

He Lives, We Live

We Are Saved By His Life

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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Last Sunday, most of this world's Christians, nominal Christians, celebrated Easter with the sunrise service or a morning service of some kind. They were out there in their new clothes and their pastels and all their finery. Easter, though, is one of probably about two days that most professing Christians show up at church, just in case.

Years ago, I heard one lady (this is kind of just in the general subject of Easter) said that she was responsible on Easter morning for preparing pancakes and eggs—and probably hot cross buns, who knows—for about 70 or 75 people after the sunrise service on Sunday. And I think a fair number of churches do that sort of thing. They are full service churches, if you will, when it comes to Easter and they are there most of the day. They probably also had an Easter egg hunt and other activities out on the lawn for the kids, weather permitting. Well, if it were today, they would be out of luck, at least around here.

It really is amazing to read the biblical accounts of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection side by side with what the Christian churches of this world teach about it. It is not even close. They go, however, to great lengths to pooh-pooh all those things like pagan origins and connotations of Easter bunnies and dyed eggs and the aforementioned hot cross buns and sunrise services. I mean, even the name Easter is biblically, totally out of bounds. We know that the word Easter comes from the Germanic goddess of the same name, Eoster. And we know that that goddess is an ancient fertility goddess, the equivalent of Ishtar and Isis and Ashtoreth and Astarte. Yet they continue to call it Easter Sunday.

It just boggles my mind. It seems to make no difference to them that these names and symbols and traditions have been used for thousands of years in the vernal equinox fertility rites of pagan religions. I mean, it just does not make sense. There is a huge disconnect there. Why can they not see that?

They have got all these pagan things yet they are trying to worship Christ by them. It just does not make sense. Well, they say, "They're just traditions, they're harmless." Oh, what I like most is, "It's for the kids." You can get away with murder. "It's just for the kids." I mean, who cares what God says. If it is for the kids, do it. I mean, I have heard many people say they would not give up Christmas because they would not want to miss what it does for the kids, for the family.

They tell us that the origins of these Easter traditions do not matter because they have Christian meanings now, though I fail to understand what those Christian meanings are. It is difficult to fathom. How do you get an Easter egg into Christianity? Like I said, it is a disconnect. Do pastries with crosses on them really honor Christ? Do eggs and bunnies really represent the new life Christians have through the resurrection? Do the sunrise services really commemorate the time of Christ's resurrection? Does the name Easter really identify the truths of the resurrection of the true Son of God? Of course, our answer to all of these questions is a resounding, "No way!" They do not have anything to do with those things.

And when you listen to their explanations, you try to make sense of them, but in the end, they just come across as lame excuses, justifications for their not wanting to rock the boat or they do not want to admit that they are wrong. The truth is out there. The truth is plain. The truth is in black and white in the pages of the Bible, but they simply will not do it. They will not change. It really brings to life Paul's assertion in Romans 1 that people do not like to retain God in their knowledge. They will do whatever they can to hold Him at arm's length, to keep Him out of their lives because He restricts them. He restricts their human nature and they will do what they want to do.

And because of this, God said He gives them over to a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting; and what do we have in our society? A lot of debased ideas, a lot of debased actions and behaviors. This is the kind of attitude—keeping God at arm's length, not doing what God says in the Bible—that has produced things like LGBTQ, abortion, and now infanticide. I mean, we used to talk about things like 20 weeks or 16 weeks, and now we are talking full term!

Anyway, it has always seemed so ironic to me that Easter supposedly commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and even that is wrong chronologically. They cannot even get the day right or the time right. Everything is wrong. Satan has so deceived the people of this world that they cannot even understand the very clear timeline that we see in the gospels. All we need to do is compare the accounts with an open mind and those things work themselves out. We can see, we can plot it out. Of course, we need to know a few things that this world lacks, like knowledge of the holy days and the Sabbath and the preparation days. And of course, the big thing is we have to believe what the Bible says so plainly and clearly, which is something they will not do.

Let us go to Matthew the 28th chapter, please. I want to read the first eight verses here.

Matthew 28:1-8 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. 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. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 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 has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has 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.

Now, I am sure that this passage was read in thousands of churches last Sunday, maybe tens of thousands of churches, implying that Jesus had risen from the dead as that Sunday morning began to dawn because of course, they believe in a dawn resurrection. They think that nearly 2,000 years ago Christ rose from the dead as it was going from dark to light. And I see all kinds of significance in that.

But the scripture does not say this, not in the least. The time marker appears in verse 1 and it tells, not when Jesus was raised from the dead, but when the women came to the tomb. Notice: "After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Jesus was resurrected." No, it does not say that. It says Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. The time marker is about the women, not about Jesus. It is about their actions, not His, not the Father's. So when the women came to the tomb has nothing to do with the time that Jesus was resurrected. It has absolutely nothing to do with it.

When they arrived there, they see this glorious angel sitting on the the tombstone that had been rolled away from the entrance of the tomb. And when he speaks, in that famous "He has risen" speech, he simply tells them that Jesus was already gone. He was not in the tomb anymore, He was not dead anymore. He was somewhere else.

Now, the translators somewhat sneakily keep the old fashioned formulation here. Notice: "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said." That is an old way of talking. If they really wanted to update the King James into the New King James, they should have put it into modern English and told us what it actually says, what the Greek simply puts down as a simple past tense. The Greek says "He *has* risen," not He *is* risen. When you put "is" in there it makes it sound like it is recent, present tense almost. But the Greek is simply that of a past action completed. He *has* risen. It can be translated, as it is in the *New Revised Standard* version as, "He has been raised," saying it happened, it is past. Or as it is in the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, "He has been resurrected." Very straightforward. That is what happened, but it happened in the past. This is a simple statement of past action completed.

Let us go to Mark this time, the last chapter in Mark. This is another one of those.

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.

Sneaky, sneaky translators. Bad, bad, bad. Here is another verse that seems *purposely* left mistranslated to perpetuate the traditional Easter timeline. It is wrong if they are trying to translate the Greek, the way they put it. Anyone

familiar with Greek, as translators are supposed to do, should know that this English rendering confuses what the Greek says. The construction of the sentence is unusual. Everyone will admit that. But the meaning is very plain, and probably the best way to understand this is to understand what it literally says.

If you put the words in order as it is in the Greek, it runs like this: "Having risen, and early on the first day of the week, He appeared." Look how they messed that up. "Now when He rose early on the first day of the week. . ." That is wrong. That is absolutely wrong. "Having risen, and early on the first day of the week," it is another time where it is something has happened in the past and now we bring it up to the present, Whereas early on the first day of the week, He appeared. So another one that is just absolutely wrong.

The Greek form, translated as "having risen," is the Greek word *anastas*. It is an aorist participle active, suggesting an action completed prior to the time of the main verb. What is the main verb in this sentence? Not risen. It is "appeared." So what Mark is saying is that Jesus was resurrected sometime before He appeared to Mary Magdalene early on the first day of the week. The time is ambiguous but it is before "early on the first day of the week." That is all Mark is trying to say. Jesus has already been raised from the dead and then on the first day of the week, He appeared to Mary Magdalene.

The *New English Translation* (which is better known as the NET Bible), says, "Early on the first day of the week, after he arose, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." The Holman Christian Standard Bible says, "Early on the first day of the week, after He had risen, He appeared first to Mary." So they got it right in those translations. What Mark is saying here is that he is speaking about two different times. One happened in the past and now one is happening on the first day of the week. But we are not given any specific time when that first action took place.

Anyway, I do not wish to go any further into the details of the resurrection. Clearly, the gospels record that He was placed in the tomb just before sunset. And after three days and nights, the Father raised Him from the dead. Now He was put into the tomb on sunset and He was supposed to stay there for three full days and three full nights—72 hours. He could not have been raised any time in the morning, anytime near dawn. As a matter of fact, if

you are put into a grave on sunset and you stay there three days and three nights fully, you come up at sunset. That is just how things work—three days and three nights. Thus, He arose at sunset the evening prior to Mary and the others coming to the tomb. But like I said, I do not want to spend any more time on that.

What I would like to do with the rest of my time is to speak about what His resurrection to life means to us, which is the far more important part of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I mean, "when" is important, but "why" is really important! Because, as Paul says in a verse I mentioned this morning (Romans 5:10), "we shall be saved by His life." The fact that He rose from the dead and is alive is far more important than the mere timing.

Let us go back to Exodus the 12th chapter; and we are going to make our way to this understanding about why He was raised from the dead and we are going to do it through the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

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 maybe 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 a week-long festival, as we know, But only the first and the last day, the seventh day, are holy to God in terms of having a holy convocation. That is the time, on the first day and the last day, that we gather for worship. The festival as a whole, as a whole week, commemorates God releasing the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Now, notice how I put that. I put that in a very positive active sense that it was God who released the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. I want you to just keep that in mind of God's agency in doing that. That is what it is all about.

The first day memorializes the day, Nisan or Abib 15, when God through Moses led them out of Goshen; when they left their houses in Goshen and got out on the road to leave Egypt. That happened on the first day of Unleavened Bread. So that brings up the question: What does the last day of Unleavened Bread commemorate? The answer is not specifically mentioned in God's Word. It is not said, the seventh day means this, but we can figure it out. We can say that the first day celebrates the initial steps of the Israelites to leave Egypt through God's power. And the seventh day celebrates when, through God's power once again, they left it completely. You get something that starts at one point, the first day of Unleavened Bread, and they finish the process on the last day of Unleavened Bread. And then there is this time in between. So there is a starting point and an ending point of God ushering them out of Egypt.

So Day One, they leave their dwellings, they leave behind the life that they had known. And Day Seven, they crossed the border and they are out there, out of Egypt.

Now, the Bible, as I said, never flat-out says 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. So the first day they leave their houses and they leave Goshen, and then on Day Seven, after they wandered through down to the Red Sea, the next big event that happens after they are leaving is the Red Sea crossing.

The Red Sea was a natural border on the east side of the nation of Egypt. It was the only barrier between them and complete freedom and they had to get through the Red Sea or over the Red Sea or somehow beyond the Red Sea if they were going to be technically outside of Egypt. They had not really left Egypt until that point. That was the boundary and they needed to go beyond there. Pharaoh's army was decisively annihilated in the Pharaoh's last ditch effort to return the Israelites to their slavery. And God was glorified. It seems very probable that this is what we are looking at.

Let us go to chapter 14, just a few pages over, and we will hop, skip, and jump through here. We will start with the first four verses and then down to verse 10 through 14, and then 21 through 30. This way we will get the whole chapter, the highlights of the whole chapter.

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, we see God here guiding them to this place where He will be given honor and glory.

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."

Exodus 14:21-30 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 upon 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.

One theme, if you notice, that pops out upon the reading of this chapter is the term salvation or saved. Pharaoh is the angry, warlike, enslaving king who wants to thwart Israel's dash for freedom. The Israelites, as we saw there in verses 10 through 14, they respond like frightened sheep. They want to go back to Egypt. They do not want to die on the swords of the Egyptians out there by the Red Sea. They are willing to give it all up in their fear. They go so far as to accuse the shepherd that brought them out of bringing them out just to be slaughtered.

Does any shepherd actually do that? I guess if he has to get his meat, but that is not the way of a shepherd trying to flee from a wolf. He is not bringing them to a place where the wolf is so that they can be slaughtered. That is just not the way it goes, but that is what they accused him of doing. Moses tries to reassure them that God will save them, that He is going to deliver them out of this certain-death situation. If you remember my sermon about Box Canyon many years ago, that God led them (as we saw in the first four

verses), to a point where they would have to trust Him. Because there were hills on two sides, there was the Red Sea on one side and the Pharaoh on the other; there was no way out. They could not get away. The only way that they could go was through the Sea.

So God set all of that up to bring Him glory so that they would have this tremendous example of God's ability and work on their behalf. And it is amazing how many times the Red Sea crossing is mentioned in the Old Testament. In lots of psalms, it is mentioned there about what God did for them at the Red Sea. It was something that stuck in their memory. That is a wonderful thing because God did the impossible. They thought they were all dead men, but He intervened directly for them and He made a way of escape for the Israelites.

I am pretty sure that that is probably where that phrase came from that Paul used in I Corinthians 10, where we have trials and God makes a way of escape. And here is the perfect example of it where, even though no way of escape seemed plausible, God found one. God made one and they were able to save their lives and the enemy who seemed so powerful was made completely impotent. All those Egyptians died there at the Red Sea.

Of course, it makes a wonderful illustration of what God does for us spiritually. It also shows us what Satan is willing to do to chase us as far and as long as he can, as we saw this morning in the sermon, when we went to Revelation 12. He is going to continue that right up to the very end. He is going to chase God's people and try to keep them from their salvation. But, like as happened here at the Red Sea, God directly intervenes for us and He opens up ways of escape for us. He opens up pathways to life and to Him because that is where He is trying to guide us throughout this whole process. He is trying to guide us to Him. And when that happens, that glorifies Him and destroys the power of the Adversary. We can always run to refuge in God.

Now, we have been talking about the resurrection, but the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ made this possible, for us spiritually. Not only our sins paid for through 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 enabling us to have a relationship with Him, but by His resurrection, we

also have the hope of eternal life in His Kingdom. And not only that, because He is alive now, we can use His power to overcome and to be guided by Him to the Kingdom of God.

Let us go to I Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter. We would normally come here on the Day of Trumpets, but it is also a good passage for this time of the year as well.

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—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; that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, and then by the twelve.

I Corinthians 15:12-22 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection from the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain [empty] and your faith is also vain [empty]. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, 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! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 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. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ [as Mr. Armstrong used to say "the same all"] all shall be made alive.

Now this first passage, the first five verses that we read there (or at least part of that), is thought to be an early credal statement: that Christ died for our

sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas and then by the twelve, etc. It was something that perhaps they learned by rote to understand the most basic aspects of Christianity.

It says here that the prophesied Messiah came as a man, He died to pay the penalty for us our sins, and He rose from the dead after three days in the tomb. And at that point, Paul focuses on the resurrection for the remainder of the chapter, highlighting how important the resurrection is. It is central to everything we believe and hope for. As Paul says, if Christ did not rise from the dead, then we have no expectation of an afterlife ourselves. There is no hope! But He did and we can have hope.

Let us go to Hebrews the second chapter, verses 14 and 15. I mentioned this this morning as well. The author writes,

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.

In coming to earth as a human being and living on the same terms as we do, as other human beings do, yet without sinning, Jesus Christ's death paid for our sins. Yes, but He also destroyed Satan's power to condemn people to death through sin. And we all know Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." So if Satan can use his wiles, his powers, to get us to sin, then we die. That is his general modus operandi. He wants us to sin and he wants us to keep on sinning so that we will die; and without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that would be it. That is what would happen. We would all fail at one point or another, as we have, and we would die and that would be it. It would be like all the atheists and evolutionists say, that this is the only life we have and we better make the most of it because there is no afterlife. That is what it would be without Jesus Christ and what He did on our behalf.

Yet by His blood, He paid the penalty for sin. So there can be forgiveness. That first step. We can be forgiven. We can be given grace. We can have a relationship with God the Father. We can be redeemed. There is redemption

possible through the blood of Jesus Christ. But that leaves the question: what good is redemption without eternal life? This is what Paul was getting at. What good is having our sins forgiven by God if we do not live forever? Because we would be, like he said, we would have hope in Christ just in this life. That makes us the most pitiable of men. Our hope is just for this little time between our conversion and our death. Is that not sad?

But that is not what happened. I mean, think about it. What good is dying justified and then ceasing to exist? It does not mean anything. Oh yeah, we are forgiven of our sins, but that is it. There is nothing beyond that. That would be futile. There would be no lasting good in God offering us redemption. It would be just for a short time and that is it.

Let us go to I Peter 1, verses 3 through 5. We can be joyful that God did not leave Jesus dead in the tomb.

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, Jesus was there in the tomb for three days and three nights and God resurrected Him through the power that He has, to go through death and give life again. And He returned to Him, to Jesus Christ, the immortality, the power, and the glory, whatever it was that He had divested himself of to become a mortal human being. And in doing so, God burst the bonds, whatever bonds of death that remained. And by Jesus Christ, the trail had been forged so that other sons and daughters of God could follow and also have eternal life.

As Peter puts it here, now we have a living hope, or we could turn that around and say that it is a hope of life. Jesus Christ, of course, is that living hope. But we can look at it in terms of that. We now have hope of life, eternal life, life beyond this life, everlasting life in the Kingdom of God. That is our Promised Land beyond the deliverance from death. See, the

parallel with what happened at the Red Sea. They were given a deliverance from death and their hope was in the Promised Land. And as Peter goes on to say here, our place in the Kingdom of God, our inheritance is reserved as long as we keep walking toward it in faith; that it is there for us for the taking, if you will. We just have to, as I mentioned this morning, keep on struggling, keep on striving, keep on enduring to change into the the image of Jesus Christ—to be transformed. And we do this through faith, through faith in Christ.

But that is the big question, is it not? How do we keep on the path to the Kingdom? How can we make that happen? If we look at the record of the Israelites, we are likely to get depressed. It might seem impossible. It does not give us much hope that we can complete the course into the Promised Land.

Let us read Hebrews 3, verses 14 through 19. And we see what was written here about them. He said,

Hebrews 3:14-19 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while is is said, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 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 [the Promised Land, that is] because of unbelief.

That is pretty scary. To think that they were given such a great salvation at the Red Sea and all they had to do was maintain their course with God, and they could not do it even though God was with them, visible to them in the pillar of fire and in the pillar of cloud. For 40 years, He was there amongst them and they still all sinned and died. It is a horrible negative example to us. God wants us to understand it. He wants us to see their mistakes and learn from their failures so that we will not do that. That is what I Corinthians 10 is all about. Do not do like the Israelites did. That is bad.

Let us go back to Romans 6 and we will read the first 14 verses here. Now, before we do, just remember, I just mentioned I Corinthians 10. First Corinthians 10:2 tells us that the Red Sea crossing was a baptism for the Israelites. They were all baptized into the Sea. Then he goes on to talk about all their sins and rebellions that they did in the wilderness, in which many, many, many of them died without reaching reaching Canaan.

Romans 6:1-14 What shall we say then? [See, this is the point where we are. If we have been to this point where we believe in Christ.] Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? [What is our course of life after being given grace? He says] Certainly not! [we should not sin so that grace may abound] 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?

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. 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 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. For he who has died has been freed from sin. [death pays the penalty of sin] 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 immortal. He lives everlastingly.]

Death no longer has dominion over Him. [it has no place with Him] 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. [it is perfect parallel between Him and us] Therefore 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.

Let us go back to the Israelites at the Red Sea and their baptism. They came through the sea alive, but they had no guarantee of life. In fact, through their many rebellions, especially that one at the border of Canaan, where the spies went in to check out the land and they refused to go in, they gave up their chance at the Promised Land, and God promised that every single one of them over 20 years old would die in the wilderness. There was no promise of life after that. They would not make it into the Promised Land.

But it is different with us. It is not the same. We not only die to sin with Christ, but we are also raised to new life and promised eternal life through the resurrection from the dead. How many times in there did he say we died to sin but we are alive to God? Just as Jesus Christ, once for all, died to sin and then now He lives to God. Our life, then, the way Paul puts it here in Romans 6, is bound in Christ through God's grace. We are like we are the same person. And we are, if we think of it in terms of Christ's body. He is the head. We are part of the body. We are bound together. We are all one. We have gone through the same death to sin and life to God through the resurrection which we commemorate through our baptism. We go under the water as like a watery grave and we come up raised to newness of life.

And so we go through that symbolism to show this very thing: that we are now bound to Christ and His act by doing the same sort of thing that He did in symbol. So our life is now bound to His and our reasonable service, as Paul says in chapter 12, verse 1, our proper response to what He has done for us is to cease from sin and to live in righteousness; to live toward God in everything that we do. A very major difference between the experience of the Israelites and our lives is that we change our way of life. They did not. They remained slaves in their heads for the rest of their lives. We, though, have been freed and we can live a new life. Unlike them, we do not remain in sin, but we mortify our flesh, as he talks about here. We repent and overcome our sins, and we act out the truth in our lives in our daily walk.

So the question has to be: what makes this possible? What allows us to do that? What makes us go beyond what the Israelites did? Let us go to

Hebrews 8, verses 6 through 12. What gives us the power? What gives us the fuel to do something that the Israelites could not do?

Hebrews 8:6-12 But now He [Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them [meaning the Israelites], 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 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."

So Christ came as a mediator of a new, better, superior covenant than the one that was made at Sinai. There, the law was written on stone tablets. But with us, this New Covenant makes possible the writing of those same laws on the heart, inside us. They are not something that is just written so everyone can see. It is something that everybody knows from the inside out—and they follow them. What he is talking about here is writing the way of God, the righteousness of God, the holiness of God, as part of our character. That they are not an external law, they are an internal law. And the big difference that makes this possible so that we do not fall into the same problems that they did, is that He has given us the Spirit of God. And what is the Spirit of God but God in us.

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.

Romans 8:9-14 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in 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 who 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 the sons of God.

He explains it pretty completely there. It is the Spirit of God in you that makes the difference. If He did not give us His Spirit at the time of redemption, we would be just like the Israelites. We will go our own way, we will live according to the flesh. But because He gives us His Spirit, we now have what it takes to change, to live in the Spirit, to follow God, to do what He says. Because it is that Spirit of God, which is the power of our God, that enables us to do this.

Let us go back to Hebrews, not far from what we were, but this time we will be in chapter 9.

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 an 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. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.'" 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 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.

This is pretty self-evident, if you ask me. But I will just repeat, basically, what he said.

To pay the penalty for sin and to ratify the covenant, Christ offered Himself, shedding His priceless blood to redeem us from our sins, and enable us therefore to accept the terms of the covenant and receive God's Spirit. But unlike any other total sacrifice, any other kind of burnt offering or sin offering, Jesus Christ not only lived again through the resurrection from the dead, but He also ascended to heaven where He sits now at the right hand of God. He went far, far beyond any kind of sacrifices mortal man could make.

So what he is saying here is not only did He live and does He live, but He now has all power. His sacrifice was so great, and when God resurrected Him and gave Him His power back and He returned to the throne of God, He is then able to use that power for us in our behalf, to guide us along the way. In a way that He could not do with the Israelites who were crossing the desert toward the Promised Land, now he can work *in us* by His Spirit. What did He say when He left the disciples there in Matthew 28? "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me," and you know what? He uses all that authority for us, in our behalf, to make sure that we make it into His Kingdom.

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. [Hold fast. How many times have we heard that in the letters to the seven churches?] 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.

Jesus Christ, resurrected and glorious, is not reclining on a divan shaded by a palm branch and munching on grapes. He is not whiling away His time. No. He is constantly at work as our High Priest. What did He say during His physical life? "My Father works and I work," and He is working to bring us into the Kingdom. (That is John 5:17.) And He is using the experiences that He had as a human being to mediate before the Father in our behalf. We stumble, we fall, we try to get back up on our feet. We try to do all these things and we find that we are not up to it. We try to finish our pilgrimage to the Promised Land and if we try to do it alone, we will never make it.

But if we come before Him and ask Him for the help that He is very willing to give us as our High Priest, He is going to make sure that we make it. That is His job. His job right now is to bring us into the Kingdom of His Father and live with Them forever. He is putting every effort forward to bring us through every trial, every hardship, every stumble. We just often do not see Him there, but He is there, in us, trying to help us. And oftentimes we refuse His help, try to do it our own way. But remember, He is the one that makes a way of escape, not you. He is the one.

Let us go forward to Hebrews 12. Remember, He says in Hebrews 13:5 that He will never leave us or forsake us. So if you get into a trial of some kind and it seems like it is over your head and you say, "Where is God?" well, that is, in a way, a lack sight. You need eye salve, because He is there. He is *always* there for His children.

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 has been 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.

That is where we need to be looking, looking at Christ, because He has been through it all. And now that He lives and is glorious and powerful, He can help us through whatever trial. Paul or whoever the writer is of Hebrews, says that sin so easily ensnares us. We are so often caught up in it because we are so weak. But if we look to Jesus, who not only started this with us, but He will finish it with us, then we can be sure to have the right answers and do the right things. But so often we do not look to Jesus. We look to ourselves and fail.

Back to Romans 8 where we were before.

Romans 8:34-39 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. [Would He be the one to condemn us?] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now this encapsulates the point of my whole sermon. Jesus Christ gave His all for us in death. And now He gives His all for us in everlasting life. It is the same character, the same Person. And if He was willing to go to the cross for us to redeem us from our sins and bring us to God, justify us before Him, He is now willing, in newness of life, in His resurrected life, in His glory, to bring us completely before the Father. It is in the life He lives now that we have real life, now and in the ages to come.

And it is not just the fact that He sits with God on His throne. It is far more personal than that. If Christ were just sitting on His throne and working everything from a distance, that would be a shame because we would never get to know Him. But instead, at the same time, He lives in us through His Spirit. He is both there and here at the same time, and He lives in us all the time through every up and down that we go through. Nothing, Paul says, can separate us from that loving Presence. And with that enduring love and power, how can we not be more than conquerors?

And this is another connection with my sermon this morning. We are more than overcomers. We are more than prevailing with Christ. We do not just overcome the world and our sins and Satan, but we are in the process of becoming just like Him. Remember, I said that was part of the definition of overcoming that comes out of the Old Testament. That we are striving and struggling and enduring to be pure of soul. And the pure soul is that of Jesus Christ. So we are in the process of becoming just like Him, children and heirs of God. And this is what Christ makes possible through His life, His life in us.

Let us conclude in the book of John, chapter 6.

John 6:35-40 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."

John 6:40 "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."

This may be the most crucial lesson of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Ask yourself, are you continuing to eat of the bread of life, Jesus Christ? Are you learning of Him and using His Spirit to grow in His image? Are you concentrating on doing that, as this feast tries to get us to do every year; tries to wrench our minds out of this world and get them focused on what is truly important.

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 and we will live forever. So as we leave this feast behind us, let us continue to feed on our Bread of life.