

MESSENGER

FULFILL YOUR DESTINY

April 2020

The Meaning of Passover

MESSENGER

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The God-established Holy Days teach much about God's wonderful plan of salvation for mankind! In this issue, we explore the rich meanings of the weekly Sabbath, Passover and Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

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THE WEEKLY SABBATH and Its Meaning

Rod Reynolds

Keeping the Weekly Sabbath is one of the ten commandments. That ought to indicate to us the importance God places on keeping the Sabbath. Yet it is shocking but true that most people who claim to believe in the God of the Bible do not keep the Sabbath! If they observe any day at all as a day of rest from secular labor, it is not the Sabbath that God command to be kept!

Yet, God commanded Sabbath observance for a reason, actually, several very important reasons. One reason to keep the Sabbath holy as God commands, is because it has prophetic significance regarding the future of the world and mankind. Keep reading for vital knowledge about the meaning of the weekly Sabbath.

God commanded the ancient people of Israel to keep the Sabbath, but most of them didn't keep it either. As a result of Sabbath breaking, and other sins, the inheritance God gave the Israelites was taken from them, and they were sent into a national captivity. "Also I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers' idols" (Ezekiel 20:23-24).

Because they forgot the Sabbath, they forgot who they are, and most of the people alive today who are descended from Jacob, or Israel, don't know their national origin.

In this chapter we are going to discuss several questions regarding the Sabbath. They are: Who made the Sabbath?

Why was the Sabbath created? Who was the Sabbath made for? When is the Sabbath?

What is the meaning of the Sabbath for you, and for mankind?

Who Made the Sabbath?

The Sabbath was set aside as holy time from the time of the creation of human beings. "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and

made" (Genesis 2:2-3).

This day was different from the other days of the creation week. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. The word sanctify means to set apart as holy. God specifically set apart the seventh day, making it holy.

We read three times in these two verses that God did not work on this day. The emphasis is that this was a day of rest. It was God's Sabbath rest. Some people foolishly dispute this interpretation, saying this was not the origin of the commanded day of rest, asserting that the word "Sabbath" isn't mentioned here. Even if the Sabbath were not specifically named in these verses it still would not negate the revelation in them of the Sabbath as being set apart, or made holy.

However, the Hebrew word translated "rested" in Genesis 2:2-3 is a form of *shabath*, the root word for "Sabbath." *Shabath* means to cease, or rest, and may include the meaning of "keep Sabbath" (*Strong's Concordance Hebrew-English Lexicon; Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon; see 2 Chronicles 36:21 where the word is translated "she [or it] kept Sabbath" in a number of English versions*). It is from this that the Sabbath gets its meaning as "a day of rest." To paraphrase the account in Genesis 2, "God sabbathed [or kept Sabbath] on the seventh day from all His work." The Hebrew language is clear and unambiguous in its intent. This is made even more clear when we compare Exodus 20:11: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

Why Was the Sabbath Created?

The Sabbath commandment has a multi-faceted purpose, both spiritual and physical. Some of the purposes served by the Sabbath include:

(1) The Sabbath identifies the Creator, the Supreme Maker of all things.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

.....

"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in

them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8, 11). It is a required weekly remembrance that a higher power and authority is at work in our lives and the lives of all humanity. God intended that the Sabbath be observed as a reminder of that fact.

The Sabbath command is found in the Scriptures that identify the true God as the Eternal God, the God who revealed himself to Abraham and later to his descendants, and left through them a record of his creative acts, and his dealings with mankind.

It is he who is not only the God of Israel, but the God of creation.

(2) The Sabbath is an identifying sign of God's people.

When the people of Israel were brought out of slavery in Egypt by the hand of God, they entered into a covenant with God, to obey his word, and thus be a holy people, a model nation to set an example for the other nations of the earth. All nations had strayed from obedience to the Creator, and had lost sight of him. God said to the people of Israel; "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

The laws given for them to keep as his covenant nation included the Sabbath, and as long as they kept the Sabbath it would be a sign between them and God, that they were a people sanctified by God for his holy purpose. "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you" (Exodus 31:13-14).

Other people may enter into a covenant relationship with God as well, if they submit to him and obey his laws, including the Sabbath. "Blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who lays hold on it; Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil. Do not let the son of the foreigner Who has joined himself to the Lord Speak, saying, 'The Lord has utterly separated me from His people'; Nor let the eunuch

say, 'Here I am, a dry tree.' For thus says the Lord: 'To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off. Also the **sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, And to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants-- Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant** -- Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For **My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.**' The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, 'Yet I will gather to him Others besides those who are gathered to him'" (Isaiah 56:2-8).

As the Sabbath was intended as an identifying sign between Israel and God under the Old Covenant, so it is under the New Covenant. The Sabbath, made from Creation by God, still remains as a sign of the Creator God, and helps to identify his people.

(3) The Sabbath provides for needed rest.

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you" (Deuteronomy 5:13-14).

God rested or ceased on the Seventh day from physical creative works, and instead did the spiritual work of creating the Sabbath. God is all-powerful and eternal. God does not need to rest. "He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalms 121:4).

However, human beings and other physical creatures need rest. God decreed that not only human beings, but also animals used for work such as oxen, donkeys and other animals commonly used throughout history for work such as ploughing, grinding, carrying burdens, etc., were to rest on the Sabbath.

A day of rest once a week for human beings produces a number of benefits in terms of physical and mental health, as well as spiritual vitality. The Sabbath teaches us that there is more to life than just physical work, or the pursuit of pleasure and material things.

Resting from secular labor on the Sabbath gives us extra time to commune with God in prayer and Bible study, and to draw closer to

our families and fellowship with friends and brethren of like mind. Note how Paul and his companions spent part of the Sabbath day when they were staying in Philippi: "And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there" (Acts 16:13).

When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, they were not allowed a weekly day of rest. The Sabbath rest reminds us that God is our liberator, and that in him is freedom from oppression. God commanded the Israelites: "And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15).

The Sabbath should serve as a weekly reminder to those who are converted and have received the Holy Spirit that they have been freed from slavery to sin, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

(4) The Sabbath allows time for a "holy convocation," in other words, congregational worship on the holy day.

"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation [or assembly]. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings" (Leviticus 23:3).

Jesus regularly attended congregational assemblies in the "synagogues," or meeting halls, where the Jews commonly met for congregational worship on the Sabbath. "Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He [Jesus] entered the synagogue and taught" (Mark 1:21).

"Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' -- that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other" (Matthew 12:9-13).

"And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this

which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!'" (Mark 6:2).

"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And **as His custom was**, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Luke 4: 16).

This is just a sampling of the Scriptures that show how Jesus kept the Sabbath by attending a congregational service on the Sabbath.

The apostle Paul also kept the Sabbath by attending congregational services. "But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down" (Acts 13:14).

Paul gave a sermon, and then:

"So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, **the Gentiles** begged that these words might be **preached to them the next Sabbath**. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the **next Sabbath** almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:42-44).

Later, when Paul was in Corinth, we read: "And he reasoned in the synagogue **every Sabbath**, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4).

(5) The Sabbath Is a type of the Millennial Rest of God's Kingdom.

The weekly Sabbath has **prophetic as well as historical significance**, as do all of the festivals of God and the holy days, or Sabbaths, that accompany them.

According to Scripture, the Sabbath days, "...are a shadow of things to come..." (Colossians 2:17). The holy days, the Sabbaths, are a shadow, or as the Greek word *skia* means, a sketch, or **outline of things to come**. They reveal the **unveiling of God's plan** as it is being worked out in the course of time. The Greek word *skia*, as defined in *Thayer's Lexicon* means: "A shadow, i.e. an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object: opposed to *σῶμα* [*soma*], the thing itself, Colossians 2:17; hence, equivalent to a sketch, outline, adumbration [foreshadowing, or prefiguration]..."

The weekly Sabbath prefigures the age in the future when Satan's oppressive rule, and the burden of slavery to sin for mankind, will be replaced by a new age of peace, righteousness and abundance for all, under the rulership of Jesus Christ. It will be a "rest" from the evil's of this present age.

"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....

.....
"There remains therefore a rest [Greek: sabbatismos, Sabbath keeping] 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" (Hebrews 4:4-6, 9-10).

Satan the Devil is the "god of **this age**" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus referred to him as "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He is "a liar and the father of it," who "deceives the whole world" (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9). He is a "murderer" (John 8:44), an "oppressor" who rules in anger (Isaiah 14:4, 6). He is called "Abaddon" (Hebrew) and "Apollyon" (Greek), which means "destroyer" (Revelation 9:11).

This age of man doing his own works and that of his ruler Satan has lasted about six thousand years. It has been a sorry and woeful record of bloody wars, misrule, crime, oppression, poverty, disease, suffering, curses, and death.

The Bible foretells a Millennium, a period of a thousand years, during which, after Jesus Christ returns to earth, he will reign as King of kings over the earth. The resurrected saints of God, those who were converted and remained faithful in this age, will rule with him, under his authority.

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

The historian Edward Gibbon comments in discussing the beliefs of the primitive Church, "The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time

appointed for the last and general resurrection" (The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, The Triumph of Christendom in the Roman Empire, Harper Torchbooks, p. 25).

Jesus Christ did not change God's Sabbath day. On the contrary, throughout His ministry He showed the true purpose and intent of the Sabbath. Jesus often showed that the Sabbath, and particularly his teachings and actions on that day, prefigured the coming messianic age – the time of the Kingdom of God – as one of healing, freedom and restoration for all humanity.

Who Was the Sabbath Made For?

In Scripture, the Sabbath is never called "the Jew's Sabbath." The Sabbath is not referred to in Scripture as "Israel's Sabbath." It is referred to as "the holy Sabbath to the Lord" (Yahweh, the Eternal, the Ever Living; Exodus 16:23, cf. Exodus 16:25, et al.), and "the Sabbath of the Lord" (Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 23:3; et al.). God calls them "My Sabbaths" (Exodus 31:13; Leviticus 19:3; Ezekiel 20:16; 44:24; et al.). Jesus said, "... the Son of Man [meaning himself, the Messiah] is **Lord even of the sabbath day**" (Matthew 12:8).

"When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, they were not allowed a weekly day of rest. The Sabbath rest reminds us that God is our liberator, and that in him is freedom from oppression. God commanded the Israelites: 'And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day' (Deuteronomy 5:15)."

The Sabbath was not made only for the Jews, as some allege. There were no Jews at time it was made. It was **made for mankind** (Mark 2:27).

It's been argued that there was no command for human beings to keep the Sabbath at the time of Creation, nor before the Exodus. Are we to believe that God created the Sabbath during the creation week, and "blessed and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:2-3), but did not reveal it to Adam and Eve, nor insist that they keep holy what he had blessed and sanctified? Especially when the Sabbath was created for man?

God's commandments, no doubt including the Sabbath, were known to Abraham, and he

kept them (Genesis 26:5). The Israelites during their time in slavery had forgotten the Sabbath. But it had been made holy at the time of mankind's creation. Nehemiah wrote that in the wilderness God "made known" to Israel the holy Sabbath (Nehemiah 9:14). This occurred shortly after God had freed the Israelites from slavery (Exodus 16).

Requiring Sabbath observance is an important test (but not the only test) God uses to distinguish those who are willing to obey him from those who are not. "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, **that I may test them**, whether they will walk in My law or not.'" (Exodus 16:4). The test had to do with keeping the Sabbath, as the context shows. By sending extra food on the sixth day of the week, and withholding it on the Sabbath, the seventh day, God revealed to them the **proper time for keeping the Sabbath**.

As pointed out earlier, anyone can have a relationship with God if he or she is willing to repent of sin, or breaking God's laws, and begin obeying, including obeying the Sabbath.

When is the Sabbath?

Some have asked, how do we know which day is the seventh day?

Exodus 16 rehearses how God revealed to Israel in the wilderness which day is the weekly Sabbath, as we discussed earlier. The Levites were given the responsibility for preserving the Hebrew calendar, and the Sabbath was kept by some Israelites, although not by all, from that day to this time.

The Jewish nation continued to observe the Sabbath and maintain the calendar after their captivity in the sixth century B.C. up to the time of Christ. Jesus Christ kept the Sabbath on the same day as other Jews kept it. The revelation of which day is the Sabbath is preserved in the Hebrew calendar. It's also preserved in the history of the New Testament Church.

There have been Sabbath keeping Churches in various locations around the world from the New Testament era until today. I have a list of quotations from various sources documenting Sabbath day observance in many centuries in many places on the earth, such as the Near East, Africa, India, China, Persia, parts of Italy, Spain, France, parts of Eastern Europe, Britain, Ireland and Scotland, and others. Some Sabbath keepers were early settlers among the English who came to what is now the United States.

Most Churches that reject the seventh day Sabbath and keep Sunday in its place nevertheless recognize that the **Biblical seventh day** is on what they call "Saturday." Churches that turned to Sunday (first day) worship sometimes claim that their worship is on the "eighth day," i.e., the day after the seventh day. God never sanctified the "eighth day," nor the "first day," of the week as a day set aside for weekly rest and congregational worship.

From the standpoint of Scripture, and as the Jewish people have understood for millennia, biblical days begin and end at "evening," or when the sun sets (Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 22:6-7; Leviticus 23:32). So the biblical Sabbath coincides with "Friday" sunset to "Saturday" sunset according to the common civil calendar used in many nations.

What Is the Meaning of the Sabbath For You?

The meaning of the Sabbath for you may depend on what kind of relationship you want to have with the God who created you, if any.

We've discussed who created the Sabbath and why, and for whom, and when the Sabbath is to be kept. But for you, the Sabbath will have little meaning **until you begin to keep it**, except that by not keeping it you are defying God's commandment, and will suffer the penalty for doing so unless you repent.

Keeping the Sabbath in a world hostile to God's law, and to Sabbath keeping, is not necessarily easy. But it's not impossible, either, as there are millions of Sabbath keepers around the world.

There are many benefits and blessings God promises to those who keep the Sabbath faithfully. "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father" (Isaiah 58:13-14).

If you want to come to know God more perfectly, and honor him, and be honored by him, and understand God's plan of salvation, keep the Sabbath.

PSALM 92:1-5



A Psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.

It is a good thing to give thanks to Yahweh,
to sing praises to your name, Most High,
to proclaim your loving kindness in the morning,
and your faithfulness every night,
with the ten-stringed lute, with the harp,
and with the melody of the lyre.
For you, Yahweh, have made me glad through your work.
I will triumph in the works of your hands.
How great are your works, Yahweh!
Your thoughts are very deep.

For more information about the weekly Sabbath see the following articles available on our website (cogmessenger.org), or in print by request:

Did Jesus Break the Sabbath?

Why Christians Should Keep the Sabbath Have We Entered Our Rest?

Did Jesus Teach 'Different Commandments'? Were the Commandments Nailed to the Cross?

The Passover is about human destiny. It's about why you exist. It's about your future, and the future of mankind.

The Passover is also about God's love. It is about God's love toward us and about our love toward God, and about the love we may have toward one another through God's Holy Spirit.

The Passover is the first of seven annual festivals God commands to be kept by his people. Like all of the commanded festivals, there are lessons pertaining to God and our relationship with God to be learned and reminded of in keeping the Passover. To learn the lessons intended by the Passover, it's important that it be observed at the right time. And it's even more important that it be observed in the right manner and spirit and with the proper understanding.

In this article I will discuss the Passover, what it means, and how it relates to God's plan of salvation.

Have you ever stopped to think that God's nature can be summed up in one word? What is the word? The apostle John wrote, "...for God is love" (1 John 4:8). The Greek word translated "love" here is *agape*.

As William Barclay points out in his book, *New Testament Words*, *agape* is a word little used outside of the Bible. And the Bible gives the word a new meaning. *Agape* is divine love, love that so characterizes God's nature that John wrote "God is love."

It is a kind of love which originates with God, and which human beings can have only through God's power. It's the love which the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5).

God the Father and Jesus Christ personified and shared the divine love from eternity. Jesus in prayer said to the Father: "Father, ...You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Jesus said to his disciples, "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (John 14:31, ESV). In this verse the tense is present for the word translated love (*ἀγαπάω*; *agapao*), which implies an abiding, continuing love.

Jesus Christ wants us to have and abide in that same love as he and the Father do. Doing so requires keeping God's commandments. "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:9-10).

In understanding why faithful converted Christians should observe the Passover it's very important that we keep in mind the love of God, the love that epitomizes the very nature of God. As Scripture teaches the Father and Jesus Christ shared divine love from before the foundation of the world.

The Bible implies that from eternity itself **it was in God's mind to develop a family with which to share eternal life**. Paul wrote of "the eternal purpose that he [God] has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11, ESV). Or it might be better translated, "the eternal purpose that he **realizes** in Christ Jesus our Lord." The eternal purpose of God is ongoing, and is in the process of being realized through time eternal.

Eternal life is not the same as the life you and I possess physically. As William Barclay also points out in his book, *New Testament Words*, in discussing the meaning of the Greek word *aionios* (eternal) as used in the New Testament, "Aionios is the word which describes nothing less and nothing other than the life of God" (p. 35). He goes on to say correctly, **"The ultimate destiny of the Christian is a life which is none other than the life of God himself"** (*ibid.*). Eternal life belongs to God alone, and to those to whom he chooses to give it. **"...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Romans 6:23, KJV).

The promise and gift of eternal life, **God life**, comes with knowing and having faith in God through Jesus Christ. The Bible makes it perfectly clear that eternal life is a gift given to us from God through Jesus Christ.

Eternal life is linked to belief or faith in Jesus Christ, and it has to do with him being "lifted up," a reference to his **crucifixion and death, which is symbolized by the Passover**. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that **whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life**" (John 3:14-16).

The Passover then has to do with eternal life, which is salvation. The festivals of God are designed to teach us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the plan of salvation. They have to do with how and why God offers human beings the gift of eternal life -- which is the message of the gospel. The message of salvation, the message of the true gospel, and the message inherent in the meanings of the festivals of God are one and the same.

Jesus Christ has the power to give us eternal life. "My sheep hear My

PASSOVER:

THE MEANING BEHIND THE DEATH OF JESUS

Rod Reynolds

voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28).

Eternal life has to do with coming to **know God**. "Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they **may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent**'" (John 17:1-3).

Knowing God in the way Jesus meant comes through God **dwelling in us by his word and Spirit**. "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and **I in you**. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:20-21). The Greek word translated "manifest" is *ἐμφανίζω* (*emphanizo*), which in this context means to manifest, reveal, or make known (cf. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*).

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, **he will keep My word**; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and **make Our home with him**" (John 14:23).

The Spirit of God is given to those who **obey God** (Acts 5:32). As one keeps God's word, his understanding deepens. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; **A good understanding have all those who do His commandments**" (Psalms 111:10). Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And **you shall know the truth**, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

As one studies and applies the teachings of the Bible, God's Spirit works in conjunction with God's word to reveal more clearly God's purpose and plan. "But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man **The things which God has prepared** ['makes ready,' Concordant Version] for those who love Him.' But God has revealed ['God reveals,' Concordant Version] them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

Knowing God through his word and Spirit goes hand in hand with the gift of eternal life. Knowing God, as the Bible reveals, is more than just acquiring intellectual knowledge. That certainly is included. **But to really know God is to become like God.**

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that **when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is**" (1 John 3:1-2).

The Scripture says when God is revealed -- and the full revelation will not be made until the resurrection -- that those who have been converted and remained faithful in this age, will see and know God as he is because they will be like him. Salvation has to do with sharing God's eternal life (as we have seen), and his glory, and being partakers of his **divine nature**. God, "...will render to each one according to his deeds' eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for **glory, honor, and immortality**" (Romans 2:6-7).

"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in

the **knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Peter 1:1-4).

Notice again that these Scriptures tell us that **salvation has to do with sharing God's eternal life (as we have seen), and his glory, and being partakers of his divine nature**. What a wonderful destiny God has in store for his children.

In building his family, however, God had to deal with the issue of sin. The Scripture clearly reveals how God has chosen to deal with sin in respect to us, his potential sons. We should have no trouble why God wants to rid his family of sin, once we understand the nature and effects of sin. Sin may be gratifying or pleasurable for a time, as the Scripture says (Hebrews 11:25). But in the final analysis sin is evil, it is destructive, it destroys property, it destroys relationships, it destroys people. Just take a look at the world around you, and you can readily see the destructive effects of sin.

Sin is the transgression of God's holy law. "...sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4, KJV). **The law of God is based on the principle of love.** "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?' So he answered and said, 'You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and '**your neighbor as yourself**.'" And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live'" (Luke 10:25-28).

The law of God is an expression of his nature, and **obedience** to it is linked to inheriting eternal life. "Though He [Jesus] was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of **eternal salvation to all who obey Him**." (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Specific laws of God tell us **how to love** in specific ways, and how to avoid behavior which violates the principle of love. "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:8-10, ESV).

Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15). The Apostle John wrote, "**For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments**. And His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3).

But through disobedience to the commandments of God, we have all sinned. The gift of God to the obedient is eternal life. But the penalty of sin is death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Unless the death penalty is removed, we can have no hope of eternal life. But from the foundation of the world a sacrifice sufficient to remove from our heads the penalty of death had been provided.

When God had determined to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Egyptian Pharaoh refused repeated warnings to let them go, backed up by plagues God sent on the land as he refused. Finally, God exacted the death penalty, claiming the lives of all the firstborn in Egypt, except those whose homes were protected by the blood of a lamb slain in accordance with God's instructions (see Exodus 11 and 12). The death angel "passed over" the homes of those protected by the blood of the Passover lamb. This experience is a type, or forerunner, of God forgiving sin and removing the death penalty from the heads of those whose sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ, who gave his life that salvation from eternal death might be possible.

Jesus Christ is referred to in Revelation 13:8 as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the type of the Passover lamb. He is "our Passover," who "was sacrificed for us" (I Corinthians 5:7).

The Apostle Peter wrote, "...you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or

"At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him"
(John 14:20-21).

gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (I Peter 1:18-21).

By his sacrifice Jesus Christ bore the penalty for our sins and makes possible our reconciliation with God. "...Christ also suffered for us.... Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (I Peter 2:21, 24-25). Jesus was qualified to pay the penalty for our sins, because he "committed no sin" (I Peter 2:22; cf. Hebrews 4:15; I John 3:5).

Without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for our sins, there would be no path to redemption. His sacrifice, and our faith in believing in Christ as Savior and repenting of our sins, are the first steps on the road to salvation.

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission

of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

The Passover, to be observed each year on the anniversary of the first Passover in Egypt (Abib 14) according to the sacred calendar, is a remembrance and a witness of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ by the shedding of his blood in payment for our sins. Paul rehearsed instructions concerning the Passover service under the New Covenant, writing to the predominately Gentile Church in Corinth: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night [Abib 14] in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

In keeping the Passover, we are to remember **how Christ died and why**. In order to accomplish that it's important that we **keep the Passover as instructed by Jesus Christ**. "The earliest Christians celebrated the Lord's Passover at the same time as the Jews..." (Encyclopedia Britannica,

"Christianity, The Church and Its History, Church Year, History of the Church Year, Easter," Multimedia Edition, 1998). Actually it was on the night the fourteenth of Abib (or Nisan), the first month of the sacred calendar (Exodus 12:6). For more information on the timing of the Passover see our publication *When Is the Biblical Passover?*, available online at our website cogmessenger.org or in print by request.

But by the middle of the second century most Churches in the Roman world had begun celebrating a Sunday festival linked to the vernal equinox, which they called "Passover," but gradually came to emphasize not Jesus death, but his resurrection. Thus the Greek word *pascha*, which is a transliteration of the Hebrew word *pesach*, and which means "Passover," subsequently came to be associated with a supposed Sunday resurrection.

Abandoning Passover and substituting "Easter" Sunday (as it's referred to in English and a similar word in some other languages) has obscured for millions of people the full meaning of Christ's death, why it was necessary, and how it relates to the fulfilling of God's purpose as revealed through the cycles of the annual festivals of God. "A good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Psalms 111:10). Keeping the Passover according to God's command is an important step in clearly understanding God's plan of salvation, and how it can be accomplished in your life.

It is important that converted and properly baptized Christians observe the Passover at the time and in the manner and spirit Scripture instructs. There are many vital lessons relating to salvation that we can learn from this commanded festival of God. Passover, along with the other festivals of God, can help us understand and remember What and Who God is, what he is doing with us and for us, and how, and why.

UNLEAVENED BREAD

Putting Sin Out

Rod Reynolds

About a third of the people in the world claim to be Christian. Yet festivals of the Bible, such as Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread have little or no meaning to most of them. In this article we continue our discussion of how the Bible's festivals and holy days picture the plan of God with a discussion of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Passover sacrifice instituted just prior to the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt was symbolic of Jesus Christ, whose suffering and death paid the penalty for our sins, making salvation possible. "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

There are spiritual lessons also in the manner in which the Passover was eaten. The first Passover was to be eaten haste, and with unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8). "And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover" (Exodus 12:11). The Israelites were to be poised to flee from Egypt.

Following on the heels of the Passover is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, during which no leavened bread was to be eaten, and leaven used for making bread was to be put out of their dwellings.

"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat - that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance" (Exodus 12:15-17).

No leaven was to be found in their homes for seven days, the fifteenth of the month through the twenty-first, inclusive (Exodus 12:19-20). Note that unleavened bread was also to be eaten with the Passover meal (Exodus 12:8, 18). Though closely related, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are separate feasts, each having its own significance historically, and from a spiritual standpoint. "This [Feast of Unleavened Bread] has been considered as a distinct ordinance.... The passover was to be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month; the feast of unleavened bread began on the fifteenth and lasted seven days, the first and last of which were holy convocations" (Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, at Exodus 12:15; cf. Leviticus 23:5-8).

The Israelites kept the Passover by sacrificing the Passover lambs and eating the Passover meal on the night of the Passover. The next

morning they began to assemble and then began the journey out of Egypt the following night - the fifteenth day of the first month of the sacred calendar.

"And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, 'We shall all be dead.' So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders.

.....
"And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves. Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years - on that very same day - it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations" (Exodus 12:33-34, 39-42).

The unleavened bread reflects in part fleeing Egypt in haste. Israel left the night after the night of Passover. They ate the Passover on the fourteenth and departed on the fifteenth.

"They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians" (Numbers 33:3).

They began their journey at night on the fifteenth. Days begin at sunset according to the sacred calendar (cf. Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32; Judges 14:12, 18). "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night" (Deuteronomy 16:1).

Egypt was given wholly to idolatry. Partaking of the society of Egypt is equated with sin. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:24-25).

From a spiritual standpoint, leaven in this context represents sin. Keeping the feast without leaven pictures putting sin out of our lives.

Having access to God's mercy through Christ's sacrifice, we are to strive to put sin out of our lives, to obey his commandments, to keep the covenant. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him.... To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17-18).

A lesson for us is that in regard to sin, we must not delay removing ourselves from sin or circumstances that would lead us into sin.

"Flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6: 18). "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10: 14).

We are to separate ourselves from influences that tend to lead us astray. Israel fled Egypt physically, but not in their hearts. We must make sure our hearts are not back in the world. Think about where your affections lie. Is your heart attuned to the world, or to the word of God?

"But you, O man of God, flee these things [lusts, temptations to sin] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

Most people are consumed with material pursuits, often money or the things money can buy. Money itself is not evil, nor the material things we have need of. But the inordinate love of those things is a root of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). If we set our hearts on those things, and put them first, we will be distracted, and turned aside from the way of eternal life.

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Avoid situations and associations that are likely to stir up lusts. Involve yourself in things that lead to righteousness and righteous conduct. Just as Israel left Egypt in haste, look at sin in the same way. Egypt is a type of sin and a system of lawlessness.

What was it like to live in Egypt as an Israelite? Was it pleasant? In one way, even to those in slavery, there was much that appealed to the flesh. Moses preferred the reproach of God rather than the passing pleasures of sin in Egypt. Sin is fun for a while sometimes. It may be attractive and appealing to the flesh. Israel had selective memory. In their trek through the wilderness they tended to remember the pleasant things they had experienced in Egypt - and in their minds glossed over the awful oppression of slavery (Exodus 16:3; Numbers 11:5).

The world can be very appealing if we set our hearts on it. Pursuing God's kingdom can be daunting, and often involves sacrifice, inconvenience, trials and difficulties (cf. Matthew 7:13-14). But we need to set our minds on seeking the kingdom of God anyway, regardless of what it takes, and not be distracted.

As God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God also wants to free us from slavery to sin. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (Galatians 4:3). This refers to the false systems of religion and government ruled by Satan, to which the whole world is in bondage, except for those God liberates from such bondage.

But those who are of the faith of Abraham, are no longer slaves, but sons of God; seed

of Abraham; heirs of God through Christ. "...as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:6-7). To become children of Abraham in a spiritual sense, and remain so, sons of the kingdom of God, through faith we must allow God's Spirit to work in us.

Once having made the commitment to follow the path of repentance, one must follow through, heed God's word and obey, or he can be lured back into sin and bondage. Keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread each year for seven days reminds us that putting sin out of one's life and keeping it out is a lifelong struggle.

Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth, to people who had already made a commitment to God, yet needed to further purge sin from their lives. "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Christians in Corinth when this Scripture was written were, judging from the context, in the midst of observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and hence were "unleavened," in a physical sense. But they were not yet entirely unleavened spiritually, hence the admonition to "purge out the old leaven."

Paul had mentioned earlier in the same chapter that sexual immorality, incest, was being tolerated among them. They were "puffed up" by the leaven of sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).

They had yet to finish the job of casting the "old leaven," out of their lives. They were told, "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 5:8).

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed'" (John 8:31). We can truly be Jesus' disciples only if we abide in His word. The key to spiritual truth is God's word (John 8:31-32; 17:17). Jesus said, "Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). If one practices sin, failing to struggle to put it out of his life, he is a slave to sin.

Putting the leaven out of our homes during the Feast of Unleavened Bread represents the process of putting sin out of our lives. Once the Israelites began their journey, coming out of Egypt had its perils, but it was relatively easy compared with what came later. The hardest part was forsaking the habits and attitudes they had learned in Egypt. Putting sin out proved awfully difficult for physical Israel -- and for the most part they never succeeded very well in doing that (cf. Numbers 14:1-4; Nehemiah 9:17-18; 2 Kings 17:6-20; Amos 5:25-26; Acts 7:38-43).

Getting rid of sin is a process -- it's a lifelong job that requires diligent, sustained effort. But the job might be made a little easier if we understand WHY we must put sin out of our lives.

Why does God want us to put sin out? Now you might say, "Because God commands us to." Yes, God commands us to put sin out of our lives -- but WHY does God want us to do so? God does things for a purpose. When God tells us to do something, it's for a reason, or more often that not, for several very good reasons!

Why then does God want us to put sin out?

What is the purpose?

To answer that question, let's first ask, "What is sin?" The answer is simple. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV).

Scripture reveals essentially two ways of conduct. One way is expressed in the principles of God's law. The other way is conduct in violation of that law, or sin. God's law expresses a cause and effect relationship. Obedience to its precepts produces joy, happiness, and abundant life. Sin, on the other hand, produces misery, suffering, unhappiness and death (Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

Look at the world in which we live -- you can see everywhere what sin produces. The world is plagued with all sorts of societal and personal problems that are often if not always linked directly or indirectly in some way to sin. Among them are poverty, diseases, divorce, fatherless children, violent crimes, thefts, fraud, corrupt governments, ethnic and racial hatred, war and death.

As Jesus said, sin enslaves. It results in spiritual blindness (Proverbs 4:19; Romans 1:21; Hebrews 3:13; Ephesians 4:17-19). Sin produces unhappiness and suffering (Proverbs 5:10-11; Nehemiah 1:3-4). Sin separates you from God (Isaiah 59:2). Sin leads to death (Proverbs 13:13; Romans 6:23).

God's commandments, however, when obeyed, produce understanding and discernment (Proverbs 6:23; 2:1-5; Psalms 111:109).

Obedying God's commandments produces honor (Proverbs 13:18; Proverbs 21:21). Obeying God's commandments produces health (Proverbs 3:7-8; 4:20-22).

Obedying God's commandments produces prosperity: (Psalm 1:1-3; Proverbs 3:9-10). Obeying God's commandments produces happiness: (Proverbs 3:13; Proverbs 29:18). Obeying God's commandments produces peace (Psalm 119:165). Obeying God's commandments produces life (Proverbs 3:1-2; Proverbs 7:1-2; Proverbs 11:30; 3:14; Revelation 22:14).

So why does God want us to put sin out of our lives? It's not because God is arbitrary, petulant or capricious. It's because God wants us to be happy. He wants us to live peacefully, joyfully and abundantly. He wants us to have good health. He wants us to prosper. He wants us to have wisdom and discernment. He wants us to inherit honor and glory and eternal life.

By striving to put sin out of our lives, and overcome it, with the help of God's Spirit, and only with the help of God's Spirit, we can do it (Romans 8:3-14; Philippians 2:12).

Ask God every day to strengthen you, to deliver you from evil. He will if you strive to overcome and cry out to him. God will work in you if you yield to him and seek his help.

The struggle against sin, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is an essential step in God's plan of salvation for mankind.

JOHN 17:10-14a | WEB



All things that are mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them through your name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. I have kept those whom you have given me. None of them is lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to you, and I say these things in the world, that they may have my joy made full in themselves. I have given them your word.

BE FILLED WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS

Rod Reynolds

Jesus said he who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be filled (Matthew 5:6). How can this promise be fulfilled in you?

What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? If you hunger for food you sense a need for it and have a strong desire, a craving for it. Similarly if you thirst you sense a need for drink and have a strong desire for it. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is a metaphor for longing for it, strongly desiring it, craving it (Psalm 119:20; 40).

What is righteousness?

It starts with believing in God (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 36:5-10). If you trust in God, believe in him, then implied is a willingness to do what God says (Hebrews 11:8).

Righteousness includes obeying God's commandments (Deuteronomy 6:25; Psalm 119:172; Isaiah 48:18; Luke 1:5-6).

Righteousness encompasses mercy (Matthew 1:19 ["just," translated from the Greek word *δίκαιος* (*dikaïos*), just, righteous]; Luke 10:25-37; Proverbs 21:21; Micah 6:8).

Righteousness includes everything encompassed by God's will (Matthew 3:15; Psalm 119:137-144).

So how can we be filled with righteousness?

(1) Hunger and thirst for it.

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness implies that you sense the need for righteousness, meaning you have a void, a need to be filled. One who is self-righteous doesn't sense a need, so he doesn't hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We can be filled with righteousness only when we realize it's not something we already have, but it's something we need, and its source is not within ourselves, but it comes from God (Isaiah 55:1, 3, 6-11; Romans 7:18; 8:7; Isaiah 64:5-6; Luke 18:9-14; Ezekiel 33:13; Jeremiah 23:6).

(2) Be purified from uncleanness.

To be righteous we must be cleansed from unrighteousness, which is sin (1 John 3:4; Psalm 24:3-6).

To be cleansed of sin requires repentance and justification (Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:7-10; Romans 3:22-26; 5:17).

(3) Abide in Christ.

To have the righteousness of Christ we must partake of him (John 6:48, 57, 63; 1 John 3:6-7). Feed on his word (John 15:7). Seek and put on Christ (Isaiah 51:1; Hosea 10:12; Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 1:11; 3:9-14). Yield to God (Romans 6:13). Let Christ live in you through his Spirit (Romans 8:4, 10).

(4) Endure the testing of your faith.

The righteousness we have of God is of faith, and God tests our faith (Psalm 139:23-24; Jeremiah 17:9-10; 1 Peter 1:5-9).

God promises that if we hunger and thirst for righteousness we will be filled. Let's make sure we do hunger and thirst for his righteousness, and yield to God, so his promise can be fulfilled in us.

IN THIS ISSUE

"The Weekly Sabbath and Its Meaning" – Many today believe the Sabbath is an outdated commandment meant for Israel alone. Was this an arbitrary commandment, or was there more meaning behind it? See what the Bible says about the day of rest and God's plan!

"Passover: The Meaning Behind the Death of Jesus" – One of the greatest acts of God's love towards each of us individually was the sacrifice of Jesus. Why was His death necessary? See how God's plan was advanced with one of the greatest miracles of all time.

"Unleavened Bread: Putting Sin Out" – We've heard about the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, but why was unleavened bread used as a symbol in this way? See why God established the Feast of Unleavened Bread and how it relates to His plan.

"Be Filled With Righteousness" - The Bible is filled with verses revealing the value of righteousness. Yet it also reveals how sinful human nature is. How then can righteousness be obtained? Join us as we glimpse into the possibilities and hope concerning this vital topic!

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