

The New Horizons Newsletter

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Matthew 28:19-20

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New Life

Christians around the world will soon be celebrating that most momentous event—the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

On the night prior to his crucifixion Jesus invited his disciples to share a memorial meal with him. During it he introduced to them the simple ceremony of bread and wine, saying they should continue with it every year ‘...this do in remembrance of me’ (I Corinthians 11:24).

Down the centuries this simple observance has become distorted. Its *time* has been changed—not just annually but to quarterly or weekly or indeed to many times daily. Its *meaning* has been changed—not just a memorial but a means to salvation. Its link with the *Passover* has been suppressed.

There’s more. Jesus was crucified at the time prescribed by God for the sacrifice of the Passover—towards the end of the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar (in our March/April). Contrary to popular theology and general belief Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday afternoon. He remained in the grave from sunset Wednesday until Saturday sunset, as he forewarned, ‘...three days and three nights in the heart of the earth’ (Matthew 12:40). But he didn’t remain in the grave.

New Life

Christianity celebrates this, the resurrection of Jesus, every year on ‘Easter Sunday’. The roots of the celebration are in the Biblical Passover, but by Papal authority it was moved to conform with the widespread observance of what was then the pagan *Ishtar* festival.

The early church, however, continued to observe the ancient God-appointed seven-day festival known as the *Days of Unleavened Bread*. It is one of what God calls ‘...My feasts’ (Leviticus 23:2). We thus find Paul discussing it with the church in Corinth (I Corinthians 5) where he notes that they were ‘unleavened’: ‘...Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened’ (v.7). It follows on the heels of the Passover, beginning on the 15th of the month.

Holy Living

‘Leaven’ is the raising agent (eg yeast) used to make bread, and Christians are to abstain from it for the entire festival. It is used in the Bible as typical of *sin*, of *hypocrisy*, of *false teachings*. When we repent and are baptized we put out of our life all sin as defined by the Scriptures and by the divine Law. The seven days typify our remaining life-span.

Through the resurrected Christ living in us we become a ‘new creature’: ‘...If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature’ (II Corinthians 5:17), striving for a sin-free life. Writes Paul: ‘...as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ’ (Galatians 3:27). He lived the perfect ‘unleavened’ life which we seek to emulate. Jesus himself, in compliance with God’s instructions, observed the Festival throughout his life (John 2:23, Luke 2:41-42).

The festivals appointed by God are as relevant for Christians as ever, providing insight hidden by those substituted by the apostate church. **Ω**

further study...

The Passover...is it for Christians
Passover: a double celebration
www.cgom.org or in print

Will Israel Survive?

Nations and empires dominate the world scene—and are gone, mere ‘...dust on the balance’. Babylon, Assyria, Greece, Rome—all have disappeared in the mists of time. Yet here is one small nation of some eight million citizens existing in a cramped (8000 square miles) and surrounded by hostile enemies intent on her extermination: *Israel*.

Young, too—just seven decades old, yet older than those empires, for Israel has roots of over three thousand years in this same patch of real estate. Despite worldwide opposition—from all Arab nations, from the United Nations, indeed from most of the world—they mean to stay, believing they have a divine mandate. *And they have*.

Divine Mandate

The modern nation of ‘Israel’ is in essence *Jewish*—though it welcomes all as full citizens, including those of Islamic persuasion. Though calling itself ‘Israel’ it is in reality part of a larger whole. Around 1500BC a nation was born, as twelve tribes (clans) were freed from being subjugated to Egyptian domination, latterly as slaves—the ‘children of Israel’. One of those tribes was *Judah*, forming the nation known today as *Israel*.

In the tenth century BC the twelve tribes divided (over taxation!), ten (known as ‘Ephraim’) forming one group while *Judah* dominated the other. They were often at war with one another. The Ephraim group sank into gross idolatry and were dispersed from the land (‘Palestine’). They have yet to return. After a seventy-year exile in Babylon *Judah* returned to Palestine at the behest of King Cyrus, remaining in occupation as a nation until 70AD.

Divine Mandate

Centuries before Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the LORD had tested and chosen one man as His standard-bearer, the one through whom He would work out His plan—Abraham. So dedicated was he to God’s way he became ‘...Abraham my friend’ (Isaiah 41:8). His grandson was Jacob, later called *Israel* (Genesis 32:28).

It was to Abraham—and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob—that the LORD deeded perpetually much of the territory between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates (Exodus 23:31). Their right of occupancy, however, was dependent on their conformity with the divine way; abandon the LORD and they would be expelled from the Land (Psalm 89:31-34).

Model Nation

Sounds a bit harsh: ‘*Don’t obey Me and you will be banished!*’ But this was another momentous crisis in man’s history and God was determined to keep His promise to Abraham. The world—empire after empire—some eight centuries post Flood, was sunk in idolatry having almost universally again rejected divine guidance of our affairs of state and personal morality. Almost alone among the nations the descendants of Abraham through Isaac clung (precariously) to

God’s way despite enslavement in Egypt (Exodus 5:1f). God wanted to protect His legacy.

The northern Israel commonwealth [*see side-bar*] sank into idolatry, followed a century and a half later by the tribe of Judah. The latter returned from exile after seventy years—and remained in the Land to the time of Jesus. Their rejection of the Messiah led to a further exile from which they are now returning.

The Return

Jesus had prophesied that Judah would be in occupation of the Land at the era of his return (Matthew 24:15-16), currently an on-going century-long process. But the Jews’ seventy years of nationhood (since 1948) has been marked by conflict with its Islamic neighbours who are intent on Israel’s destruction—a reflection of the Psalmist’s observation: ‘...*They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance*’ (Psalm 83:4).

Model Nation

As a projected pattern for righteous government God, JHVH, forged Israel as a model nation to further His plans—plans designed before man was created (Ephesians 1:4, Titus 1:2). Humans by nature will, without some form of restraint, oppose God’s laws, and to instill its principles in Israel He designed their Constitution based on His Law—a mirror image of basic human instincts.

Jerusalem, the Israeli capital, is predicted at that time to be the centre of a hate campaign—not only by their Islamic neighbours but also by the concerted rage of the nations: ‘...*when that time comes, I will make Jerusalem like a heavy stone—any nation that tries to lift it will be hurt. All the nations of the world [the UN?] will join forces to attack her [Judah]*’ (Zechariah 12:2, 3). It’s the time when Jesus warned that believers need to get out—speedily: ‘...*When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will know that it will soon be destroyed. Then those who are in Judea must run away to the hills; those who are in the city must leave, and those who are out in the country must not go into the city*’ (Luke 21:20-21).

Dogmatism isn’t appropriate, but the prophecies may indicate that both Judah and her sister tribes will then suffer greatly at the hands of the invaders and may again experience deportation. The prophet Ezekiel notes that the land (Palestine) will be laid waste by ‘Edom’ (*ch* 36:5)—but that’s *not* end of story! [Edom in Jewish tradition is Rome.]

The prophet continues, clearly referring to a time yet to be: ‘...*I [God] will take you [Israel] from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land*’ (v.24). Not the present return, for ‘*I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them*’ (v.27). (Jeremiah 31:31, Ezekiel 37:19). The promise is to *all* Israel—both to Judah and ‘...*to the twelve tribes scattered abroad*’ (James 1:1). They are still ‘out there’! Ω

Insight from Paul

The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God


The apostle is firmly grounded in 'the Scriptures'—the writings of the Old Testament, not least in his understanding of the process of creation and our human origins. He writes: '*...by him [Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible... all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [hold together]*' (Colossians 1:16-17).

In a reference to Genesis (*ch.1 v.3*) he says to the brethren in Corinth: '*...God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*' (II Corinthians 4:6), echoing '*...let there be light*' (Genesis 1:3). The account passed on by Moses of what befell our first parents is also a foundation teaching of Paul: '*...Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression*' - 1 Timothy 2:14). Adam, he reasons, was a uniquely created being shaped from clay and direct from God's hand. And in v.45: '*...The first [in order] man Adam was made a living soul*'.

When he addresses mankind's nature Paul recognizes, with *Genesis* (and indeed the rest of Scripture) that man is a *mortal* being, that when we die we are truly dead and that we enter a *passive* state. We are oblivious to our surroundings and, as he describes it, '*asleep*'. We await our resurrection to judgment. He refers to Genesis 2:17: '*...in the day you eat [the forbidden fruit] you will surely die*'. Man was not created immortal.

A further reference to *Genesis* by the apostle is to 'the serpent', Satan: '*...as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*' (II Corinthians 11:3). The account is in *Genesis ch.3*. Paul also makes reference to this being under other guises—'*...god of this world*' (II Corinthians 4:4), '*...the prince of the power of the air*' (Ephesians 2:2).

We further see that the apostle accepts as historical the Old Testament characters, referring for example to Moses a score of times, to Abraham, to Noah, to Jacob, to Esau.

The apostle thus directs us to understand *Genesis* to be reality and not a collection of myths. All of Scripture is to be understood in the light of these foundation principles. All the Scriptures, he says, are '*...for our learning, that...we might have hope*' (Romans 15:4). 

Letter from England

The infantile obsession with 'political correctness' rumbles on, affecting business, government, entertainment, the print media—and spilling over to affect the expression of a Biblical world-view.

As kids we mouthed '*sticks and stones... etc etc*' and we brushed off the inevitable name-calling of our contemporaries. Now? Don't even breathe! A word out of place could land you in jail. There *are* civilised limits to free speech but there must, in a free(ish) society, be opportunity to safely and without fear express a contrary opinion. Otherwise the 'bad' can't be assessed and discarded.

Increasingly, laws are enacted quite contrary to what is expressed in the Scriptures and we have to live with them, however personally distressing and however inimical to our national well-being. But our law-makers are oblivious to the path to good government as detailed for them in the Scriptures. They despise it and in their ignorance undermine the foundations of what remains of our civilisation.

We are tempted to 'pull up the drawbridge' and hide. But we have a work to do and a duty to pray. What we teach is the only way to the Kingdom and is sure to draw fire—we are warned of persecution to come. And we are encouraged to pray for 'all in authority' to the end that we may live a peaceable Christian life.

Personal challenges will come. Some who profess Christ have lost their jobs simply for standing up for Bible principles. Worse will come, as our leaders become despotic and suppress the Word of God—and even God Himself.

We must stand fast. We must diligently study God's revealed way. We must apply that Word in our day-to-day activities. For these who remain steadfast to the end there is unending life serving with our Saviour throughout eternity.

We are 'joint-heirs with Christ'—but only through what he has done for us through his suffering, death and resurrection. As we once again come to the memorial of this awesome event in the annual observance of the *Lord's Supper* and the *Days of Unleavened Bread* it is for us to examine our standing with him and to work to conform our behaviour with his perfect example.

James

Festivals 2018

Lord's Supper	29 March (<i>Thurs evg</i>)
Unleavened Bread	31 March-April 6
Pentecost	May 20
Trumpets	September 10
Atonement	September 19
Tabernacles	September 24–30
Eighth Day	October 1

DAY TIME

We don't give much thought to it—the 'day'. It's there, always with us day *and* night, 24 hours, seven in a week, 365 of them in a year. All so familiar, and with us since the beginning of time.

Then there's the not so precise definition. *His day will come. Doomsday. In my day. Call it a day.* This fuzziness of meaning we take in our stride. And when we turn to the Scriptures the fuzziness continues.

Jesus said '*...Are there not twelve hours in a day?*' Then we find that Adam, were he to sin, would die '*...in the day you eat of [the forbidden fruit]*' (*ch* 2:17). Yet he lived a further nine centuries plus. *The Day of the LORD* spans more than twenty-four hours.. Then there is the account of creation by Moses: '*...These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day [Heb.yom] that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens*' (Genesis 2:4). But there is an anomaly here, for he had just recorded that it took *six* days for Creation (*ch* 1). 'Day' clearly is not limited to twenty-four hours!

Symbolism

We note that in *Genesis 1* God ended each 'day' with the observation '*...the evening and the morning were the ...day*'. Closure. But when God addresses the seventh day when He Himself rested there is no closure. His work of creation was complete, but the seventh 'day' continues. As wrote the author of Hebrews: '*...he [Christians] that is entered into his [continuing] rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his*' (*ch* 4:10).

There's much symbolism in the Scriptures and we might consider the days of creation as symbolic. Look at it this way. God set in motion the processes for a physical creation in which to carry out His plan. By His awesome power He shaped the invisible 'dark energy' with which He had created 'space' into planets and stars and galaxies: '*...the universe was created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of*

what cannot be seen' (Hebrews 11:3). Having sited Earth in its perfect location in space God, using natural law, proceeded over perhaps billions of years to prepare it for human occupation.

There followed a series of divine interventions in six stages each of countless aeons during which earth's eco-systems matured. The creation of mankind was the pinnacle, and there has since been no special creation. Each was symbolized as a 'day'. Then, when all was completed, '*...God rested from all His works*'.

The Week

God then divided time into seven-day units—a unique system that had no connection with the planetary movements, as do the month and the year. Each 'day' represented a symbolic commemoration of a particular phase of creation. The *seventh* was a memorial of the whole of creation: '*...in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day*' (Exodus 20:11). The seven day week proclaims the LORD as our sole Creator.

It is noteworthy that each phase of creation continues in our day. *Space* continues to expand generating new dark matter. *Earth* continues to rearrange its physical features through volcanic and seismic activity. *Vegetation* continues, from its created genetics, to generate variation. And the purpose of the whole creation, *mankind*, is still a 'work in progress' as God the Father selects from among us—and trains—those individuals who will reign with Him in His approaching earthly Kingdom and throughout eternity. God initiated the processes, each after its kind, and they continue to unfold in accord with in-built law.

This interpretation of early *Genesis* may be alien to many of our readers, but is worth considering in light of the vast research findings of geologists and cosmologists. They are faced with hard facts which they report—but (the scientific approach) they are not unwilling to change tack when the facts warrant it. Properly understood, natural science and the Bible are in perfect harmony. **Ω**

7th-day

When Israel became a nation God set before them their Constitution, at the heart of which was the obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. It had been instituted at Creation ('...made for man' - Mark 2:27) as a blessing for all of mankind. He placed His stamp of authority by Himself entering into a Sabbath rest: '*...in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day*' (Exodus 20:11). He notes: '*...on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made*' (Genesis 2:2)

Many 'Creationists' believe the entire physical universe was created in one act of creation some six thousand years ago. Unless God was out to deceive us the testimony of the rocks assures us there were billions of years of activity to bring us to today. The popular 'Big Bang' theory is out of favour and some cosmologists now believe that perhaps the material creation condensed from the 'dark menenergy' that makes up 90% of the material universe—a 'substance' described by a modern cosmologist as '*...completely alien to us: invisible to our eyes and quite beyond our physical experience*'.