

## JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

### WEEK 7 – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: His Crucifixion and Resurrection

#### Who is Jesus?

He is the Anointed of God, the Messiah/Mashiach, He is the beloved Son of God, the Bread of life, the Light of the world, the bright and morning star, Immanuel – God in the flesh, God with us, the prince of peace, the Son of David, the door – the door at PASSOVER with the blood of the Lamb. . .and much more. . . .

Jesus is the MESSIAH Who came to die.

Isaiah 53:10 – it pleased the Father to bruise Him. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.

Psalms 22 – from the cross He cried out, in anguish and pain, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?”

In His crucifixion, Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb (I Cor. 5:7). Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover lamb that was slain at the first Passover in Egypt. Exodus 12 – the lambs were killed and their blood was applied to the door of homes in which the Passover was observed. The blood of the slain lambs brought deliverance for those who obeyed God’s instructions at that first Passover. The blood of Jesus shed for us brings ETERNAL deliverance for those who call out to Him for forgiveness of their sin – for those who trust in Him for their salvation.

In His resurrection, Jesus is our first fruits. I Cor. 15:20 – “*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*”

Jesus’ resurrection PROVED that He is indeed the Messiah of Israel – of the WORLD!

#### Who is Jesus TO YOU?

According to God’s plan, it was mere days away from Jesus’ crucifixion. This was Jesus’ hour; this was His time. Romans 5:8 – “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”

#### Why did Jesus have to die?

Before we can come to grips with anything God does, we have to first acknowledge that His ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8).

Deuteronomy 32:4 reminds us that “*He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God Who does no wrong, upright and just is He.*”

Therefore, the plan of salvation He has designed is perfect, just, and upright. It is this plan of God that delivers us from spending an eternity apart from God. It is this plan that provides for us an eternity with God!

Scripture defines the Gospel for us – the good news: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel. . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. . . .”* (I Cor. 15:1, 3-4). Our sinless Jesus bled and died on a cross. The Bible explains why Jesus’ death and resurrection provide the only entrance to heaven.

God’s word tells us that the punishment for sin is death. God created earth and man. Gen. 1:31 – *“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.”* Adam and Eve sinned; they rebelled against God’s commands. Our God is holy (Lev. 19:2). Overlooking sin would make our holy God unjust. He would then cease to be God. There are consequences for sin: *“For the wages of sin is death. . . .”* (Rom. 6:23) Good works cannot pay for the penalty of our sin. *“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6b).

In Psalm 51:5 we read King David’s words explaining that he was born in sin. Ever since Adam’s sin, every human has been guilty of disobeying God’s righteous laws. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Sin is falling short of God’s standard; God’s standard is perfection. Sin includes what we read in Prov. 6:16-19 – *“These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”*

The Jewish prophet, Isaiah, wrote in Isa. 59:2 – *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”* God hears a prayer of repentance and promises to pardon. Isa. 55:6-7 – *“Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. <sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”* A prayer of repentance is based on God’s provision of forgiveness of sin in the Messiah Jesus. (Read Deut. 18:15-18) Because of sin, everyone deserves death – eternal separation from God in hell.

God banished Adam and Eve from the garden; however, He didn’t leave them without hope of heaven. He promised He would send the Redeemer Who would pay the price for our sin – Who would pay the penalty for our sin – Who would die in our place. In Genesis 3:15 God promises to provide the Redeemer Who would wield a death a blow to Satan. In Heb. 2:14 we are told that through Jesus’ death He destroyed the devil who had the power of death.

In place of the fig leaves that Adam and Eve provided for themselves (through their own works) following their sin, we find God providing animal skins to cover them (Gen. 3:21). Was blood shed? Lev. 17:11 – *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”*

God promised a substitutionary sacrifice in Genesis 22:8 – in place of Isaac. He promised that He would provide HIMSELF, the LAMB! God gave the Jewish people the sacrificial system which was observed for approximately 1500 years with morning and evening sacrifices and multiple sacrifices on feast days. When a person sinned, he/she brought that unblemished animal (Dt. 15:21) to the door of the tabernacle/temple and killed it. The animal died in the person's place. The sacrificial system looked forward to the ultimate sacrifice – Jesus the Messiah, the perfect Passover Lamb of God! God's perfect Son fulfilled God's perfect requirement of God's perfect law. "*God made Him (Jesus), Who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The prophets foretold Jesus' death. From Adam to Jesus, God sent prophets to mankind, warning them of sin's punishment and foretelling the coming Messiah. One prophet, Isaiah, described Him: "*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*"

Between 700 to 800 years later, Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus. Multitudes followed Jesus - to be taught by Him, to be healed by Him. The religious leaders scorned Him. Mobs cried out, "Crucify Him!" Soldiers beat, mocked, and crucified Him. As Isaiah foretold, Jesus was crucified in between two criminals but was buried in a rich man's tomb. But He didn't remain in the grave. Because God accepted Jesus' sacrifice, He fulfilled another prophecy by raising Jesus from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 26:19).

Why did Jesus have to die? Our holy, just God cannot let sin go unpunished. We cannot pay for our sins; we are not blameless. Jesus only – the spotless, perfect sacrifice – became our sin-bearer. Jesus had to die because He is the only one who can pay the penalty for our sins.

Jesus had entered Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – Lamb Selection Day. It was a triumphant entry. It was 1,000 years after King Solomon's reign during which time Israel prospered. And, it was the beginning of Passover week. Passover – which carries a message of deliverance because God delivered the Jewish people from bondage to slavery in Egypt – so long ago.

Jesus shared Passover with His disciples – for the last time on earth!

Matt. 26:20 – "*When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve.*" They reclined at the table in the upper room.

*Seder* means “order”. This is based on God’s instructions to the children of Israel in Ex. 12. God told them that the evening should be commemorated by eating 3 foods: lamb, matzah (unleavened bread), and bitter herbs. Leaven symbolized sin in Scripture. Unleavened bread – bread without sin, so to speak, points to our sinless Messiah Jesus. The bitter herbs caused them to remember the suffering that their ancestors knew in Egypt. While every part of the meal was highly symbolic, it had absolutely no meaning without the lamb – whose blood on the lintel and doorposts delivered them from the bondage that oppressed them in Egypt.

At this last Passover Seder between Jesus and His followers, the Messiah, the perfect Lamb of God, told the redemption story in Moses’ day – the story of physical deliverance from bondage to slavery which spoke to eternal deliverance from bondage to sin to eternal life. Jesus recounted the story as only He could have. And then He fulfilled it on the cross the next morning!

Matt. 26:26-29 – *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. <sup>29</sup> But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’”*

The cup of the blood of the new covenant is the cup of redemption that is taken at the Passover Seder. Perhaps this is the cup to which Jesus referred in His prayer to God the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus asked God, “if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me” (Matt. 26:39). Cup in Scripture often refers to judgment. This was a cup that Jesus could partake of only with outstretched arms on the cross. Of course, in the Garden, in His prayer to God the Father, Jesus submitted and said, *“O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.”* (Matt. 26:42). Jesus became the cup of redemption and poured out His life so that we could be in a right relationship with God.

Matt. 26:30 – *“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”*

Traditionally, every Passover Seder ends with a song. Often Psalm 115 through Psalm 118 is sung. One of the verses from Psalm 118 is 24 – *“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it”!* This is what they sang as Jesus made His way to the Garden of Gethsemane and ultimately to the cross for us. Jesus is our sin-bearer – our substitute for sin – to those who cry out to Him for forgiveness.

Jesus was arrested by the Romans. A “great multitude” (Matt. 26:47; Mark 14:43) with swords and clubs came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. John 18:3 describes this multitude as a “detachment of troops.” This refers to a cohort of Roman soldiers which equates to 1,000 men at full strength. With such numbers in the Garden, we can better understand why Judas identified Jesus with a kiss. There was commotion in the Garden, to say the least. And, Proverbs 27:6 - speaks to the kisses of an enemy being deceitful. Satan had already entered Judas (Luke 22:3). Satan deceives (Rev. 12:9).

In the garden. . .

In the garden of Eden, man sinned. The curse is placed on man and on the earth in the garden. In the garden, the promise of salvation/redemption is given (Gen. 3:15).

In a garden, Jesus was crucified – “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden. . . .” (John 19:41).

Matt. 26:59-60 *“Now the chief priests, the elders,<sup>[g]</sup> and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death,<sup>60</sup> but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.”*

Jesus faced six trials – three religious trials and three civil trials. There were many illegalities connected with the trial of Jesus:

- No trial was to be held during feast time.
- No trial was to be held at night
- If the death penalty was given, a night must pass before the sentence was carried; however, only a few hours passed before Jesus was nailed to the cross.
- The Jewish people had no authority to execute anyone.
- The accused was to be given counsel or representation; Jesus had none.
- The accused was not to be asked self-incriminating questions; however, Jesus was asked if He was the Christ.

Jesus was sentenced to death. He was beaten and mocked. He was led away to Golgotha – place of the skull – to be crucified. WHAT HAPPENED? A few days ago it was the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – Lamb Selection Day – when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey and was hailed as King. Jesus came to die. As the Lamb of God, He was scrutinized and found blameless by Pilate, Herod, and the Sanhedrin. And so, as in keeping with the Passover – just as the animal lambs that were found without blemish were sacrificed – Jesus, our perfect Passover Lamb, found to be blameless – was nailed to the cross.

Crucifixion was the Roman capital punishment. Criminals were crucified. Crucifixion was forbidden to any Roman citizen no matter how serious his crime. Crucifixion was unimaginably painful and inhumane. Victims of crucifixion could live up to six days! BUT Jesus remained on the cross for six hours. He had to die when He did. He had to be placed in the tomb on the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

On the day after Passover, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, the children of Israel left Egypt. Egypt is a picture of the world in Scripture (Isaiah 30:1-2 and Isaiah 31:1). The children of Israel, following their redemption/deliverance through the blood of the Passover lambs, were taken out/separated from the world. Jesus was buried on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan. In His death there was a separation from the world. (When we are redeemed through Jesus blood, God separates us from the world – SANCTIFICATION). (Matt. 27:57 – it was the day after Passover – “in the evening” - that He was buried).

What does the OT teach about being hanged on a tree?

Deut. 21:22-23 - *“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,<sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.”*

And because Jesus became a curse for us – we are set free! We are redeemed. Redeemed means to be bought out of the marketplace. Who were bought and sold in the marketplace in those days? Slaves! We were in bondage before we were set free in Jesus. We were in bondage to sin.

Gal. 3:13 – *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’),”*

This might explain the religious leaders’ insistence that Jesus be crucified. All notions of Jesus being the Messiah would die a cursed death with Him. And, it is in keeping with Isa. 53:4b – *“... we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”*

Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9 a.m. (Mark 15:25 – the third hour) as the animal Passover lambs were being slain in the Temple.

Criminals who were crucified had their crimes inscribed on a sign which was attached to the cross. The sign over Jesus’ head on the cross:

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS (Matt. 27:37)

Jesus/Yeshua – God is salvation

King – melech

Jews – Yehudah (praise)

There is some concern over the seeming discrepancies among the four Gospel accounts of the inscription placed on the cross over Jesus’ head. Each of the writers quotes the inscription, the list of crimes. However, each account is different from the others. How do we explain the differences?

Firstly, both Luke and John point out that the inscription was printed in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The varying accounts may simply reflect variations in language.

Secondly, each of the writers, totally inspired by God, exercised his “editorial prerogative” – emphasizing the portion of the inscription he deemed to be most significant. The full inscription, from all the Gospel accounts, reads, “THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

In John 19:19 we have the sign noted as JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS (John 19:19)

Jesus/Yeshua – God is salvation

Nazareth – connotation – germ. Root word: nazar -BRANCH

(Messianic title).

King – melech

Jews – Yehudah

WHAT A PROCLAMATION!

Crucifixion was the height of man’s inhumanity to man. Man’s freedom of choice was on display at Golgotha! What an ugly display. God used man’s tainted/polluted freedom of choice to unfold His perfect, divine, and redemptive plan! Do I grasp this? No. But, I accept it. God’s thoughts are not my thoughts; my ways are not God’s ways.

At the fall of man in the garden of Eden, God told Adam, “*Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.*”<sup>18</sup> *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.*” (Gen. 3:17-18) The earth was cursed at the fall. The Roman soldiers fashioned a crown of thorns with spikes several inches in length and put it on Jesus’ head. The thorns – such a display of the cursed earth – most likely deeply cut into Jesus’ scalp causing bleeding and pain.

And in the midst of the severe flogging He received. . . so that His “visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isa. 52:14). . . and in the midst of the unimaginable pain from the crucifixion. . . what did Jesus cry from the cross? “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus looked down from the cross and saw the Roman soldiers casting lots for His clothing (John 19:23-24). He heard the two thieves reviling Him (Matt. 27:44). The religious leaders were mocking Him (Matt. 27:41-43). The crowd was blaspheming Him (Matt. 27:39). And Jesus cried, “Father, forgive them.”

Even in His agony, Jesus’ concern was for the forgiveness of those who counted themselves among His enemies.

When we come to Christ in faith and repentance as a result of His drawing us to Himself (John 6:44), He says of us, “Father, forgive them,” and He does!

Matt. 27:45 – “*Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all*

*the land.”*

The darkness which accompanied Jesus’ crucifixion reinforced the significance of the crucifixion, as the sins of men were cast upon the sinless only begotten Son of God. Luke 23:45 tells us that the sun was darkened for three hours. The crucifixion has significance for all men. The most reasonable explanation is that the darkness was a special miracle.

Matt. 27:46 – “*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’*”

Did God the Father forsake His Son? Why did Jesus cry out these words from the cross? “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” was a harkening back. To what was it harkening? This was a reminder to observant Jews who knew their Scripture. King David had written these words about the crucifixion of the Messiah in Psalm 22 – 1,000 years prior to Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus was reminding His people – the Jewish people – that He indeed is the Messiah – the One about Whom King David wrote in Psalm 22. And, it was a reminder to observant/faithful Jews who knew their Scripture that Psalm 22, Psalm 23, and Psalm 24 should be taught and read as a unit.

Jesus, by crying out the first verse of Psalm 22, was proclaiming:

- God the Father answered Him. Psa. 22:21 – “*Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.*”
- He was reminding the people that God the Father had NOT hidden His face from Him. He heard Jesus. Psa. 22:24 – He has not. . . . “*hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard.*”
- He was proclaiming His hope and trust in His loving Father – Psa. 23:4 – “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*”
  - Jesus had walked by the valley of the shadow of death on His way to Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.
- He was envisioning His triumphant return to heaven – Psa. 24:7-10 – “*Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.*” <sup>8</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.* <sup>9</sup> *Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.* <sup>10</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.”* (Eph. 4:7-10)

John 19:28-30 – “*After this, Jesus, knowing<sup>[e]</sup> that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’*” <sup>29</sup> *Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on*

*hyssop, and put it to His mouth.* <sup>30</sup> *So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished! And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.'*

“It is finished” - Jesus’ work was completed – the seed of the woman had CRUSHED the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). Heb. 2:14 – “. . . that through death, He might DESTROY him who had the power of death, that is the devil.”

A more in-depth look re: what “It is finished” means:

- “It is finished” is *tetelestai*, an accounting term that means “paid in full.” When Jesus uttered those words, He was declaring the debt owed to His Father was wiped away completely and forever. Not that Jesus wiped away any debt that *He* owed to the Father; rather, Jesus eliminated the debt owed by mankind—the debt of sin.
- Jesus had finished the eternal purpose of the cross. It stands today as a finished work, the foundation of our reconciliation to God, paying fully the debt we owe to God. “We owed a debt we couldn’t pay; He paid a debt He didn’t owe.”
- At some point before He cried out **it is finished**, a spiritual transaction took place. God the Father laid upon God the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and He bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God for us. In that transaction, God gave us who believed and who would believe, His righteousness (II Cor. 5:21)
  - Rom. 6:23 – “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What was finished?

- Believers are not under the authority of the Mosaic Law (Romans 4:13-16; Romans 10:4)
  - The Mosaic Law was temporary (Gal. 3:19)
  - The Law is from God and it reflects Who God is. The Law restores the soul (Psa. 19:7).
  - The Law is a tutor teaching mankind that we need a Savior (Gal. 3:24).
  - The Law only condemns; it cannot save! (Romans 3:20; Romans 8:3; II Cor. 3:7-11)
- The death of Jesus rendered inoperative the sin-nature’s authority and power to reign over the believer. The believer is dead to sin – free from the domination of the sin-nature. The sin-nature is not dead; however, the believer is dead to it in that he is no longer obligated to obey its demands as he was before he was saved (Romans 6).

- The death of Jesus is the grounds for the believer's forgiveness and cleansing (I John 1:9). Jesus' death obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12).
- Jesus died not only for the sins that would be committed after His death, but also for the sins committed prior to His death. He died for the sins of NT saints and also for the sins of OT saints (Romans 3:25; Acts 17:30; Hebrews 10:4)
- The death of Jesus meant the spoiling of principalities and powers – He triumphed over them (Col. 2:14; John 12:31; John 16:11; Heb. 2:14).
- Established Him as our Great High Priest (Heb. 9:11-12).
- The blood of Jesus cleansed the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:21-24). The fall of Satan occurred in heaven. Therefore, the heavenly sanctuary needed the cleansing of blood just as the earthly sanctuary needed the same.
- The death of Jesus is the grounds for peace:
  - Between God and man (Romans 5:1).
  - Between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-16; Col. 3:11).
  - On this earth (Col. 1:20) – in the Millennial Kingdom (Romans 8:21-22).
- The death of Jesus is the basis for the national salvation of Israel. Some day all Israel will believe on Him (Deut. 30:3; Jer. 31:31-34; Romans 11:25-29). The future national salvation of Israel is the precondition to Jesus' Second Coming (Zech. 12:10-ff).
- The death of Jesus is the basis for the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 5:8-14).

Matt. 27:51-53 – “Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,<sup>52</sup> and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;<sup>53</sup> and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

The veil of the Temple which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn in two – from TOP to bottom. GOD made the way into His presence. HE opened the way to the Holy of Holies. Each year, prior to the death of the Messiah, only the High Priest could enter and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat during Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement. On that one day each year a sacrifice was offered for the sins of the people as a nation. The tearing of the veil signified that the way into God's presence was open to all through the blood of the Messiah shed on the cross.

In synagogues today and in Jesus' day, on the Sabbath following Passover (the day prior to Resurrection Sunday), the Song of Solomon was/is read. Jewish people call the Song of Solomon “the Holy of Holies”.

- Song of Solomon 4:6 – “Until the cool of the day, when the shadow flees away, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.” The Bridegroom was anointed for burial – to die for the bride.

- Song of Solomon 5:1 – “*I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse. . . .*” – which many interpret an invitation to his garden.

The day following the Sabbath of Passover week was the Feast of First Fruits (Lev. 23:9-14). It commemorated the first harvest – the barley harvest. Jewish mindset: as God has given us the first harvest, surely He will give us the next harvest (wheat).

- The day after the Song of Solomon was read in synagogues, when it was still dark, the high priest would go into the Kidron Valley. He would wait, while it was still dark, for the first pinpoint of light to come up on the back of the Mount of Olives (in the east). When he saw the first pinpoint of sunlight, he would ceremonially harvest the first stalks of grain. These were the first fruits.
- All four Gospels tell us that the resurrection was at the very “crack of dawn” – while it was still dark (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). The very hour of the very day of the year when the high priest was bringing the first fruit into the Temple, harvesting the first fruit, Jesus rose from the dead. I Cor. 15:20, 23 – Jesus is our first fruits. His resurrection guarantees the resurrection of believers in Him.

In the garden, man sins, the curse is placed on man and the earth in the garden, but in the garden the promise of salvation/redemption is given.

In a garden, Jesus was crucified – “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb. . . .” (John 19:41).

John 20:1 – Mary Magdalene came to the garden. In the garden, the curse came upon Eve first (Gen. 3:16-17ff). So, the good news of Jesus’ resurrection came to a woman first.

Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping (John 20:11-12). When she looked into the tomb, she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. What do we picture? The Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark.

John 20:16 – as Mary was weeping and telling whom she thought was the “gardener” that her Lord had been taken away and she didn’t know where they had laid Him. If the “gardener” had carried Him away, Mary asked him to tell her. Jesus responded with, “Mary!” Here, we might say, is a welcoming into the garden – as “the Beloved” welcomed His bride in the Song of Solomon 5:1.

In Genesis, in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden. Following the crucifixion and resurrection, the door is open.

Matt. 27:51b-53 – “. . . and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,<sup>52</sup> and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;<sup>53</sup> and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

. . . and many bodies of the Saints. . . . Matthew alone mentioned this miracle. Since they appeared to many people, there were ample eyewitnesses who could testify to the validity of the miracle. Nothing more is said. Here is a visible demonstration of Lev. 23:9-14 – first fruits. Jesus was NOT alone in His resurrection.

John 12:23-24 - *“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains ALONE; but if it DIES, it produces MUCH FRUIT.”*

Jesus is the forerunner of the harvest to come – believers in Him!

Jesus’ resurrection is proof of Jesus’ deity. Proof that His work was indeed finished – He had paid the penalty for sin – He had met God’s righteous demands.

I Cor. 15:17 – If Christ is not risen – our faith is futile – and we are still in our sins! The author of Hebrews tells us to LOOK 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. CONSIDER JESUS – lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. . . .

By the ARM/ZEROAH of the Lord, God delivered the Jewish people from Egypt: Ex. 6:6 – “. . . I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.” Jesus – the arm/zeroah of the Lord (Isa. 53:1-2) – has redeemed us by His outstretched arms on the cross!

This was God’s plan. It remains God’s plan. It is eternally God’s plan. And, it is glorious!

Who is Jesus to you?

Who are you to Jesus?

#### QUESTIONS:

Did you learn anything new about the crucifixion and the resurrection?

How has it impacted your love for Jesus?

Talk about attending the annual Passover Seder at SBC on 4/11.

#### SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Read Acts 1 & 2

Why did Pentecost occur on the Jewish Feast of Shavuot/Weeks?