

Our Bread Of Life

Life Through the Resurrection

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It is amazing to read the biblical accounts of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection side-by-side with what the Christian churches out there teach about it. They go to great lengths to pooh-poo the pagan origins and connotations of things like the Easter Bunny and dyed eggs and the aforementioned hot crossed buns and sunrise services, and even the name 'Easter' itself. They will give you a long explanation why 'Easter' is an okay name.

But we know that 'Easter' derives from the name of a Germanic goddess. 'Eoster' is the Germanic equivalent of the ancient goddess 'Ishtar' or "Isis" or 'Ashtoreth' or 'Astarte.' That is the big bugaboo of the Israelites. They loved to worship her as she was the 'queen of heaven.'

And now one of the big holidays of the Christian year is named after that goddess. Is that not ironic?

It does not make any difference to them. It seems that these same names and symbols have been used for thousands of years in vernal equinox fertility rites and other festivals welcoming the new sun, which is a god. Depending on whatever the religion is, it has various names.

These things, to modern Christians, are just harmless traditions. "For the kids," they say. "They get a kick out of the Easter bunny and the new clothes and the nice hat and whatever it is. The Easter egg rollout on the grass, that's really fun. Dyeing them? You can't wait for that every year. It's just like Santa Claus and Halloween. It's all for the kids. It doesn't matter. It has no real significance."

Even if you press them up against the wall about whether it really matters, they say, "Oh, it really doesn't because these things have new 'Christian' meanings. They don't mean what they used to mean. Eggs don't mean fertility rites. Bunnies don't mean fertility. They have new meanings."

And then you scratch your head and say, "What are they?" I mean, these 'Christian' meanings on these ancient symbols are really difficult to fathom.

Do pastries with a cross on them really honor Christ? And they are full of yeast too. Do

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the eggs and bunnies really represent the new life Christians have through His resurrection? How does that work? Do the sunrise service really commemorate the time of Christ's resurrection? Are they even right about that? Does the name 'Easter' really identify the truths of the resurrection of the true Son of God? Like I said a few minutes ago, that name is associated with a female goddess of fertility.

Now, of course, we reply that the answer to all these questions is a resounding 'No!' They really do not mean this. They really mean something else, and it is all pagan. Their explanations, instead, come across as lame excuses so that they do not rock the boat or admit that they are wrong. They just hold on to them so that they can hold on to their traditions very much like the Pharisees did (they would not listen to Jesus because it meant rocking the boat).

It brings to light Paul's assertion in Romans 1:28 where he says that "they (even Christians—nominal, professing Christians of this world) do not like to retain God in their knowledge." They would rather have pagan gods and goddesses and all the rites and trimmings and trappings of pagan religion.

And so, because of this (because they do not want to retain God in their knowledge), Paul says, as the rest of the verse goes on: "God gives them over to a debased mind." He lets them go over. He lets them fall into a "reprobate mind" (as it says in the King James)—'a degenerate mind', as some versions have it—where they do not think straight, they do not think right. You could even call it a retarded mind, if you want it to. It has been held up to a certain point and cannot go any further in understanding the truth or acknowledging the truth even. And as we go on further in the verse, he says that because they have a debased mind, they do those things which are not fitting.

And where have we come in our culture? Where has the morality of this society gotten to? We are beginning to see the real effects of that debased mind. The whole world has it and it is getting worse and worse out there.

Now it always seems so ironic to me at least that Easter supposedly commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ and yet they do not even have the right chronology. They are off by half a day. Satan has so deceived mankind, people—even some who call themselves Christians—that they cannot even understand or follow the very clear timeline of events.

All you need to do is get a *Harmony of the Gospels*, put the events there in front of you, and you can track them fairly well. There is not really a problem. You do not even have to go into the Greek because they all lay out very clearly. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and

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John were not trying to confuse us. They were not trying to fool us. They were writing in fairly plain Greek. And so what they set down for the historical record is very clear. But we have managed to confuse it terribly by certain assumptions so we could work it out.

All we have to know are a few basic things. We have to know about the holy days, we have to know about the Sabbaths, and we have to know about the preparation days. And if we can figure those things out and put them in their proper order, the chronology is easy.

Now, of course, I forgot to mention: You have to believe the Bible. If you believe the Bible, then it is clear.

I just wanted to take, just as we begin here, two scriptures that get totally messed up in this world's Christianity in terms of the resurrection and Easter. Let us go to Matthew 28. We are going to read verses 1 through 8 and we will see here Matthew's account of that Sunday morning.

Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath . . .

“After the Sabbath”—notice that. It is very clear. It is after the Sabbath when this occurs.

Matthew 28:1-8 . . . as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. [That is very clear. Let us go on. Just keep this in mind.] And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” So they [departed] quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

I am sure that this passage was read in thousands of churches yesterday and those ministers implied that Jesus had risen from the dead as that Sunday morning began to dawn, nearly 2000 years ago. That is how they read this passage: That Sunday morning—as the light began to come up over the horizon—was the same time that

Jesus rose from the dead.

But it does not say this. Verse 1, in particular, says something altogether different. Let us read that again.

Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

What does it say? It says that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb as it began to dawn on that Sunday morning. That is what it says. It does not say that Jesus rose from the dead at that time. It just says that the women came to the tomb at that time. That is all that Matthew is trying to say here. The time marker in verse 1—“after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn”—goes with the women’s action, not with Jesus’ action. Not when Jesus rose from the grave.

When they arrived there, they see this glorious angel sitting on the tombstone, which he had rolled back from the entrance. And when he speaks, he simply tells them that Jesus has already gone from the tomb.

The translators of the King James and the New King James do something sneaky here. They leave an old formulation of the language in the text.

Now somebody in 1611 would have known what this formulation meant, but we do not because over 400 years have gone by and we think of it in a different way and because of the conditioning that we have had in our religious upbringing over the years.

That phrase that says “He is risen” is what I am talking about. That is the old formulation that they leave in there. It is kind of sneaky because what it does, it covers the fact that the Greek simply says “He has risen.” It makes it sound more present than it was. “He is risen” sounds like it just happened and almost comes to the point where you think of it as “He is rising”; it is not quite there. You still understand that it happened sometime in the past, but it is just a short time in the past.

What modern translators have done that are honest about the Greek here, they have translated it “He has been raised” (this is the New Revised Standard Revision). That is what the Greek says: “He has been raised.” Or, as the Holman Christian Standard Bible says “He has been resurrected” which may be even better. It is a simple statement of past action completed—something that happened in the past and it is done. So “He has risen” is the best way to do it, or “He has been resurrected.”

Let us go to another one very similar. It is another verse that seems purposely left mistranslated to perpetuate the traditional Easter timeline.

Mark 16:9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

This one is just the way that it is put; it is the way the sentence is constructed—the syntax. Anyone familiar with the Greek (as translators are) should know, in comparing what the Greek says versus what the English says, that the English rendering confuses the Greek sense.

Notice this:

Mark 16:9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene . . .

That is really not what the Greek says. The construction in the Greek is a little unusual, but the meaning is plain. Let me give you the literal translation, word for word, from Greek to English. It would run like this: “Having risen, and early on the first of the week, He appeared.” and then the rest of the sentence. That is how it reads in Greek, translated over directly into English.

That Greek form that is translated as “Having risen” is a Greek word, ‘Anastas’—an active aorist participle. It suggests an action completed prior to the time of the main verb. It is a completed action just like in Matthew 28. It is something that happened in the past before the time of the verb. So the time of the verb here is “early on the first day of the week.” That is when Mary and the other Mary came to the tomb. This is just like Matthew 28:1 except it is a little bit more confused by the way the Greek is laid out.

What it is saying here is that Jesus was resurrected sometime before He appeared to Mary Magdalene, early on the first day of the week. So what does it say? It says when Mary appeared at the tomb with the other Mary, *He had already been resurrected*. That is all it is saying.

They came before the dawn, while it was still dark, and He was already up and out. That is all Mark is trying to say, that it happened sometime before they came—and they came before the dawn.

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The *New English Translation*, called the NET Bible (you can get it for free on the internet, if you like), is a very good translation. They really took their time on it. They footnote it extensively. They tell you why they translate things the way they do. This is the way they translated this first phrase (the time element) of this verse:

Mark 16:9 (NET) Early on the first day of the week, after he arose, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene . . .

Much simpler.

The *Holman Christian Standard Bible* again gets this right. It is interesting, that is a Baptist Bible, they get it right (they do not follow it, but they get it right).

Mark 17:9 (HCSB) Early on the first day of the week, after He had risen, He appeared first to Mary . . .

That is really a very good translation. That is plain. It takes away the ambiguity and the confusion of these particular typical scriptures in the Easter timeline, if you want to put it that way.

If they had just gone with this (with the way the Greek had been written) and not tried to sneakily make it sound like they were right rather than the Scripture was right about when Jesus rose from the dead, then we would not have all this confusion, maybe.

I do not want to go any further into the details of the resurrection.

Clearly, the gospels record that Jesus was placed in the tomb just before sunset, and Jesus said very clearly (it is the only proof of His Messiahship, given in Matthew 12:40) He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, just like Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. And so He specifically says “three days and three nights.” If He goes into the tomb just before sunset and He stays there dead three days and three nights, He is going to rise from the dead at sunset—not at dawn.

But I do not want to spend time on that anymore. I do not want to spend time on the physical details of the timeline and that sort of thing.

What I do want to spend time on is what His resurrection to life means to us. Whereas

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Paul writes in Romans 5:10: “We shall be saved by His life.” We are justified (our sins are forgiven by His death) that we shall be saved by His life.

Let us go to the Old Testament and touch base with this holy day, in Exodus 12. I always like to make a connection to the holy day, if I can, because that is why we are here.

Exodus 12:15-17 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.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is shown here very clearly as a week-long festival, but only the first day and the last day (the seventh day) are holy days. They are the only days that we meet together for worship. That is what a convocation is; it is a coming together to be taught.

Now, the festival, it says here—specifically in verse 17—commemorates the Israelites’ release from Egyptian bondage, and the first day, we know, specifically memorializes that particular day (Nisan or Abib 15) when God, through Moses, led them out of Goshen.

We know that the Passover occurred. They spent the next day getting ready to leave. Then, as the fifteenth day began (which begins at sunset), they left the city and they went out from there. That was their release. They walked out on that day, the first day of Unleavened Bread, at the time that we keep the Night to be Much Observed. That is when God did everything to allow them to go out in power. They had a high hand, it says. So they left Egypt on that first day.

What does the last day memorialize? If they left on that first day and we keep it as a holy day, then why do we keep the seventh day? What does that memorialize? Well, if we go back here (to Exodus 12:17, it tells us that we keep the whole thing because they came out of Egypt. It memorializes their coming out of Egypt. Both days do. Not just the

first day, but the seventh day as well.

Now it is not specifically written in God's Word, but what is said here in verse 17 seems to summarize the meaning of both days. It is not just on the first day that they came out of Egypt, but on the seventh day they also came out of Egypt.

So if you put it together, the first day commemorates or celebrates their initial steps out of Egypt when they left Goshen, and the seventh day celebrates when they left it completely. So on day one they leave their dwellings, and on day seven they cross the Egyptian border.

The Bible never says flat out what happened on the seventh day, but with a little figuring and a measure of common sense it seems clear that the Red Sea crossing occurred on day seven. That it would take that long for that many people to go from the land of Goshen to the Red Sea. It would take them a full six days to get there, and then on the seventh day they would cross over.

I have four little points here on this. These are the four proofs, you might say.

1. The first is that the Red Sea crossing is the next big event that happens. They leave Egypt on that first day and then the narrative shows that the very next big event is the Red Sea crossing, and it is a huge event. It is not just a big event. I mean, it is a *spectacular* event that the people of Israel were talking about and writing about for hundreds and hundreds of years, and we are still talking about it. So it is not just the initial walking out, but it is this great miracle that God did to give them their freedom.
2. The second thing is that the Red Sea was a natural border of Egypt. So while they were still within the confines of the land (they had not gotten to the Red Sea), they were still under Egyptian power, at least nominally. They were not out yet until they crossed over that border.
3. Pharaoh was decisively annihilated in his last-ditch effort to return the Israelites to their slavery. There was still a chance, at least Pharaoh thought in his own heart which God had hardened, that he could get them back. In his own mind, they were not free, they were still his; and until he was defeated and his army was slain in the Red Sea, they were still under his power to a certain extent, or potentially. They still had not gotten away from the army and from Pharaoh's power until they crossed the Red Sea.

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4. God was glorified in what happened at the Red Sea. That is always a big thing. It says in the text that God would show Himself strong against Pharaoh, and He was given all the glory because the Israelites did not do anything except plunge in and walk. That was hard enough; it took a certain amount of faith to do. But God was the One that did pretty much all the work. So it seems very probable that the Red Sea is what happened on the seventh day.

Let us go to that in chapter 14. I want to quickly hop and skip through this chapter so we know what happens. And I want you to think about the themes that come out, but one in particular which I will discuss once we read it all. Let us start in verse 1.

Exodus 14:1-4 Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, ‘They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.’ Then I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

So it all went according to God’s plan. The Egyptians followed after, thinking that they had a chance to get the Israelites back. The Israelites went into the trap. They got caught by the Red Sea, surrounded by the hills, and the advancing Egyptian army.

Exodus 14:10-14 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.” And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

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They get there. They complain because they think that they are all going to die, there is no way out. Moses has tricked them—he has brought them out in the wilderness so that they could die. There is no hope.

Moses says: “Whoa there! That’s not right. You’re forgetting about God. God will bring us through this. Just stand still and watch Him work.”

Exodus 14:21-31 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.” Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.” And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

Now one theme, in particular, to me—this is what I see popping out from this chapter—is the theme of salvation.

Pharaoh was trying to make sure it did not happen, and he thought he had figured it out (“Aha, they’re trapped. I’m going to slay enough of them to cower them and bring them back”).

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The people were like sheep when they see a wolf; they were frightened, and all they wanted to do was get out of there. So they took out their anger and aggression on Moses—he was the one that had brought them out here and ‘tricked’ them. They wanted to save their hides. They did not want to die there. They would rather go and serve the Egyptians.

And then there is Moses. Moses has total confidence that God will save them. God says to Moses (in a part that we did not read), He says: “What are you staying there for? Go and open up this water.” But even so, Moses was confident.

But I think as we go through the last half of the chapter, we see God doing His saving work, and He does it alone, in the main. Like I said, Moses had to do something, the Israelites had to do something (they had to walk, they had to move forward), but in the main, the work was God’s. He did the work. He looked down on the Egyptian army and He troubled them. He opened the way across. He (not just Moses, but Him) led them through the sea, and then He told Moses to make the waters go back. He was the One who was doing all this. And that is why verse 31 says that “the people feared the Lord”—they knew where it had come from. Their salvation was totally dependent on what God had done to them. And of course, they also believed Moses because he was right—he had told them the Lord would fight for them and He did.

So we see this theme of salvation, that God saves us from these disasters that occur and particularly against this king—this Pharaoh (this angry, war-like, and slaving king)—who wanted to thwart their dash for freedom.

God does the impossible to bring us out of the grip of the most powerful on this earth—this enemy, this adversary—that is against us. God makes a way of escape (here, the Israelites’ lives) for us to save us from bondage to this Adversary. He renders the threats and the might of that very terrible enemy completely impotent (he has no power when God is around and saving His people). This I think is a very good illustration of what God does to save us spiritually.

Though Satan and all his accomplices in the world would try to keep us from escaping, God directly intervenes in our lives. He opens up a way of escape. It is a pathway to life—a pathway to Him—and it glorifies Him and destroys the whole power of the Adversary.

Now we need to think about what Jesus did. Jesus Christ, in His death and resurrection, affected the same thing for us. We could say that is the Red Sea for us. What Jesus Christ did and what the Father did through Jesus Christ, opened up the way to life,

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opened up the way to God. Not only are our sins paid for by the death of our sinless Creator, and a way opened up to us through the veil into the Father's presence by His shed blood and enables us to have a relationship, but by His resurrection we have the hope of eternal life in His Kingdom. So it goes beyond what happened with the Israelites at the Red Sea. The greater miracle happened in Jerusalem.

Let us go to I Corinthians 15. We normally go here on the Day of Trumpets, but it fits here in terms of the resurrection. Jesus' resurrection occurred at this time of the year. We normally read this in the fall when many believe we will be resurrected. But we have here the basic understanding of what Christ's resurrection has done.

I Corinthians 15:1-5 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you [Just keep that in the back of your mind, "if you hold fast that word".]—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

So this section here, these five verses, many scholars think, is an early Christian creed (something that people memorized) because it puts all of the basic beliefs of the gospel into one very easily understood set of phrases.

So he says that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; that He was buried and that He rose again the third day; that He was seen by Cephas. So we have there the fact that He came as a human being, as the Messiah, according to the prophecies in the Scriptures; and that He was crucified; and that He was buried and He stayed in the tomb for those three days and three nights, as the Scripture had prophesied; and that He rose from the dead on the third day; and that He was seen—it was not just something that they heard about, but it was something that they saw (they did not see the actual resurrection, but they saw Him and they saw Him time and time again).

He goes through and he says that a lot of people saw Him. This is not just something that a few people made up said they had seen Him, but this was something that, as he says, at one time over 500 people at once saw him. So it was not something that could be refuted easily. As a matter of fact, it could not be refuted; you had all these witnesses who had seen Him.

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So these early Christians used this creed as a way to succinctly remind themselves—and maybe even to tell others—what they believed, and that it was then something that they could take with them and hang on to.

Now let us go down to Because what Paul does is, he goes through this creed, and the resurrection is what he ends with and that is what he continues on with—in terms of his discussion here.

I Corinthians 15:12-13 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

The idea of resurrection was something that was hotly debated at the time. If you remember, Paul went to Athens, and as soon as he started talking about the resurrection of the dead they said, “Ah! Come back next week” or something to that effect (“We’ll talk about this later”). And, of course, the Sadducees among the Jews did not believe in the resurrection; the Pharisees did, and Paul allied himself at times with the Pharisees on this question. So, both in Gentile philosophy as well as Jewish theology, it was a question. So, obviously, when he went to Corinth (most of the people were Greek or Gentile although there were probably Jews there as well—remember, Corinth was a *mélange* of people, a big mix, as it was such a port city), this question would have risen there too, either from the Jews or from the Greeks. So, evidently, there were some among them that said that there was no resurrection of the dead. So he has to go into this.

I Corinthians 15:13-17 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen [“You’re shooting yourself in the foot here, fellas”]. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is [vain] and your faith is also [vain] [“Why do you believe then, if there’s no resurrection from the dead?”] Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God [He was one of them that had seen Christ, he says, last of all] because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

You cannot have the death of Christ without the resurrection; if you do not have the resurrection, it is unfinished business, and so you are still in your sins. There is a reason for this. We will get to it hopefully.

I Corinthians 15:18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

They are dead, and they are going to stay dead if there is no resurrection from the dead. And so he concludes this section:

I Corinthians 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ [without a resurrection from the dead] we are of all men the most pitiable [or 'most miserable'].

There is no hope after life without the resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:20-22 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead [that 'Man' was Christ]. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

So we have that reassurance from Paul that it did actually occur. There is a resurrection.

People who say that there is no resurrection are fooling themselves and are giving themselves no hope. If there is no resurrection, then there is no faith in Christ; there is nothing, there is nothing to live for. It is a dead end.

So Christ died and He rose again; and then when we die, we can rise again. That is what Paul is saying. We have hope and our faith rests on that fact, that because Christ died and because Christ rose again, that we will follow in His footsteps—if we hold fast that word that we have heard.

Let us go to Hebrews 2. We are going to chase this out. I think you will find, as we go through this, we will be going back and forth over the same material time and again.

What I am kind of doing through this sermon is giving you an overview of something and then I will unpack it a little bit, and then we will go into another overview and will keep continuing to unpack it. So we are going over the same material over and over and over again.

And Paul went over the same material to the various churches that he spoke to because it was such a central concept, such a basic thing that he needed to make sure that they understood this, so that they would have both faith and hope.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Now, in coming to earth as a human being and living on the same terms as we do, yet without sin (which is the big key in all of this—that He would live without sin), He paid the penalty for our sins. And in doing so—in paying that penalty—He also destroyed Satan’s power to condemn people to death through sin.

Satan loves to use the law because the law’s power is to condemn, and if Satan can get us to sin, then death becomes the automatic wage, as Paul says in Romans 6:23 (“the wages of sin is death”). So if Satan can work it so that we contravene God’s law, the penalty comes down automatically—we get the death penalty. And so he has that power over man.

But when Christ came, He pulled the rug out from under Satan the Devil and that power of death. Now Satan does not have the leverage that he used to have because Christ pays the penalty. He makes it possible for the sin and the death penalty to be wiped away through His blood. There is payment for that.

So we can come before God and ask for those sins to be forgiven, and we are justified and made white as snow once again (it usually does not last very long), but we can continue to do this and God will continue to forgive us because the penalty has been paid; He gave His life, which was far above any one of our lives, which is great enough to cover any amount of sin for everybody on the face of the earth—whoever lived. Satan and that power of death has been defeated. So we have justification through Christ’s. We have the possibility of those sins removed through His death. We can be redeemed.

But that leaves a question: What good is redemption without eternal life? Think about it. What good would it be for you to be continually forgiven of your sins, over and over and over again, to simply die at the end of your life, and there is nothing more; or to die, white and clean, but that would be it? There would be no hope of more life, if that is all there was. If it was just the justification that we wanted, it is kind of worthless.

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That is what I said before: that the crucifixion and death of Christ go together with the resurrection because all the justification in the world will not get us an afterlife. If we are just going to be saved from our sins and there is nothing more, then (as Paul says in I Corinthians 15: “If we have hope in Christ just in this life”) we are pretty miserable people (“of all men most miserable”). There is no hope for a future. All there is is hope of forgiveness, and that is great, but it only goes so far. And so there is more.

Let us go I Peter 1. Are you not glad it came as a package deal? We did not get the one without the other. We got both. And that is what Peter says here. This is how he begins his epistle:

I Peter 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So it did not stop with Jesus Christ being left dead, but there was the resurrection which our great God and Father effected for us, so that we would have a living hope. See, with just justification and no resurrection to life, we would have a dead hope. It would be a hope that would end in death and annihilation and nothingness. But Christ, being raised from the dead by the Father, gives us a living hope, or what we could turn around and call ‘a hope of life’—life beyond this life (this life that is hardly worth living); everlasting eternal life in the Kingdom of God. That is the life that is being offered to us through the resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ’s resurrection.

Jesus Christ did not remain dead in the tomb but the Father returned to Christ the immortality, the power, and the glory that He had divested Himself of to become a human being. He gave Him back His Godhood, as it were, in full. In doing so, it burst whatever bonds that death still had; it just burst right through them. The bonds of death are completely broken in Christ.

So that is our Promised Land, thinking back to the Israelites going through the Red Sea. It is beyond the deliverance from death. That is what happened with the Israelites. They walked through the Red Sea and God saved them—He delivered them—from physical death. But they had no guarantee of life beyond that. They had to walk through to the Promised Land, but there were no guarantees after that. They could continue following God but they really had no guarantee of real life. And as a matter of fact, they died; they

all died in the wilderness.

So we have the ability to go on to the Promised Land and to live in the land forever—the Kingdom of God. Peter says here that our place is reserved there as long as we keep walking toward it in faith. It is a promise, a guarantee that is sure. All we have got to do is keep on the path. Stay the course.

But that is a big question mark, is it not? Can we do that? How do we keep on the path to the Kingdom? If we look at the record of the Israelites, as I just mentioned, it does not give us much hope that we can complete the course.

Let us go back to Hebrews and read a few verses where Paul tells us this. He gives us a short history of the wilderness trek. We have read it many times.

Hebrews 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

This idea keeps coming up that we can continue on as long as we are steadfast, as long as we endure—“if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

Hebrews 3:15 While it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

Do not do like those Israelites did because they hardened their hearts and they rebelled. What happened?

Hebrews 3:16-19 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

They passed through the Red Sea, they saw all the things that God did for them, but they did not stay on the path. They rebelled. They disobeyed. Their corpses fell in the wilderness. The penalty of their sins caught up to them and they died. There was no living hope for them. There was a hope of getting to the Promised Land, but they

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dashed it all through sin, through disobedience. So this is pretty scary for us.

If this is the example of millions of people following Moses, seeing God every day in the pillar of fire or in the cloud, knowing that God was right there—He was supplying all the manna; He was getting water out of the rock; He was fighting their enemies; He was keeping a cloud over their heads so they would not get burnt; He was keeping their shoes and their clothing from deteriorating, their feet did not even swell from all the walking that they were doing—just almost minute by minute, they had reminders that God was there and helping them and doing all these things, and they all died through sin and disobedience and rebellion.

It does not look good for people, does it? If God's own chosen people (the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) following one of the most righteous men ever—Moses—could not do it, what hope do we have of being able to stay on the trail? That is pretty grim.

Let us go to Romans 6. There is a difference. Verse 1. Paul says:

Romans 6:1-3 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Just remember, as we are going through this, that I Corinthians 10:2 says that the Israelites were baptized in the sea. So their crossing the Red Sea is analogous to our baptism. They came out the other side and failed. Notice what it says for us though.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

They came out of the water, as it were, and they did not walk in newness of life. They were the same people coming out, as went in. We are different though. When we go down into the waters of baptism, we die to our sins, and when we come up out, it is a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and we are raised to an entirely new life.

Romans 6:5-6 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing

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this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Is that not what happened with the Israelites? When they crossed through the Red Sea, they left the border of Egypt. Guess what? They were really no longer slaves. Their freedom had been effected. They were now totally free from Egypt. Just when we are pulled out of the waters of baptism, we are totally free from sin. We were slaves. Now we are free, in Christ.

Romans 6:7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

That is why baptism is a death. A person has to die to be no longer under sin. When a person dies, he pays the penalty, and so we die in Christ (Christ's blood covers us, His death covers us), and so we are able to be then raised out of there as a type of the resurrection. We do not have to physically die. We spiritually die. Christ was the One that did the physical dying for us in order to give us the opportunity to be raised, like He was raised, in new life—a life without sin.

Romans 6:8-9 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.

He is eternal, everlasting, immortal. What does that mean for us? It means, for Him, death no longer has dominion over Him. And if we are in Him, what does that mean for us?

Romans 6:10-12 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore

...

Because of this, because Christ's death covers you—we died in Him and we are raised to life in Him, and now death has no dominion over us just as it has no dominion over Him—we now have life in Him, just as He has life in God. And so what does that mean? It means, verse 12:

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Romans 6:12-14 . . . do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

So what he says then, that since our life is bound in Christ through God's grace (all these things have been done for us and given to us freely), so we are now wrapped up in Christ (that is what it says in Colossians 3—that our life is hid with Christ, in God). So we are now in Him, He in us; we are like the same. He wraps us totally around; we are in Him, just like we are the same person. And as a matter of fact, He calls us parts of His body (He is the Head, we are the body—we are all in one). Because of all of that has been done for us, it is our reasonable service, as he says (Romans 12:1), our proper response is to cease from sin and live in righteousness.

You see, this was something that was never offered to the Israelites. They came through the sea, but there was not any of this other stuff that comes through the life of Christ. They were never raised in newness of life. And so they died. So a major difference between Israel and us is that we change our way of life after coming up out of the water. We do not remain in sin. Now what makes that possible?

Let us go to Hebrews 8. The difference is Christ, if you want to put it in a nutshell.

Hebrews 8:6 But now He [meaning, Christ] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Let us remember that when Israel came through the Red Sea, they headed for Sinai and the Old Covenant. There was a problem with the Old Covenant and we will see here what it is.

Romans 8:7-8a For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second [the New Covenant]. Because finding fault with them . . .

It was with the people, the fault was with them. They could not keep it. They were still in

their sins.

Romans 8:8a-12 . . . He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel [the Israel of God] after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

In the New Covenant there was not only the Spirit but there was forgiveness of sin, which was not under the Old Covenant. The New Covenant has advantages that were not in the Old. That is why it is such a better covenant. Of course, it had a better mediator—Jesus Christ—who made all of this possible.

So the New Covenant makes possible the writing of those same laws in the mind and on the heart so that there is a possibility of change—that we can change our character, that we can go from sinners to saints, that we can go from living in unrighteousness to being holy and righteous like our elder brother Jesus Christ. Now the big difference though is in the giving of the Spirit of God, which is Christ in us, the hope of glory. That is what it says in Colossians 1:27: Christ in us is the hope of glory.

Let us go back to Romans 8

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

That is what makes the difference. It is the Spirit of Christ in us.

Romans 8:8-14 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in

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you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [which] dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

By Jesus Christ being raised from the dead and ascending to the Father, we now have access to the Spirit. Remember, Jesus, in His final words to His disciples, said “it is a good thing that I go away” because then He is able to work more powerfully in more people. He does not have to be there in the midst of them as a physical person, guiding and directing them. He can be Spirit, God, directing everyone to whom He has given His Spirit. And it is much more powerful.

Hebrews 9:11-12 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 10:5-13 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.” [He is talking about those offerings of bulls and goats.] “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’” [That is, to be the sacrifice for sin.] Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He

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may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

I went through all that so we can see it again, see how it works just in a little bit different way, but we go one step further.

Christ offered Himself, shedding His priceless blood, to redeem us from our sins and to enable us to accept the terms of the covenant and to receive God's Spirit. But unlike any other total sacrifice, Jesus Christ lived again. He rose from the dead by the power of the Father. And not only that—He did not just rise from the dead and live among us; He ascended to heaven where He now sits at the right hand of God. So not only does He live, He has all power. What did He tell His disciples? "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." So we have a very strong and powerful advocate before the Father.

Hebrews 4:14-16 "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

He has been over the road. He has seen the way things are in this world. He lived it. He lived as we live, and now He is in a position to help us. He has all power to help us. He is there, willing and able to give us what we need, at the right hand of God.

So He is constantly at work as our High Priest, with all power, using His human experiences to mediate for us before the Father, as we stumble and fall and try to get back up and on to our feet and finish our pilgrimage. It is His job, as our High Priest, to make sure that we make it to the Kingdom. That is all He does. He is not sitting up there, reclining on a divan, shaded by a palm branch, and eating grapes fed to Him by an angel. He is not wasting away the time. He is up there working in our behalf. And He says, in Hebrews 13:5: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So Paul tells us,

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Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I was going to go through Romans 8:34-39, but essentially what it says there is “Who can separate us from the love of Christ?” We have Him rooting for us, helping us, giving us everything that we need so that we can become more than conquerors. That means ‘overcomers.’ We are more than just overcomers; there is more to it than just overcoming our sins. That is absolutely necessary.

But there is more to it. Beyond that is life eternal in the Kingdom of God. That is what He is working on. He is bringing many sons and daughters of the Father into glory. That is what He wants more than anything. He wants us to become just like Him so that we can sit down with Him at the right hand of the Father and be His bride for forever. And it is Christ in us that makes this possible, and it is His life—because He was resurrected and ascended to heaven—that this can be. So let us conclude in John 6.

John 6:35-40 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

John 6:54-58 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.

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So this is the most crucial lesson of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Are we continuing to eat the Bread of Life—our Savior Jesus Christ? Are we learning of Him and using His Spirit to grow in His image? By His life being lived in us and our enduring submission to God's will, we will be saved. We will be raised on the Last Day. We will live forever.

So, as we leave this feast behind us, let us continue to feed on our Bread of Life.