

*** MARCH 2016 ***

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE RESURRECTION

Recently here at SHILOH we have celebrated the Passover weekend, remembering the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. We have been so refreshed by the reality of Jesus being our Passover Lamb, sacrificed for us. We have also been rejuvenated again in the reality of the resurrection of the dead. So much preaching in the modern era focuses on “going to heaven when you die”. This causes the genuine hope of the gospel to be neglected. We must continue to strengthen the foundations of apostolic truth in our lives – Jesus the Christ *“is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* 1 Corinthians 15:20. This is our hope! We hope in the Messiah who said, *“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold I Am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”* Revelation 1:18.

What gospel do you preach?

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand” 1 Corinthians 15:1. This gospel when received enables the saints to stand their ground, not falter and be stable, anchored to the hope within the veil (Heb.6:19-20). This gospel truly brings salvation, *“by which also you are saved”* or more literally *“by which you are being saved”* (v.2). This gospel does not only work in our initial moment of being “saved” but must continue to work in our lives even now as we choose *“to hold fast that word”* so that we do not believe *“in vain”* (v.2), missing out on the glorious inheritance of our salvation.

The gospel according to the Scriptures

The gospel that Paul received and delivered to us was 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”* 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. This gospel is according to the Scriptures. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah was not a surprise event that happened 2000 years ago. There was a history to it. It was testified of in the Scriptures before it happened that we might know and believe and learn to fully rely on the veracity of the Word of God, which are a testimony of Jesus (Jn.5:39)

Messiah rose from the dead according to the Scriptures

King David prophesied the resurrection of the Messiah when he wrote *“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption”* Psalm 16:9-10. David wrote this 1000 years before Jesus appeared but the Spirit of the Christ in Him was prophesying of Himself (1 Peter 1:11). David, being a prophet, *“spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ”* Acts 2:30-31.

Isaiah also prophesied the resurrection of the Messiah. After vividly speaking of the suffering and death of the Messiah in Isaiah 53:1-9, he then goes on to say *“Yet it pleased YHWH to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days...”* (v.10). If the Messiah’s soul was made an offering for sin, meaning He died, how then could He *“see His seed”* and have *His days prolonged*? Here is a prophetic insight. The Messiah would actually rise from the dead

and “*see the labor of His soul*” (v.11). We who have trusted in Jesus the Messiah are *His Seed*; we are the *labor and travail of His soul*, new creations born out of His death and resurrection!

The sign of Jonah

Not only do the Scriptures testify that He would rise from the dead but they also reveal the time He would rise – *the third day*! The Scripture testifies that “*Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights*” **Jonah 1:17**. Jesus said that this was the sign that He would give to His generation that He was the Messiah! “*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” **Matthew 12:40**. Hosea prophesied “*After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight* (6:2). Jesus spent three days and three nights in the realm of the dead, and He was raised to bring us life, free from sin, that we may *live in His sight*! Now

He was seen!

The resurrection was not just a story or fable. It is a reality! There were eyewitnesses! There is real evidence based on testimony. The apostle Paul tells us that “*He was seen by Cephas [Peter], then by the twelve*”, “*He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once*”, “*He was seen by James, then by all the apostles*”, “*He was seen by me [Paul] also*” **1 Corinthians 15:5-8**. By the testimony of two or three witnesses a matter must be established (**Deut.19:15**). The truth of the resurrection has over five hundred eyewitnesses! Jesus is alive and many people to this day continue to see Him! We must share with people the definitive truth and proof of Jesus’ resurrection. **This awesome history and world changing event had many witnesses!**

He was touched

One of the twelve, Thomas, was not with the other disciples when Jesus first appeared to them after the resurrection. The others said to him “*We have seen the Lord*” **John 20:25**. Thomas said he would not believe “*Unless I...put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side*”. After eight days Jesus appeared again to them while Thomas was there and said to him “*Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing*” **John 20:27**. Thomas physically touched the resurrected body of Jesus and believed.

The resurrection proves Jesus is God

When Thomas had this experience of seeing and touching the resurrected Messiah Jesus, all he could say was, “*My Lord and my God*” **John 20:28**. Thomas finally got the revelation of who Jesus was. He called Him “*Lord*”, the Ruler with Supreme Authority. He called Him “*God*”, the Creator and Maker of all things. The resurrection proved to Thomas that Jesus was the *Lord God!* Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus was “*declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness and by the resurrection from the dead*” **Romans 1:4**. The Deity of Jesus as God in the flesh [Son of God] was confirmed by the Spirit and through the resurrection!

Thomas was saved

“*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*” **Romans 10:9**. When Thomas confessed Jesus as Lord and God, He was saved! This is a revelation by the Spirit for “*no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*” **1 Corinthians 12:3b**. Thomas believed Jesus was

raised from the dead and by the Spirit confessed Him as Lord! You are blessed if you ***“have not seen and yet have believed”*** **John 20:29**. This faith in the resurrection saves. It is faith in the resurrected Messiah, Jesus, the Lord God.

Faith and hope in the resurrection

We are to have faith and hope in the resurrection. This is the crux of the faith of the gospel. ***“For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen”*** **1 Corinthians 15:13**. The hope of the resurrection is to be the stabilising force of our faith. This hope of a resurrection guides how we live now as ***“I have hope in God...that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a good conscience without offense toward God and men”*** **Acts 24:15-16**. The truth of the resurrection makes certain the reality of judgement and accountability for how we lived our lives in the body as ***“many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt”*** **Daniel 12:2**.

A living hope, free from sin

“Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” the human race has been given ***“a living hope”*** **1 Peter 1:3b**. Faith is actually the ***“substance”*** of this hope (**Heb.11:1**). Faith makes this hope ***“living”*** in our being! Faith brings the reality of the resurrection into our experience now. By believing that ***“God raised Jesus from the dead”*** we can now be broken free from all sin and all bondage to sin. For He was ***“delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification [making us just as if we had never sinned]”*** **Romans 4:25**.

When we combine faith in Jesus with baptism into His death, burial and resurrection we are then ***“freed from sin”*** and can ***“reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God”*** **Romans 6:7,11**. We can live in the reality that ***“you He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins”*** **Ephesians 2:1**.

If Christ is not risen, faith is of no value

If we do not truly believe Jesus is alive from the dead then ***“your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”*** **1 Corinthians 15:17**. Simply believing in a dead Jesus does not profit you. Simply believing in a historical person named Jesus who died on the cross will not help you. In fact, ***“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable”*** **1 Corinthians 15:19**.

Baptism is only powerful ***“through faith in the working of God, who raised Him [Jesus] from the dead”*** **Colossians 2:12**. Baptism ***“saves us...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*** **1 Peter 3:21**. If Jesus only died on the Cross then there would be no coming up out of the water in baptism! You would have to stay under the water, in your sins, and die with no hope of coming up into new life!

But now Christ is Risen!

But praise be to God that the reality is ***“Christ is risen from the dead”*** **1 Corinthians 15:20**. In fact Jesus Himself is the Resurrection! ***“I Am the Resurrection and the Life”*** **John 11:25**. We are to herald and preach everywhere ***“in Jesus the resurrection from the dead”*** **Acts 4:2**. We are to function with ***“great power”*** giving ***“witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”*** **Acts 4:33**. We are to declare that God has ***“appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”*** **Acts 17:31**.

Messiah is the Firstfruits

Jesus the Messiah *“is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”* 1 Corinthians 15:20. This statement is actually saying that Jesus the Messiah has become the fulfilment of the firstfruits offering which was part of the Passover feast. The children of Israel were commanded, after the day of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to *“bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest...on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it”* Leviticus 23:10b-11. Matthew recorded that *“after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn...”* the women went looking for Jesus’ body but an angel told them *“He is not here; for He is risen”* Matthew 28:1,6. Jesus is the Firstfruits of the resurrection. He is the wave offering. His death, burial and resurrection are in complete fulfilment of the full Passover feast.

There are more to come

The offering of the Firstfruits means there is a field nearly ready for harvest. Jesus is called the *“firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”*. This means there are more to come. In Christ *“all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming”* 1 Corinthians 15:22b-23. There is a promise of resurrection at the Coming of the Lord. It is not a promise of a “rapture”. We are promised that those in Christ will partake fully of His resurrection in our bodies.

Jesus is the first to rise from the dead. He is the *“the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence”* Colossians 1:18. He is the *“firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth”* Revelation 1:5. We are *“predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren”* Romans 8:29. We are destined to *“bear the image of the heavenly Man”* who will *“transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”* 1 Corinthians 15:49, Philippians 3:21. This is awesome!

The Feast of Passover in fulfilment

John in his gospel records Jesus going to Jerusalem a number of times for particular feasts. Each time Jesus went to a feast He was revealing something of the real meaning and fulfilment of the feast.

Unleavened Bread fulfilled

In John 2 Jesus went to Jerusalem and *“the Passover of the Jews was at hand”* v.13. Jesus discovered the temple full of men making money out of selling sacrifices for the people (Jn.2:14). Jesus *“drove them all out of the temple”* v.15. He was getting the leaven, the wickedness, out of His Father’s house (Jn.2:16). This was fulfilling the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was part of Passover feast, where they had to remove any leaven from their houses (Ex.12:15). Zeal for the house had *“eaten Me up”* (Jn.2:17).

Passover and Firstfruits fulfilled

The Jews then were very disturbed saying, *“What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?”* v.18. Jesus’ answer gives a revelation of the fulfilment of Firstfruits as part of the Passover Feast. He said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”* v.19. The Temple was the house of God. The Jews were indignant and ridiculed Him as it had taken forty-six years to build that temple in Jerusalem. But the Scripture tells us *“He was speaking of the temple of His body”* v.21.

Jesus was speaking about His death (Passover) and resurrection (Firstfruits). He was speaking of His body being the temple. The body of Jesus literally died and rose again three days later. But there is a further fulfilment for us as *“By One Spirit we were all baptized into*

One Body” 1 Corinthians 12:13a. Through faith and baptism in Christ, we become a part of that ***“body”*** that Jesus was referring to! ***“After three days He will raise us up that we may live in His sight” Hosea 6:2.*** There is a corporate reality and fulfilment! We are joined to the ***“head of the body...the firstborn from the dead” Colossians 1:18.*** The Body of Christ is the ***“Body”*** that Jesus raised up in three days to be His temple, His house! The Body of Christ is to be known by the power of the resurrection flowing within it. We are the Body of the Resurrected Christ!

**Preach the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Life and power will flow!
Messiah Jesus truly is risen and has become the firstfruits of those who have
fallen asleep!**

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