

“Pascha”

Lord Jesus, grant me your Spirit that I would proclaim your word in Truth and Power and that all who listen would hear what you have to say to them. To the glory of the heavenly Father. Amen.

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

First Fruits. What is he talking about?

Most of the Christians in the world do not call these days Good Friday or Easter. It is called something like Pascha - Passover. The old barbarians German - English use the pagan word Easter.

We count these as separate days, different events. The ancient Church, the Old Testament, considered them the same long event, Pascha. It extends from the Passover to Exodus to the covenant at Sinai. All together it remembers, brings about, creates, the victory over slavery to evil, by the blood sacrifice of the lamb, leading out to the new life as the people of God.

It starts with the Passover. The meal, we recall as the Lord’s Supper. It is the high point of the Jewish year still after three thousand five hundred years. Jesus shared this meal with his followers a day early. Jesus followers must have been wondering what Jesus was planning for the next day. The disciples’ wives and children, Mother Mary, Lazarus and sisters, Jesus uncle Clopas, Mary of Magdala, many of the healed, many other were there. Possibly 300 in all. They sat in circles on the floor. Jesus sat with the twelve.

I expect they were filled with anticipation, thinking tomorrow Jesus was going to reveal Himself to the people of Israel, to everyone in Jerusalem, to all the world, as the Messiah of God. All the promises of God were going to be fulfilled, and they would see it. Jesus did all that in a way they never expected.

The great redemption of the children of Abraham enslaved in Egypt was by the blood of the lamb. On that day a lamb was sacrificed. The blood placed on the doorposts and lintel. The angel of death saw the blood and “Passed Over” all who believed and obeyed. Every year since they come together, remember and celebrate. To claim, to make that salvation their own.

In Jesus' day the historical record has over two million pilgrims. All in Judea and Galilee and pilgrims from all over, Gaul, North Africa Ethiopia, India. Large numbers from Syria, Alexandria and Babylon. There were more people than in the Baltimore region.

Arrested,
tried,
convicted,
executed.

Before they knew it, Jesus was hung on a cross. They were devastated. All their dreams, their hopes, everything they expected destroyed. They had been wrong. Meanwhile all around them the population was celebrating. Can you image what it takes to kill, skin, clean more than twenty five thousand lambs an hour. There were fifty thousand priests on the local roster.

Can you image how devastated Jesus' followers were surrounded by millions of joy filled celebrants? They were eating their passover lamb. Jesus followers hardly ate, they had their passover lamb the night before. What had Jesus been thinking. Did He know He was going to be crucified the next day?

The Almighty Creator made a covenant with Abraham. It was not just about being the God of his

descendants. More than just taking care of them, God promised to be the God of all people who would come to Him. It was not just about protecting and blessing with little stuff. It wasn't even about saving them from slavery in Egypt.

What does that have to do with life today? They remembered, renewed, recreated that old reality for themselves in their day. God is a mighty God, a victorious God, a Saving God, a rescuing God, a restoring God. Not just long ago, not just for today, His is victorious over all evil now and forever. They were, we are, living in His presence, His kingdom, forever.

Believe God is your God! Live as people of God now! Seek Him, seek His Spirit, His presence in your life. Come to Him, praise Him, pray to Him with all your cares, lay them before Him for Him to take care of them, care of you as He knows in wisdom and perfect love. He is with you, sustaining you, protecting you, every harm will be healed, every tear wiped away.

In Egypt with Moses God took on the most powerful nation in the world. That meant they had to have the most powerful gods. By His outstretched arm and power He overthrew and drowned the chariots and

army of Egypt in the sea. He did this because of His covenant promise to Abraham. He is faithful and loving. He is divine mercy and forgiveness.

It was not because they deserved His rescue, they were disobedient, filled with complaints, unfaithful. weak. He made them great by His greatness. All He asked was that they Love Him with all their heart all their soul all their minds and that they love their neighbor as themselves. Caring for the weak, the orphan, the naked and hungry treating the foreigner with kindness remembering they had been slaves, foreigners in Egypt. God's people are to live in justice and righteousness. Loving merciful and gracious to all as He is loving merciful and gracious to us.

The Day we call Good Friday is the day they knew as passover. The day the passover lamb was sacrificed. They crossed through the sea and traveled through the wilderness. Moses met God in the fire and thunder on top of Sinai God wrote His covenant with them on tablets of stone. He promised to be their God and they promised to be His people.

God, the almighty creator of heaven and earth, His only begotten Son our Lord Jesus, The Holy Spirit

has promised to be your God, your savior from all evil, even death. Do you? have you? will you? promise to be His people, obey His word and will, serve Him all your life, worship Him now and forever? He gives you everything Himself, His Love, freely. That means it is too much for you to buy. His gift to you is not without strings, His salvation comes with requirements for you and for me to keep. If we do not obey, We will not receive the blessings He has for us.

First Fruits, what is this about first fruits? St Paul and James both call Christ's resurrection the first fruits of them that slept. First Fruits was the beginning of the Spring harvest. The very first part of the harvest was to be given to God before the rest was cut.

Today - Good Friday a delegation went to the fields near Bethlehem and selected the grain to be cut. Tomorrow, the Sabbath celebration in the Temple that Valley of the Dry Bone prophecy was read in the service. Tomorrow Evening after sundown the sheaves were cut, during the night winnowed ground and prepared. Easter morning the Chief Priest Caiaphas presented it to the Lord at the Temple with the sacrifice of a lamb.

Picture this, as the first fruits of the harvest are presented in the Temple, the news was spreading that Jesus' tomb was empty. Jesus is the first fruits of all that die. As He rose so will all rise because of Him. The gates of Heaven, eternal life, is open to all who will praise Him as their savior forever.

God has given you peace that passes all understanding, your life, all you have are held in His hands, your hearts and minds are kept in Christ Jesus Amen.

Good Friday

Synagog

Easter Early

Ex 15:1-11

I Cor 5:6b-8

Easter Late instead use

Ezekiel 37:1-14 1 Cor. 15:20-26

Is. 25:6-9

1 Cor. 15:1-11

Passover

Ezekiel 36

First Fruits

Psalm 118:15-29

John 20:19-31

Mark 16:1-8

Psalm 16

Mark 16:1-8

April 3, 2015 Good Friday

April 5, 2015 Easter

Berea

Living Water Rosedale