

outreach

The New Horizons Newsletter

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Matthew 28:19-20

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All Together Now...

The essence of Christianity—and of its antecedent faith implanted in mankind’s beginning—is that ;,,[God] has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord’ (Acts 17:26-27). That through Jesus Christ all of man’s self-destructive foibles may be reconciled.

Paul echoed the words of Jesus: ‘...*That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me*’ (John 17:21). All who believe (v.20) will ultimately be united under one Kingdom and in one faith. One global government and one world religion under God: ‘... *that God may be all in all*’ (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

That, however, is a *spiritual* Kingdom requiring a transformation of the nature of man. It is the one true God-appointed faith, the *one way* rejected by our forebear, Adam and all his progeny. It’s the rule of God restored at the coming return of the Messiah, Jesus.

Failed Kingdoms

All attempts over the next fifteen hundred years since Adam to restore man’s ‘golden age’ failed. The *nephalim* [*powerful anti-God leaders*] brought the world to a violent end, incurring divine judgment in the Great Flood (Genesis 6).

Although a remnant maintained the true faith, lessons went unlearned and despots sought again to unite mankind under a secular global government: ‘...*let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth*’ (Genesis 11:4). The plan was again foiled by God’s direct intervention (v.8) by confusing languages.

Rise and Fall

Over the millennia since, powerful empires have arisen—Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman but none attaining to global status, all a merging of the secular and (false) religion. [We have an inbuilt need, however vague, for a belief in the supernatural!] As predicted in Scripture they all eventually were erased by the next conquering empire, with one exception: *Rome*.

Church Power

By the sixth century AD secular Rome, too, had decayed almost to extinction. Early in the fourth century the Christian church had been accorded secular authority by Emperor Constantine, and it became increasingly influential in both the spiritual and the temporal realms—assuming the title, the *Holy Roman Empire*. It spread worldwide and was well established even in China by the seventh century.

The Roman church assumed temporal power over nations and its oppressive and cruel administration over the succeeding centuries is well documented, but resisted—often to the point of martyrdom—by small persecuted ***cont’d p.2***

groups and individuals. Its temporal power was restricted in the late 1800's, but restored in 1929 (the *Lateran Treaty*) from whence it has escalated its influence over all nations.

Going Global

In the 4th century Augustine had promoted the notion that the *church* is the Kingdom of God—and therefore destined to rule all nations. It is the seed from which grew the domination of the Roman church over Europe, and with its sights set on a global kingdom. The Vatican State, its political unit, has representative offices—each with its 'diplomatic' staff—in most national governments, and is in effect a political-religious government in waiting, a 'two-headed beast'.

In prophecy, the two beasts of Revelation 13 may portray two aspects of a single organization; for it is the 'woman' (the church) who rides—ie controls—the beast. [see ch. 17:7).

Our world leaders, almost without exception, today look to the Papacy for guidance; the Pope is usually their first port-of-call after their election. Rome also views Protestants as her straying 'children' and indeed many mainstream and evangelical Christian leaders now defer to Rome, even for doctrine and for their own stance on global issues such as 'climate change' or the pandemic or social credit.

Be Alert!

Global domination, then, has been the goal of powerful leaders down the ages—but is subject to overall divine control. God is working to a plan, and any humanly-devised global kingdom will be in direct rebellion against Him: '*...the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city*' (Genesis 11:6-8).

When, or if such a kingdom will be achieved is unknown. God's plan throughout this era is to selectively build His team to work with Him over the final millennium of human history, and not to now convert the world through a distortion of true Christianity. For those invited it is vital to remain faithful through all that life may throw at us and in face of the Devil's vain attempts to establish his own evil kingdom. Ω

Insight from Paul

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

The apostle cautions the brethren about getting above themselves: *don't rate yourself too highly*, he writes to the Romans (eg Romans 12:30). As the centre of the Empire, Rome and its citizens exalted themselves over the 'barbarians' they had conquered.

It's a lesson for all of us and applies whether or not we serve in a church office, and it echoes the guidance of Jesus: '*...you know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all*' (Matthew 10:42-44). We are each called to *serve*.

And Paul continues to explain to the church that concept of being a 'servant'. As Christians we have been removed from the mire of Satan's kingdom and are grafted into the one pure 'body' that is Christ. That calling is by no means random—each of us, as in the physical body, has a vital part to play: '*...we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*' (Romans 12:5). Each member is there not to 'warm a pew' but to serve each other and to forward the work of their congregation—and the work of the church at large.

In the apostle's analogy Jesus is, of course, the Head, and as such directs every function including the distribution of each gift. Notes Paul: '*...When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men*' (Ephesians 4:8). Those gifts are individually 'installed' '*...each according to his ability*' by the Lord himself. They have, often, been shaped by our life experiences and we are responsible to ensure we improve our use of it.

When we are privileged to be part of a local congregation we are assigned to develop and to use our gift for the benefit of all. Others, if cut off from a local congregation, find ways of deploying their gift—eg by prayer, writing, letters of encouragement and calls to other brethren, where appropriate supporting needy brethren etc. All are vital and when neglected the church is falling short of its high calling.

Our spiritual gifts (and how diligently we develop them) are among the 'good works' that will determine our role in the coming Kingdom.

[Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 16:1-13 are useful related studies] Ω

Remember!

Some life-events generate powerful memories—some pleasant, others we would prefer to forget. Indeed we invent ways of recalling certain events: birthday parties, for example, or our wedding customs. Nationally we all come together to celebrate a victory or perhaps a traumatic event (try *November fifth* or *11th*).

Religions, too, have their ‘days to remember’. In Christianity, for example, there are multiple such—notably *Christmas* (Jesus’s birth) and *Easter* (his death and resurrection) - though neither is noted in the Christian Scriptures as to be observed and are relics of past faiths.

Sabbath

But the Bible does give clear direction for us to ‘remember’ specific occasions: ‘...Remember the [seventh-day] sabbath day, to keep it holy’ (Exodus 20:8). It is the oldest of mankind’s commemorations, having been instituted at creation, and is a memorial of God’s power in creating the material universe.

While abandoned by most nations it has been preserved within Judaism, and was the weekly observance of the New Testament church until officially replaced in the fourth century by pre-Christian Sunday worship. It is, however, still observed by millions of Christians to this day. It is God’s ‘signature’, His identifying mark.

‘...this do’

Jesus, knowing he was the next day to fulfil the symbolism of the annual Passover, introduced an observance to the first Christians—today observed throughout Christianity variously as ‘*the Lord’s supper*’ or *Communion*. The apostle Paul summarizes: ‘...the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, *Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me*’ (I Corinthians 11:23-24).

He introduced the observance to the Twelve the evening prior to his false arrest and crucifixion, and dying at the time (the ‘ninth hour’) of the sacrifice in the temple of the national Passover lamb. The record is in John 13. Many Christians observe this annually—as notes Paul, it was ‘...the same night in which he was betrayed’ (ie 13/14 Nisan).

[Note: The Passover lamb was sacrificed on the afternoon of 14th Nisan or Abib (on the Bible calendar). It was then roasted, and eaten after sundown—which began the 15th] See next column for dates

To be faithful to the Scriptures we need to remember these events by actively observing them—and learning from them.

New Wine

The *Sabbath* and the *Lord’s Supper*, however, do not stand alone within the Biblical Christian festival calendar. The Passover sacrifice of the lamb was the start of the seven-day *Days of Unleavened Bread* during which believers abstain from foods containing a raising agent, this in Scripture symbolic of corruption.

Paul records the evidence that the first Christians actively observed these days: ‘...Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness’ (I Corinthians 5:6-8).

Such real-time observances through material symbols reinforce their spiritual significance (cf ‘Lent’). As Christians we become a ‘new creature’ and our mission for the remainder of our life is to change, to ‘put on’ the pure character of Jesus – the expression of perfect love. It is the ‘new wine’ of his Gospel message.

Other Memories

So also with the other festive days, called by God ‘...My feasts’ and outlined in Leviticus 23. All call to our remembrance the significance of various phases of God’s purpose for mankind.

Many Christian groups around the world continue to observe these festivals as an integral part of our worship. They are ‘holy convocations’, when we gather with like-minded brethren for interaction, for instruction from the Scriptures, for the worship of our great Creator. Ω

Festivals 2022	
Lord’s Supper	Thurs evg April 14
Unleavened Bread	April 16-22
Pentecost	June 5
Trumpets	September 26
Atonement	October 5
Tabernacles	October 10-16
Closing Day	October 17

Keep My Feast!

'...let us keep the feast, *not* with old leaven'.

Thus the apostle Paul instructs the brethren in Corinth some years after the first Christian *Pentecost*. He was echoing to this New Testament church for their instruction the guidance God gave to Moses for His observances: '...the first day [of the feast] you shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel' (Exodus

12:15). This was the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* [Heb. *mats' saw*] (Exodus 34:18).

'Leaven' is any form of raising agent, notably yeast', the usual daily bread being made with it.

As a time of celebration the feast begins on the evening of the 15th with a communal or family gathering accompanied with a festive meal. That first day (15th—beginning as the sun sinks on the 14th) is the first of the Bible's seven holy days—days when no regular work is done other than what's needed for the celebration: '...on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days you must eat unleavened bread'.

A Time to Meet

The two holy days during this festival are also 'holy convocations'—appointments for the brethren to meet together for worship, for instruction, for fellowship: '...In the first day you shall have an holy convocation: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: you shall do no servile work therein' (Leviticus 23:6-8).

As an example, on another festival day (*Trumpets*) Ezra taught the gathered assembly of Israelites from God's law: '...Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month' (Nehemiah 8:2). The convocations are a time for instruction from the Scriptures by competent teachers.

Put On Christ

For seven days, then, we—having previously removed all leavened products from our property—do not eat leavened products and each day eat something leavened. This is, of course, symbolism. 'Leaven' in Scripture is a product that spreads insidiously and is applied both positively and negatively.

In itself it corrupts, and symbolically signifies hypocrisy: '... Beware of the leaven of the Phari-

sees, which is *hypocrisy*' (Luke 12:1). Also: '... let us keep the feast [of Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of *malice and wickedness*; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (I Corinthians 5:8). Jesus warns his disciples: '...Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees' (Matthew 16:12).

Through our commitment to a changed life, and by baptism, we become '...a new person in Christ'. A new spiritual being is conceived in us and we are commissioned to mature into the perfect character exemplified by Jesus Christ: '...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' (II Corinthians 5:17).

Note: while excluding leavened products we do still eat our normal diet, perhaps with a festive twist!

Thus by abstaining from leaven for this seven-day period we picture—and reinforce—our desire to 'put off' negative characteristics (eg Colossians 3:5-9). By daily eating some leavened bread (eg *matzos*, or home-made) we picture our desire to 'put on' those positive qualities so clearly manifest in the character of Jesus (eg vv. 12-14).

As with all God's feasts *Unleavened Bread* is a time to meet and rejoice with God and with our brethren and at a date *He* has appointed: '... Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts...which you shall proclaim in their seasons [Heb *mo'ed*: appointed time] (Leviticus 23:2, 4).

Properly observed these festivals are a reflection of God's perfect plan for mankind. Ω

Symbolism

The use of symbols is common practice in most faiths. Thus the Bible, for the *Lord's Supper*, uses *bread* and *wine* in our remembrance of Jesus and his sacrifice. *Baptism* symbolizes our public commitment. *Anointing* with oil for healing, or *unleavened bread* as in this festival.

In mainstream Christianity believers abstain from a personal selected practice (eg a food, smoking) during *Lent*. And, of course, the *wafer* with communion/Mass.