

The God Of Second Chances

Passover – Resurrection appearances of Jesus

The empty cross and the empty grave verify that Jesus was and is more than just a man. The resurrection can be viewed as God's receipt telling mankind that the debt has been paid.

We, who were once debtors, have more than just a slip of paper saying 'paid in full:' though that should be enough accompanied by God's signature. We have the privilege to celebrate with eye-witness reports. We rejoice as Mary Magdalene's tears turn to joy and how his hand-picked disciples went from fear to courage.

One eye-witness, Peter, one of the fishermen who Jesus said would become a fisher of men, has quite a story to tell. I want to pick up Peter's story just before Jesus' final Passover celebration before his death.

Jewish Friday began at sundown on Gentile Thursday. Approximately 6pm Thursday began their Friday and Matthew, Mark, and Luke record an event that took place just before sundown that's similar to an event that took place about a week prior.

Using Luke's account:

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

⁹ "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

¹⁰ He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹² He will show you a large

room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."

¹³ They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. (Luke 22:7-12)

The New Commentary on the Whole Bible gives the following information for the preparation of the Passover:

"The preparation for the Passover might be divided into two segments: (1) Earlier preparation: During this time, the roads were prepared for the great throngs that would be assembling in Jerusalem for the observance of the Passover. The bridges were made safe, tombs by the wayside were whitewashed (that no pilgrim would be contaminated by touching a tomb), and everything was generally prepared for the great migration to Jerusalem. The principles and the occasion of the feast were taught in the synagogues for at least two months prior to the date of the feast.

(2) Later preparation: This began on the night before, that is, the 13th of Nisan. Houses were searched very carefully for leaven, and if any was found, it was burned the following day. The Paschal lambs were slain between 2:30 and 6:00 p.m. on the 14th of Nisan. The lamb had to be a perfect lamb, and it was slain by its owner. The blood of the lamb was caught in a utensil and passed along a long line of priests and finally dashed upon the altar."

In all this hustle and bustle, Jesus sent two of the disciples, Peter and John, to look for a man among the multitude of people and follow him to a certain house. The man will be identified by carrying a water jar.

Just as Jesus knew where a colt that had never been ridden would be tied, he knew precisely when and where this man would be. Had Jesus pre arranged this meeting place? Was this a well-to-do disciple with an upper room? Had Jesus used this room before for teaching or possibly a previous Passover?

Many possibilities. Where did the owner of the house eat the Passover? With Jesus and the disciples or somewhere else?

If we could ask Peter, I bet he could answer these questions. Peter, along with John, was assigned the task of preparing this very important meal.

The same Peter to whom Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan. You don't have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." (Matthew 16:23)

How could Jesus trust a man like that with something so important? It's not the end of the story, is it?

So, Peter and John made the preparations and evening came. ²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. (Matthew 26:20)

The following represents the normal order of the Passover meal: (1) An initial blessing and prayer followed by the first of four cups of wine and a dish of herbs and sauce. (2) The story of the Passover's institution, singing of Psalm 113, and the second cup of wine. (3) Prayer of thanksgiving, followed by meal of roast lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, another prayer followed by the third cup of wine. (4) The singing of Psalms 114-118, and a fourth cup of wine.

From this Passover meal came our Communion.

The next event we read about on this evening is Jesus washing the disciple feet.

² The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:2-5)

In the remainder of John 13, Jesus tells his disciples that he washed their feet as an example, ^{13:15} I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

The washing of feet is more than just a pan of water and a towel, isn't it? It's about having a servant heart.

Also in the remainder of this chapter, we learn that Jesus was aware that his betrayer sat at the table with him. 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'^[b]

^{13:19} "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.

The chapter ends with Jesus predicting Peter's denial.

Just as Jesus knew where the colt was tied and that a man carrying a jug of water would lead Peter and John to the correct house, he knew what Judas was prepared to do, as well as Peter's eventual breakdown. So far, nothing has surprised Jesus.

Now we come to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is betrayed with a kiss. One writer calls this The Hour of the Power of Darkness.

As he was about to be numbered with the transgressors, Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

He had asked his disciples to pray, but their bellies were full and it was late; he found them asleep each time he returned to them.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Just as Jesus knew about the colt and the man, and his betrayer and weak flesh, he knew that the cup he was about to drink contained the very worse that any human could do to another: False accusations and an arrest in the cover of night.

"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. (Matthew 26:55)

All his friends deserting him; false witnesses testify before the Sanhedrin; blindfolded and struck in the face; spit on; delivered to Pilate where more false accusations were made; sent to Herod where he was mocked and ridiculed, then back to Pilate, but nothing worthy of death found.

After praying in the Garden in anguish for this cup to be removed, the cup continues to slowly pour as Jesus hears the crowd shouting Crucify!

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. (John 19:1-3)

You know the rest of the story. Barabbas was released and Jesus was crucified. The cup Jesus prayed for his Father to remove emptied with these words: "It is finished." With that, he

bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

From the colt to the man, his betrayer to the cup, nothing took Jesus by surprise. As he rode into Jerusalem on the colt the week before, he knew what was coming.

And, as he reclined at the table with his disciples, he knew that it would be his last meal before drinking the cup his father had not removed.

But what is even more amazing are these words:

³¹ "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you^[a] as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. (Luke 22:31-32)

While the cup poured out for Jesus, he never forgot about others. In the Garden, while in so much anguish, he encouraged his disciples to stay awake, watch and pray, so that they will not fall into temptation.

Of course, we know that they didn't stay awake, most of them scattered after Jesus arrest, and that Peter denied publicly that he wasn't even Jesus disciple.

Now, let's fast forward for some more evidence that Jesus lived what he taught when he washed his disciples' feet.

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias.^[a] It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

⁶ He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.^[b] ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”

¹¹ Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” (John 21:1-15)

I heard a story this week about a situation between a deacon and a pastor involving an individual who had been asked to teach a Sunday school class. An unscheduled meeting

had been called to discuss the individual’s qualifications to teach in the church.

The pastor knew that this particular deacon that had asked for the meeting had a tendency to be a perfectionist. Once the meeting started, the pastor realized what was happening, and that the criticism was over nothing.

When the deacon asked for a ruling, the pastor said, “First, let me tell you a story.

In a great and large church, a man was asked to preach. For the most part, this man was sincere, but a loud mouth; speaking before thinking and stayed in trouble most of the time. Once, under emotional pressure, he was heard using curse words and taking the Lord’s name in vain. And on one occasion, he led a group of people astray. How do you rule: should this man be allowed to preach?

The ruling was unanimous. “No sir. That man should not be allowed to preach.”

The pastor, trying to be serious while holding back a grin, explained, “The man I just described to you was the ‘foot-in-mouth’ Apostle Peter. On the night of Jesus arrest and trial, Peter denied knowing Jesus with profanity. And, he led a group of the disciples back to fishing when they had been told to go preach.

But, this incompetent, loud mouth, rule breaking disciple had been set aside by God to preach the very first sermon in the Christian church.”

This is the same Peter that said that he was willing to die for Jesus, but publicly denied knowing him three times; the same Peter that couldn’t stay awake and pray when Jesus needed him the most.

Peter failed; he just couldn’t do anything right. Whenever he jumped, he should have skipped. Whenever he ran, he should have walked. (Have you ever felt that way? No

matter what you do; what choice you make, it wrong.)

Even when Peter drew a sword at Jesus arrest and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear, Jesus put it back on.

So, what’s the use, boys; I’m done. I’m going fishing. At least I know how to do that.

As you read about the resurrection and the many appearances of Jesus to groups and individuals, Jesus made sure that Peter wasn’t left out. Just as Jesus wasn’t surprised by anything that unfolded in his life, he wasn’t surprised that Peter felt like giving up.

Just as Jesus knew where the colt was tied and that a man carrying a jug of water would lead Peter and John to the place where he would wash his disciples’ feet, he knew exactly where to build a fire and cook some fish for a disciple who needed his feet washed one more time.

Peter’s ministry wasn’t over. It had just begun. Peter learned on that shore what you and I have come to know, that he is the God of second chances.