he, him and whom, however, in English, because of their preconceived idea that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person within a Trinity (see our article “Origins of the Trinity,” www.cogmessenger.org).

It's also true that in John 16:5-15 masculine pronouns are used several times in reference to the *parakletos* – Comforter or Helper – as would be

expected since it's a masculine word. Elsewhere, neuter pronouns are used in reference to the Holy Spirit. Nothing definitive about the nature of the Holy Spirit can be determined by the gender of pronouns.

If we read carefully what Jesus said, and compare other Scriptures, the truth becomes clear. Jesus said that the Spirit that would be sent was already with them (John 14:17), because his presence was with them bodily. Moreover, the Father himself was already at work granting them understanding through his Spirit (Matthew 16:17).

But after Jesus' departure, the same Spirit, Christ's Spirit, would be in them. The promise of the Spirit dwelling in them was to be sent from the Father through Jesus Christ (John 14:16, 26; Acts 1:4-5; 2:33). “I will come to you,” Jesus said (John 14:17). He would come to them, and dwell in them, through his Spirit (John 14:17-18, 23; cf. Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19). It is the Father and Christ who dwell in converted Christians through the Holy Spirit that they share, and that we share with them (John 14:23; Revelation 3:20; 1 John 1:3;

"Man has a body and, as we have seen, a spirit. Is the spirit of a man a different person from the man?"

1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 13:14). It is Jesus Christ himself, and the Father, who comfort us through the Scriptures and through the Spirit they have given (Romans 15:4-5; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

The question arises, why, if the Holy Spirit is not a person, is it referred to as speaking, being lied to, etc.? (See Acts 1:16; 5:3; Hebrews 3:7). It's noteworthy that the Jews often wrote of the Holy Spirit in such terms, without conceiving of the Spirit as a person separate from or within God. "The mention of the 'Holy Spirit,' as speaking to individuals, is frequent in Rabbinic writings. This, of course, does not imply their belief in the Personality of the Holy Spirit..." (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Edersheim, p. 139 n.). If the Rabbis could write of the Spirit in such a way, without implying that the Spirit is a person distinct from the Father and Christ, so could the authors of the New Testament. "The 'Spirit of God,'...is not distinct from God, nor does the phrase imply a distinction in the Godhead. The Spirit of God is God Himself, breathing, living, active, energizing in the world — 'God at work.' The Spirit is personal because God is personal..." (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VI, p. 255). The Holy Spirit is found in Scripture to be the instrumentality through which God expresses and accomplishes His will. It is an essential part of what he is, not a separate person.

The conception of the Holy Spirit as God's divine power in action is reflected in symbols of the Spirit used in Scripture. The primary word for spirit in the Old Testament is *ruach*, of which the primary meaning is wind. The primary word for spirit in the New Testament is *pneuma*, with a similar meaning. Like the wind, the Holy Spirit is ubiquitous, invisible and powerful (Luke 4:14; Acts 1:8). And like the air we breathe, the Spirit is essential to life (John 6:63). Oil as a source of light giving energy is another symbol of the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13; Zechariah 4:1-6, 11-14; Luke 4:18-19). Water, as a

source of power and life, also symbolizes the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). Another token of God's Spirit is the dove, denoting not only the power of communication and action from a distance, and fluid movement, but also love, peace and purity (Genesis 8:8-12; Psalm 55:6, 68:13; Song of Solomon 2:14; Matthew 3:16; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Peter 1:22).

The Holy Spirit is not the "third person" of an imaginary Trinity, but rather is an attribute of God's nature. It is his divine power in action. Through it God creates, animates and influences. Through it God can dwell in us and transform us. Through it we have communion with God and can know him and his mind. The Bible does not teach that the Holy Spirit is a separate person from God any more than our spirit is from us.

"It is the Father and Christ who dwell in converted Christians through the Holy Spirit that they share, and that we share with them."

Will Politicians Save Us?

— Rod Reynolds —

Each election season in democratic countries like the United States, millions get excited over a new leader taking office, hoping that the candidate(s) they favor will either solve the problems facing the country or pursue policies that will personally benefit them. Will politicians save us from the monumental disasters that loom on the horizon?

In a poll published by the *Huffington Post* in January, 2016, 65 percent thought the nation was on the “wrong track,” while only 26 percent thought the nation was on the “right track.”

In a similar poll by *CBS News* and the *New York Times* published in January, 2016, 66 percent of those polled thought the nation was headed in the “wrong direction,” while only 27 percent thought the nation was headed in the “right direction.”

But if you were to ask exactly what is wrong with the direction of the country, you would get a widely diverse set of opinions about what is wrong and how to fix it.

Many would say we need to provide more services, like a free college education to any and everybody. This proposal was actually made by at least one of the people running for President in the current election (2016).

Some would say we need more taxes, others less taxes. Some would say we need to do away with all laws restricting abortion, others would say we need to outlaw abortion.

The reality is that as of April, 2016, more than 94 million Americans are not in the labor force, many because they have lost their jobs and have given up looking for work (cnsnews.com). Many others are employed part time who would like to work full time.

About 45 million are on the food stamp program. Wages have stagnated over the past

eight to ten years for the average worker. Less than half the people in the United States have as much as \$1000 in savings (MarketWatch.com).

One problem that many recognize is the massive national debt the government has accumulated by deficit spending. What many people may not realize is that massive debt, national bankruptcy, has led to the downfall of many governments and the decline of nations down through history. National bankruptcy was a major factor, for example, leading to the fall of the Royal French government and the subsequent French revolution. It was a major factor in the rise of the Nazis to power in pre-war (World War II) Germany. Those are just a couple of examples.

According to wikipedia.com, the officially acknowledged United States public debt in 2008 was \$9,654 billion (\$9.7 trillion; “History of the United States public debt,” wikipedia.com).

In less than eight years the debt had ballooned to \$19 trillion and is still growing rapidly.

“The National Debt is the amount of money the United States Federal government owes various creditors due to deficit spending. As of December 31, 2015, the national debt had reached \$18.9 trillion, or, if divided equally among each member of the U.S. population, \$234,000 per family of four, a jump of \$8,000 in the single month of November 2015” (conservapedia.com).

The official national debt has virtually doubled in the past eight years, with an average deficit of well over a trillion dollars a year.

“As of December 30, 2015, the official debt of the United States government is \$18.8 trillion (\$18,825,061,664,536). This amounts to:

- \$58,361 for every person living in the U.S.
- \$151,100 for every household in the U.S.
- 104% of the U.S. gross domestic product.
- 539% of annual federal revenues.

"At the close of the federal government's 2014 fiscal year (September 30, 2014), the federal government had roughly:

- \$7.9 trillion (\$7,932,000,000,000) in liabilities that are not accounted for in the national debt, such as federal employee retirement benefits, accounts payable, and environmental/disposal liabilities.
- \$25.4 trillion (\$25,386,000,000,000) in obligations for current Social Security participants above and beyond projected revenues from their payroll and benefit taxes, certain transfers from the general fund of the U.S. Treasury, and assets of the Social Security trust fund.
- \$28.2 trillion (\$28,200,000,000,000) in obligations for current Medicare participants above and beyond projected revenues from their payroll taxes, benefit taxes, premium payments, and assets of the Medicare trust fund.

"* The figures above are determined in a manner that approximates how publicly traded companies are required to calculate their liabilities and obligations. The obligations for Social Security and Medicare represent how much money must be immediately placed in interest-bearing investments to cover the projected shortfalls between dedicated revenues and expenditures for all current participants in these programs (both taxpayers and beneficiaries).

"* Combining the figures above with the national debt and subtracting the value of federal assets, the federal government had about \$74.3 trillion (\$74,331,000,000,000) in debts, liabilities, and unfunded obligations at the close of its 2014 fiscal year.

"* This \$74.3 trillion shortfall is 91% of the combined net worth of all U.S. households and nonprofit organizations, including all assets in savings, real estate, corporate stocks, private businesses, and consumer durable goods such as automobiles.

"* This shortfall equates to:

- \$232,627 for every person living in the U.S.
- \$603,194 for every household in the U.S.
- 422% of the U.S. gross domestic product.
- 2,210% of annual federal revenues."

(www.justfacts.com/nationaldebt.asp).

If you owed more than 22 times your annual income, with little to no hope of ever paying your debt, what would you call yourself? Might you call yourself bankrupt?

Imagine, for comparison, an annual income of \$50,000 and a debt of one million, one hundred thousand dollars (22 times 50,000 = 1,100,000).

Other problems facing the nation include out of control immigration, an ongoing epidemic of drug addiction, widespread crime, including mass shootings, terrorist threats, and a general decline in morals and family values, to name a few.

Will electing a new President, a new congress, save us? Can politicians save us?

Leadership Counts

It's certainly true that leadership can make a tremendous difference in a nation. History confirms that, and it is reflected in the history of ancient Israel and Judah as preserved in the Bible.

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2).

In Israel and Judah during the history of the period of the kings, most of the kings were wicked. They were not faithful to God, and they led the people into idolatry and eventual ruin.

Jeroboam, who after Solomon died became the king of the northern ten tribe nation of Israel, is an example. Israel was to be uprooted from their land because they followed Jeroboam into the path of wickedness. And Jeroboam himself was to be "cut off," and his dynasty ended (1 Kings 14:14-16). Note that the nation was to be given over to punishment because of its sins, but Jeroboam was held accountable for leading the nation into sin.

Following Jeroboam's death his son Nadab became king, and not long after a usurper (Baasha) killed Nadab and exterminated the house of Jeroboam, in accordance with God's judgment (1 Kings 15:25-30).

By contrast, under the leadership of their king, Asa, for awhile Judah turned from the path of destruction and were given rest from their enemies, whereas before the nation had been afflicted with "great turmoil" (2 Chronicles 15:1-15).

Similar periods of relative peace and prosperity occurred under a few other kings of Judah who led the people to repentance. These included Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah (2 Kings 20:19; 2 Chronicles 17:3-12; 2 Kings 22:19-20).

God swore to Abraham that he would bless his descendants in the latter days because Abraham was faithful to him (Genesis 22:17-18).

These blessings were passed on through Abraham's descendants to the people of Israel.

In the latter days, the descendants of Joseph were to become a great nation, and a company of nations (Genesis 49:25-26).

For more than 200 years the peoples of the British Empire and Commonwealth, the greatest and richest empire in history, and the United States, arguably the single most powerful and richest nation in history, have dominated the world economically, militarily and culturally.

But continued blessings of this sort for the peoples of Israel are contingent on our obedience to God. "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 28:1-2).

If we turn away, we were warned that aliens would become dominant over us, and eventually our nations would be overtaken by our enemies and those left alive would be taken into captivity, as happened to Israel and Judah in ancient times (Deuteronomy 28:43-51).

Failure of Character

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2)."

Our leaders, including our religious leaders, as well as our political leaders, have failed us. They have bankrupted the nation. We have been led into a cesspool of corruption and lawlessness. God's commandments and the very mention of God, except in blasphemy and profanity, have been largely erased from our public life.

But the reason this has happened is because we ourselves as a people have not been faithful to God. The state of our nation is a reflection of our own condition, morally and spiritually.

As God's Church and citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we do not involve ourselves in the partisan politics of the world. But we certainly can and do pray that God will grant us sound leadership, and we should be praying for the leaders of our nation. We can pray for the leaders, and pray for the repentance of our peoples, so that the curses pronounced on our peoples for disobedience to God's commandments will be removed, and our blessings be restored (1 Timothy 2:1-5).

When King Solomon had built the Temple for God in Jerusalem, he prayed in the dedication ceremony that God would hear the prayers of his people Israel, as well as foreigners among them, when they turn to him in repentance after having sinned against him (2 Chronicles 6:24-39).

God responded to Solomon's prayer as follows: "Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: 'I have heard your prayer, and

have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:12-14).

The right kind of leadership can make a tremendous difference in a nation. But more important even than that is the character of the nation itself.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

Even wise leaders, by themselves, cannot save us from our own foolishness and lawlessness. Ultimately, it will require the intervention of Jesus Christ to bring permanent peace and salvation to the world.

Jesus foretold of “great tribulation” to come upon the modern descendants of Israel, and other calamities to affect the entire world, in the years leading up to his second coming:

"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

.....

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened

.....

"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:12-14, 21-22; 27-30).

Unless we turn to God and repent soon, disaster is looming for our nations, for all the nations of the earth.

But the good news is that God himself in the person of Jesus Christ shall finally intervene to save the world from utter destruction. And so shall salvation come to all nations of the earth.

"Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns; The world also is firmly established, It shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously.' Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth” (Psalm 96:10-13).

"The state of our nation is a reflection of our own condition, morally and spiritually."

Passover or Easter?

“The earliest Christians celebrated the Lord's Passover at the same time as the Jews” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

“...the parishes of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Savior's passover” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*).

“In the Christian assemblies the Jewish passover was at first kept up, but observed with reference to Christ, the true Passover (1 Cor. v. 7,8)” (*A Textbook of Church History*, John C. L. Gieseler, vol. 1).

Did Jesus or the Church of the original apostles celebrate Easter? Or did they observe the Passover according to Biblical command? Find out more about this important subject in this issue!



When Is the Biblical Passover?

Why is there so much confusion about the proper time to observe the Passover? Learn what the Bible and history reveal about this important question!

by Rod Reynolds

Also, download our free book with many more details concerning the correct day for observing the Biblical Passover, and its history. You can find it at our website: **cogmessenger.org**

If you would like a print copy, write to us:

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