

God Raised Him Up
Last Day of Unleavened Bread
Jack Elder
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Anyone who gets a local paper or watches what's going on in the local news, this time of year we see all the portrayals of the crucifixion. Churches usually have a member act out Christ's crucifixion and they usually have the image of Him and it's somewhere between a rock star and a good looking actor. They do this pageant during the week. We even saw one article in our local paper where they had little kids acting this out. Frankly, knowing what we do and knowing that these are unscriptural, we get kind of turned off by all these trappings. It's very unscriptural and full of tradition and we just don't care for that.

In thinking about that, do we make the mistake, just because we don't like these things, do we downplay the resurrection of Christ? I think for decades we've done a pretty good job of talking about the suffering and the death of Christ, but I don't believe we've talked enough about His resurrection. Today that's what I want to talk about, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, how and why it ties in with these holy days.

Actually I do have a title. It's a little further into the message. I'll let you know when I get there. But just thinking about that, it brings up two questions right away.

1. Have we put the proper focus on the resurrection of Jesus Christ during these holy days? Have we done that?
2. Has a lack of this focus affected the way we've kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread this year?

Turn over to Acts 13. There's an interesting section here in Acts 13. Paul is in his travels and he's going from one place to the next. He's having problems just about everywhere he goes. In Acts 13 beginning in verse 14:

Acts 13:14. *But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.
15) And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, (KJV)*

They saw strangers walk in and they may have known something about Paul's reputation. It's hard to say at this point. The ruler of the synagogue said:

*15b) ... You men [and] brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. (Let us hear it.)
16) Then Paul stood up and beckoning with [his] hand ... (KJV)*

He motioned with his hand; probably a traditional thing that they did to identify whoever is going to say something. He said, "I'd like to say something. No tongues or anything like that going on.

16b) ... said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience. (NKJV)

We know they were mostly Jews, but there was also a mixture of Gentiles and others that had come into Judaism and probably beginning to understand some of the truth of God. Then it goes on in verse 17; Paul summarizes the entire historical era of Israel.

17) The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. (KJV)

In a brief statement there, he covered Exodus 12 through 14.

18) And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness. (He put up with their ways in the wilderness.)

19) And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20) And after that He gave [unto them] judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21) And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22) And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony and said, I have found David the [son] of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. (KJV)

And the point being in verse 23...

23) Of this man's seed has God according to [His] promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus. (KJV)

He was an entirely different category than David and an entirely different category than human beings. So Christ has always been there, but now at this phase of God's plan He comes in the flesh. Continuing in verse 24, Paul is relating this as a historical account.

24) after John had first preached (John the Baptist), before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25) And as John was finishing his course, he said, "Who do you think I am? I am not [He]. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose." (NKJV)

He is pointing everything to Christ here, the very center of God's plan.

26) Men [and] brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. (NKJV)

They had heard about God before. They hadn't heard this part of the plan or perhaps they were hearing it, but they weren't getting it. They weren't making the connection yet.

27) For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, ... (NKJV)

They had access to everything. They had all of God's word. They had everything about Christ, but again they just did not make that connection.

27b) ... have fulfilled [them] in condemning [Him]. (NKJV)

Let's pause for a second. Those of us that have heard the things about God, that have heard God's plan, that have heard the New Testament; we've heard those things every Sabbath. We've been exposed to those things. Could God say the same thing about us? We hope not. The point is that there is more to being exposed to it. Les touched on this a little bit in his sermonette. There's more to being exposed to God's truth; the important thing is what are we doing about it? As he says, they heard the word, they heard the voices saying all these things, but they had no relationship. Consequently, they fulfill the prophecies anyway. It tells us that in verse 28.

28) And though they found no cause for death [in Him], they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.

29) Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took [Him] down from the tree and laid [Him] in a tomb. (NKJV)

But verse 30 is the very important part. There is a great big "but" here; there is a great big "however". This is my title:

God Raised Him From The Dead

What God is revealing through Paul at this point, this is the very zenith the very heart of the gospel. This is the heart of God's plan.

Verse 31 tells a little bit about the raised Christ.

31) He was seen for many days (forty actually) by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. (NKJV)

He showed Himself first to Mary Magdalene, then the twelve and then to five hundred others and who knows how many more in those forty days.

32) *And we declare to you glad tidings – ... (NKJV)*

Because this is good news; this is the good news.

32b) *... that promise which was made to the fathers. (NKJV)*

And this promise is sprinkled throughout the Old Testament. It's a pretty glorious event that he is talking about here.

33) *God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."*

34) *And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption (His body was not going to decay) He has spoken thus: "I will give you the sure mercies of David."*

35) *Therefore He also says in another Psalm; "You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption." (NKJV)*

All of these prophecies in the Old Testament came true in the person of Christ.

36) *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep (He died. He wasn't taken off to heaven or any other thing.), was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;*

He went through the normal biological process. He decayed. In verse 37 it showed the contrast here, the difference.

37) *but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. (NKJV)*

Again, not an ordinary human being, He saw no decay. The whole point there is that as great as David was, this one was greater. As great as Moses was, this one was greater. As great as Abraham was, this one was greater. God raised this one from the dead. The point for us too is that the glory goes to God and the Father says to give honor to the Son and by doing that we also give honor back to the Father. That's why we do that. Let's go to verse 38.

38) *Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; (NKJV)*

What we pictured during these Days of Unleavened Bread.

39) *and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (NKJV)*

God gave the law through Moses and as good as that law is it could not compare to this part of God's plan, the resurrected Christ. It's speaking about that incredible power that

was used to raise Christ, that same power through which we get our forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, that same power. That's what this day pictures, going through the water, as we'll see in a little bit. We're going to turn to Exodus and review that because this all ties in with baptism.

40) Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: (NKJV)

They heard it all, they heard it every Sabbath in the synagogue and again we don't want that to apply to us because one of those prophets was Isaiah. Turn to Isaiah. We know in Isaiah he's talking to Judah and he's talking to the city of Jerusalem. If we look at that first chapter very closely, the first few chapters actually, the context very closely describes our society today. Sometimes we don't get back to the prophets very often. Let's go to verse 9. Soon they were going to be conquered. Actually part of Israel had already been conquered.

Isaiah 1:9. Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom. We would have been made like Gomorrah. (NKJV)

That already happened; he's making a comparison here and not a very flattering one either. We can see that back in Genesis 18 and 19, what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah.

But he says about the remnant, those people that are left. Even after all the things that have happened to them, even after God intervening and everything for them, here is their state.

10) Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah: (NKJV)

He's talking about a degenerative state of the individuals, the people and the leaders at that particular time, if we look at the context closely. I like that verse from the Amplified because it makes it clearer, what Isaiah is actually telling them. He is accusing them really.

10) Hear Oh Jerusalem the word of the Lord, you rulers or judges of [another] Sodom. Give ear to the law and the teaching of our God you people of [another] Gomorrah. (Amplified)

In other words, that's what they had degenerated into.

11) "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the Lord. (NKJV)

Again, this is a category that we don't want to fall into.

11b) *"I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. (NKJV)*

We know that later on towards the end of Isaiah God says, *"To this one will I look, he who is of a poor and contrite spirit."* That's not what is going on here at all. The point He is making here is that it's far different from the ritual of show, what they were doing in their religion. In other words, they had all this knowledge; they just weren't doing anything with it. They weren't obeying God as we know from the history of Israel.

12) *"When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts?" (NKJV)*

In other words, you didn't learn to do it this way from Me.

13) *Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. (NKJV)*

Meaning, what they were doing.

14) *Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing [them]. (NKJV)*

Some people use those verses there to prove that the Sabbath and holy days are done away, but we have a different take on that. These days, if we use them as God intended, they are supposed to teach us spiritual lessons. That's what we should be getting from them.

15) *When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. (NKJV)*

You know, those are pretty strong words and we don't want God saying that about us. That brings us to another short list.

- Did we put away leaven this week? That's good.
- Did we eat unleavened bread this week? That's good too.
- Did we focus on Jesus Christ's resurrection this week? That's even better.
- Did we learn any spiritual lessons from all of that, as Les alluded to in his sermonette? That's even better. Because if we put away the leaven and if we ate the unleavened bread, but we didn't focus on His resurrection or any other spiritual lesson ... so what? What good did it do us? We just went through the motions.

We have to remember that even the Pharisees kept these days. They knew how to put out the leaven. They knew to eat unleavened bread. They did it very diligently, very

systematically. We don't just want to go through the motions of something that God instructs and miss the spiritual point.

Sometimes we do that. I heard a good example recently and it's the example of tithing. This always seems to come up when there is any discussion about tithing. Do I tithe on the gross or the net? This almost always comes up. James did a series on tithing recently, trying to clear up some of this. But there's always an argument. A lot of times that is a good question; do you tithe on the gross or the net? When we are new we need to know that, don't we? They will ask a member, they'll ask a minister. What do we tithe on? But sometimes the closed caption there is what's the least I can do? Do you see the attitude there? We have to think about that. Why does God even give us the tithing principal? He doesn't want money. He doesn't need money. If you could get it to Him, what would He use it on? He would have to throw it in the trash because He has absolutely no use for it. Other than to cover the basic needs of a functioning church, it's because of one very special reason. He wants us to learn to be a giving people. Money is where the heart is, right? We don't normally want to give that up.

I remember the story of years ago, and this happened at a Protestant Church and the minister was giving a sermon about tithing. I don't know who this guy was, maybe he was a farmer (I'm teasing the Roakes.). Anyway he stood up and said, "Ain't nobody going to tell me how to spend my money! He grabbed his family and walked out.

Getting back to the principal of tithing, the way it works if we do it the right way, we learn to be unselfish and generous. Those are Godly qualities, very unnatural for us as human beings. Do you ever notice that very successful people are giving people? They're usually serving people. They give more than their money. They give of their time. They do all kinds of things. Those are Christ-like qualities. Just thinking about that, sometimes we can miss the point.

Every once in a while I go back and read I Corinthians 13, the love chapter. Just think of the things we can do there and entirely miss the point, completely.

So again, how was your feast this year? Was the focus on Christ and the spiritual lessons? Our focus should be on Christ. It should be on getting the sin out, not just the crumbs. It has to mean something. We have to have a method; Les talked about this a bit in his sermonette. We can't do this under our own power. We just cannot do it. It's only through Christ's resurrection that we can have the power to change. Les said that.

Before we get too deeply in that I'd like to step back in time a bit. Let's go back to Exodus 13 and see if we can pick up on something here. We know this is the account of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt. They're fleeing and Pharaoh is chasing after them. We have the well-known story of them passing through the Red Sea. In Exodus 13, let's skip over some of that and drop down to verse 21.

Exodus 13:21. *And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.*

22) *He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night [from] before the people. (NKJV)*

There is a very important thing to notice there, that God stayed right there with them. We don't have those physical things. We don't have the cloud or the fire by night, but we still have that support. God is still there if we will tap into that. Let's go down to chapter 14.

Exodus 14:1. *Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:*

2) *"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.*

3) *"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They [are] bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.'" (NKJV)*

They're going to get lost and we're going to go get them. They're not going to get away. The wilderness is going to trap them.

4) *"Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, ... (NKJV)*

If we look back in chapter three and other places, God always warned Moses when He was going to harden Pharaoh's heart. He always did that. He is telling him here that He is going to harden Pharaoh's heart again because he will go after the children of Israel.

4b) *... 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. (NKJV)*

As bad as it appeared, God was going to use it to His honor and His glory.

5) *Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this (How stupid are we?), that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (NKJV)*

"What have we done? We need to get them back. Our entire economic system is going to collapse. The Stock Market will crash. Oh no! Sequestration will kick in and we'll have to stop the building projects on the pyramids!"

6) *So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.*

7) *Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. (NKJV)*

How clever is God to give us this story that we rehearse every year and it's just loaded with all kinds of lessons for us. We see every year that Pharaoh is a type of Satan. He pursues us all the time relentlessly. That is what he is doing here. Turn now to verse 10.

10) 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. (NKJV)

They were scared. They saw the huge cloud of dust. You remember that at this point in history, this army of Egypt may have been one of the largest armies on the face of the earth. This was mechanized armor, these chariots.

I once worked with a man that went through The Battle of the Bulge and of course the Germans with their tanks (I can't remember which army it was) but they took them completely by surprise. He said it was absolute terror. An infantryman with an M-1 or a machine gun, that's like throwing spit wads at those tanks. He said it was a slaughter and he said he was never so afraid in his whole life. He still had nightmares about it fifty or sixty years later. So this is kind of the state they were in here.

11) 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? (NKJV)

"Are you just torturing us?" ... they wanted to know. "We thought we had freedom. We thought we got away. You told us to leave Pharaoh and the rulers there told us to leave. They wanted to get rid of us before they all died, but here they are overtaking us."

12) "[Is] this not the word that we told you in Egypt ... (NKJV)

They said it there; they were apprehensive then about leaving.

12b) ... saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? (Then they said something significant that we can learn a lesson from.) For [it would have been] better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.' (NKJV)

They would have rather stayed in slavery. Isn't that a trait of human nature? People like to talk about liberty, but they turn around and do all kinds of things to stay in bondage. We just do that. It takes maturity to handle liberty. It really does. All of us who have raised children know that. We give them a little freedom and then a little more and a little bit more as they get older, but we also give them responsibility. That's how we raise mature adults because freedom without responsibility is a disaster. It's just anarchy is what happens. People, again, they claim to value freedom, but they

want their dependencies. They want their addictions. They want whatever makes them comfortable.

Aren't our politicians astute? They take advantage of that. Look at all the dependency they have out there for anyone who wants it. They create that. It keeps them in power.

13) 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."

14) "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

15) And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? (Why are you griping at Me?) Tell the children of Israel to go forward."

16) "But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. (NKJV)"

This isn't done by Moses' power. This is God's power.

16b) And the children of Israel shall go on dry [ground] through the midst of the sea."

17) "And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen." (NKJV)"

And people are going to remember. They remember the day if they read these words, how God handled this. They know that God did this. All kinds of people will try to come up with scientific evidence to say this isn't true, but God's word says this happened. This is true.

18) "Then the Egyptians shall know that I [am] the Lord, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."

19) And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. (NKJV)"

In other words, it came between the Egyptians and the camp of the Israelites, like a supernatural curtain.

20) So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness [to the one,] and it gave light by night [to the other,] so that the one did not come near the other all that night. (NKJV)"

He kept them away from them all night.

21) 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. (NKJV)"

This was a supernatural act. For God that is not a big show of power, but God did that so they could escape.

22) 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. (NKJV)

We're going to see that this is a type of baptism and how that all ties in with this and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

23) And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen.

24) 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. (NKJV)

To say the least.

25) And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; ... (NKJV)

He made sleds out of them. It didn't work. It brought them to a stop. You know, military strategists use this as a tactic. One of the favorite things for the military is to catch a column of tanks, a column of troop trucks in a valley or ravine where they have something blocking both sides and they can't get out. What they do is take out the first couple of tanks and take out the last couple of tanks and they are trapped. They either have to surrender or get slaughtered. That's a good tactic. Funny that God knew that! He stopped the Egyptians.

25b) ... and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians." (NKJV)

They said, "Well, we want to get out of here. We want to flee. We realize now that God is fighting for the Israelites."

26) Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots and on their horsemen." (NKJV)

Moses did it.

27) 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. (NKJV)

There was no more pathway through the sea and the Egyptians were gone, they were drowned in the sea.

28) Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, and horsemen [and] all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.

29) 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. (NKJV)

Then it goes on in chapter 15; we won't go there, but the children of Israel were so excited and Moses wrote a song. Maybe they got together and composed it. We don't have the music or the melody, but it must have been a happy song. It must have been pretty peppy. We don't know for sure. We don't have that music.

If that was a type of baptism, it's kind of like the same situation we are in when we were baptized. It was a first love. They were real excited, really, really happy. Verse 20 says they were even dancing with timbrels and making a lot of noise. They were partying. They were free and they were excited about being delivered by God.

I hope we have that same kind of excitement today. Things tend to wear that down, don't they? We tend to lose that excitement after a while. But we're kind of in the same situation. When the armies of Egypt in a sense, Satan or maybe something else in our life is nipping at our heels especially when we thought we had some distance and all of a sudden there it is. Things turn around on us. When we were baptized and came up out of the water, we had that forgiveness from God for our past sins. We had the grace of God for doing that, because we didn't deserve it. He showed us what we were like, He showed us all of our past sins, but were we excited? I know I was. I don't have a voice or musical talent whatsoever. I didn't come up with a song, but I was still pretty excited.

Our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ has to be more than head knowledge. It has to be more than just understanding, more than an intellectual pursuit. It should be something that we are excited about like the Israelites were. We should want more from God actually when we think about that. That's kind of what these days picture as we overcome the sin and the weaknesses or whatever it might be. We could be asking God, "What do you want me to do? How should I treat people? How do you want me to worship you? How can I conduct my life more like Jesus Christ?" We should be happy and excited about that.

Let's go to Romans 6, because it tells us that here. I know we've all read this before. Verses 3 through 5, Paul is telling the brethren at Rome.

Romans 6:3. *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (NKJV)*

We pictured His death on Passover night.

4) *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, ... (NKJV)*

It's a type of death; that's why we go under the water. It's a type of burial.

4b) *... that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (that means the power of the Father), even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

5) *for if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be [in the likeness] of [His] resurrection, (NKJV)*

He's alive, raised by the power of God and He is at the right hand of God. We will see some scriptures quickly here. Just because of that, like the Israelites responded to God delivering them through the Red Sea, a type of baptism, they were excited. They sang a song. That's kind of the way our response should be because of what God has done for us. He set us free, He is alive and He is at the right hand of the Father. We want to deeply appreciate the fact that as our Savior, He died for us. We can't worship a dead Christ. He was resurrected. If Christ didn't rise, then everything we are doing is in vain. We're wasting our time here.

Again, a resurrected Christ, resurrected by the power of God opens up everything for us. It opens up those spiritual doors to happiness, to hope, the doors to the Kingdom and it gives us the power to change if we will tap that power.

Let's go to 1 Peter 3. Actually the New Testament used a couple different types of baptism. In 1 Peter 3 he's talking about Noah and the flood, Christ had to die once for sin. The just had to die for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Then it talks about God speaking to the spirits in prison and actually that goes clear back to the time of the flood in history. Then he talks about the flood being like baptism. Then there's a parenthetical statement that says baptism is not like taking a bath. We don't need to scrub the dirt off. That's not the point of it. We're not saved by that bath, but we are saved by the answer of a good conscience towards God because we change at that point.

When you think about that, isn't it incredible that we can have that relationship with the Son of God sitting at the right hand of God's throne? We can have that relationship. You know, that's not a theory. It's a fact for all of us. We can have access to all of that incredible power that God has. You talk about hanging out with powerful people, we have that access. We can do that. Sometimes we have to ask ourselves, how real was that relationship? How real is our image of Christ sitting at God's right hand? How real is that to us? Actually if we think about that, about His death, what He did for us and even bringing us to the point of repentance and baptism, that ought to be a tremendous motivation for us to change, not only during the Days of Unleavened Bread but at other times in our lives too. 1 Peter 3:21 kind of says what I've just been saying.

1 Peter 3:21. *There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

1 Peter 4:1. *Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, (NKJV)*

Christ was here in the flesh. He died for us. He never committed a sin and our response should be not to sin, to cease from sin as it says here. We should be likeminded in the sense that we look at our mistakes and put all those mistakes behind us and move on from there, as Les was saying in his sermonette.

2) that he no longer should live the rest of [his] time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

3) We have spent enough of our past lifetime (And Boy, haven't we!) in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. (NKJV)

So again, our reaction to the death of Christ should be that He suffered because of our mistakes. We don't want to repeat those things and that's what these days picture. We had a clear conscience at the point of baptism because God forgave all of our past sins at that point. Because we know He is at the right hand of God, we know He has the power that we can tap. We want to maintain that state. We don't want to slip backwards even though sometimes we do, don't we?

Part of the picture of the holy days is that the Father raised Christ from the dead and being alive He does give us the strength to overcome, if we will go to Him. But we have to really believe and trust in that power from God. I made a short bullet list of "what ifs."

- What if you've been diagnosed with cancer or had some other serious illness? Do we trust God to take care of that?
- Some people suffer with horrible migraines for weeks and months. That just knocks you right out of the saddle.
- What if you're having job pressures and you know you're going to lose your job? You know the job market out there is pretty bleak. The chances of getting another job are pretty slim. So, what if?
- What if you're struggling with an addiction? People do. Even God's people sometimes struggle with addictions.
- Here's one that we all face: What if you're struggling with some of your own personality and character flaws? We all have a little bit of that. What if you have a character flaw like a really bad temper? Don't we all like to use the excuse, "Well, my dad was like that, or my grandfather was like that, it's in my genes and I can't help it." Well, that may be true that we inherited some of that mentality or temperament, but that's just part of our spiritual battle.

- What if you're struggling with discouragement or depression and that happens to all of us from time to time, doesn't it?

The point is that any one of these "what ifs" can weaken us. Where do we get the strength to overcome and face these things? Where do we get that? Paul tells us. There is one source and one source only. It's in Philippians 4 and it's something that we really have to believe and turn to. Of course, Paul had an easy, rosy time; no stress, not much going on in his life, just kind of kick back and cruise. No. In Philippians 4:13 he tells us that the only way he survived ...

Philippians 4:13. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (NKJV)*

That one at God's right hand. If we just ate unleavened bread and got rid of the leavening, but we haven't thought about our temper, we haven't thought about these other flaws and things that keep us down, we haven't thought about our hurt feelings or our repressed anger. If we are not willing to deal with these things, we are not taking advantage of that power. We are not taking advantage of the resurrection of Christ because He is at God's right hand and we can go to Him.

We have the power to choose. We can choose never to address those issues. We can choose never to extend forgiveness to anyone. We can choose to eat unleavened bread and just get rid of the leavening. We can make those choices, but shouldn't we be concerned that God the Father and Christ are looking down and they're saying, "That's it? That's all they are getting out of this?" We don't really want to be there.

How much unleavened bread can we eat in a lifetime? How much can we get rid of? So there's got to be a lot more that we think about during these days. We can be really zealous about getting the crumbs out, but if we forget about the anger problem, if we forget about the character problems, what have we accomplished spiritually? Nothing, we've just gone through the motions.

Sometimes we think, "Boy, I really had a good year this year for the Days of Unleavened Bread. I really got the leaven out. I've done just great this year. That crack in the table is just bright and shiny. There isn't a crumb in there. That toaster, Man, I'll tell you what; I cranked my compressor up to 500 PSI and I just about blew the chrome off of it, but it's clean this year."

We don't want God saying, "Is that all they got out of this? Is that all Jack got out of this or anyone else got out of this?" We need to do less of those things and more of the other spiritual things, because God gives us that power through baptism when the minister laid hands on us and asked God for a little bit of that holy spirit. That gave us the connection right to the right side of that throne where Christ sits. He gave us that connection. We're supposed to get rid of that old man. That's what these days picture and we need to be doing that even more and maybe some of these other things even less.

It's getting harder and harder to be a Christian these days, isn't it? A lot of people believe that the verse there in Philippians 14 is just an empty platitude. They think that's all it is. Can we really do things through Christ strengthening us today? We don't want to be naïve. Just as a reference, Proverbs 14:15 says, *The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.* We need to conduct our lives with wisdom.

Here in Philippians 3:17; are we still there? You know I bring my Bible up here because this is my security, but I can't read it. I have to print it in big letters. Paul is giving some encouragement here to the Philippians and that Church was doing pretty well. He's giving them some encouragement though, but he doesn't want them to be naïve.

Philippians 3:17. *Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (NKJV)*

Some people don't, even in the Church they don't.

18) For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, [that they are] the enemies of the cross of Christ: (NKJV)

That way of life that we follow.

19) whose end [is] destruction, whose god [is their] belly, and [whose] glory [is] in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things. (NKJV)

Purely sensual, purely politically correct things. Being realistic, God has given us understanding and knowledge. We understand who the enemies of the cross are. We can look at our entire culture today, our educational systems, our government/political system and our own Supreme Court recently. Traditional marriage is falling by the wayside. That is a God-ordained institution, but let's put it up for a vote, let's look at the polls, we've got to follow the polls. That's what people want.

Some people kind of make you feel that if you're a Christian you have to love everybody. This sermon isn't all about that, but the reality is that we have to love some people from a distance, and some people from a big distance. Some people we have to love by maybe not giving them the time of day. You just stay away from them. Actually that is love. There are some syrupy religions out there that try to love and be nice to everybody. When we think about that, do we realize that Christ was not nice to everyone? We have accounts of that. Go back and read Matthew 23 and how He dealt with the Pharisees and the hypocrites of His day. Look at some of Paul's dealings with people. He was not always nice to people. To make an odd point here, you know, we don't have a Christian requirement to be nice to people. Sometimes we can't relate to people. It doesn't mean that we don't have to be civil to people, because we have to be civil to everyone. Some people like to entrap you emotionally. They like to control you with guilt. They might say something like, "You have to be nice to me." No, we don't. I can stay away from you if that's what I need to do. I have to be civil to you, but I can

stay away from you if that's what I must do. You don't either. You don't have to let people control your life with guilt, and some people will do that. Philippians 4:4 tells us how we should be.

Philippians 4:4. *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*
5) *Let your gentleness (humility) be known to all men. The Lord [is] at hand.*
6) *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; (NKJV)*

Go to that source of strength. Go to that source of power.

7) *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (NKJV)*

It will keep us on an even keel.

8) *Finally, brethren, (We've been through this many times) whatever things are true, whatever things [are] noble, whatever things [are] just, whatever things [are] pure, whatever things [are] lovely, whatever things [are] of good report, if [there is] any virtue and if [there is] anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (NKJV)*

That is a Godly frame of mind.

9) *The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. (NKJV)*

Paul, as we've seen, says, "Follow me as I follow Christ." It's not follow him because of who or what he was.

10) *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.*
11) *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: (NKJV)*

This teaches us something very important for our lives. No matter what the stimulus is, no matter what comes at us, we need to react properly, no matter what the environment, no matter what the conditions are, we need to react properly. We can only do that through that connection, being like Christ.

12) *I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (NKJV)*

That's why you and I have good days and bad days. We can enjoy the good days, but we're going to have some bad days. Like I mentioned earlier, we need to be on an

even keel. The only way we can do that is by keeping God the Father and Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, no matter what happens to us. The good days are going to have their challenges and the bad days are going to have challenges. We should have a determination not to run from the trials that come upon us and cry about those things saying, "Why is it always happening to me. I'm a believer. Woe is me!" Doesn't scripture tell us that the rain falls on the just and the unjust? That reminds me of that song, "Bring on the Rain." I don't know the lyrics. Again the point being if we really have the attitude that we can do all things through Jesus Christ, we will have the determination to handle those bad days. Continue on in Philippians 4:13; and again Paul had more than his share of bad days, but this was his approach.

14) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (NKJV)

I can survive whatever life throws at me. I can survive that; that was Paul's mentality. His life was a Christ centered life.

If you will suffer me, I'd like to throw in one of my golf analogies. In golf we have good shots and bad shots and we have bad shots over here, the good shot is over here. We know that we're going to have more bad games than good games. That's just a fact. What we do is practice. We try to narrow the space between the bad shots and the good shots, make that narrower. We could apply that approach to our Christians lives, can't we? If we get the power and the help and the strength that we need and please God more, we can make that space between the good days and the bad days maybe a bit smaller in our lives. Not always, but there is a spiritual joy in balance. Sometimes it takes us a long hard time to find that. Some people never find it.

In just talking about Christ's resurrection, there is another piece to this and it is the joy of grace. We spent some time going through some scriptures to show us how to have more success than we've had, if we can just tap into that power that we're already connected to, if we haven't lost that connection. We can have more overcoming because of that power. We can change and grow.

I'd be doing a disservice if I don't mention that there is another side to this. Guess what? We're going to stumble and we're going to fall. It's going to happen. If we think about that power and if we think about the things that Paul taught, if we think of that and Christ's resurrection, it helps us realize that we can get the power to change. But also what about the power and strength we need to deal with our failures because we need to do that. In Hebrews 4, this is a very important section and I believe Paul wrote this.

Hebrews 4:14. *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. (NKJV)*

Our confession is that contract, that agreement we made when we came up out of that watery grave at baptism. We said, "Yes, I will follow You."

15) *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses (and we all have them), but was in all [points] tempted as [we are, yet] without sin.*

16) *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NKJV)*

And we will have those times of need, sometimes more often than not, but we can go to God for that. We have an outstanding example about dealing with failure ... Psalm 51. Let's turn there. Don't we all know what's going on in Psalm 51? David's life is a total disaster. He's got a huge mess. You talk about a king-size mess (no pun intended) the train has really come off the rails for David in Psalm 51. But here is why he is a man after God's own heart. Where does he go?

Psalm 51:1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. (NKJV)*

Erase it. He had to live with the scars. Rick talked about that recently. But David is suffering the consequences of what he did.

2) *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

3) *For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin [is] always before me (the scars).*

4) *Against You, You only have I sinned, and done [this] evil in Your sight – That You may be found just when You speak, [and] blameless when You judge.*

5) *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. (NKJV)*

That's how he started out, but God gave him His spirit and His help.

6) *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden [part] You will make me to know wisdom. (NKJV)*

He realized that he had failed. He had heard it all, he had listened, he knew God's law, he knew everything but he didn't use it.

7) *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

8) *Make me hear joy and gladness, [that] the bones You have broken may rejoice. (NKJV)*

That expression there means that when he came to the full realization to what he had done, the consequences of his sin, he was crushed. That's how you get your bones broken, you get crushed.

9) *Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.*

10) Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (NKJV)

He had that and was in danger of losing it because of what he had done.

11) Do not cast me away from Your presence. And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12) Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. And uphold me [by Your] generous Spirit. (NKJV)

You know, David experienced that generosity of God's love, mercy and forgiveness the hard way. Let's hope we don't have to go there and suffer like he did. Let's also remember again that we have that same exact powerful source today. We have it.

Here are a few closing scriptures that sum it up.

Hebrews 1:1. *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (NKJV)*

The entirety of the Bible points to what is being said here, including everything rehearsed during these Days of Unleavened Bread. God spoke those things in the past. We have that, we rehearsed that and we go through the Israelites leaving Egypt, type of sin and all of that.

2) has in these last days (Now) spoken to us by [His] Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (NKJV)

Talk about power; we can tap into that.

3) who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged out sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (NKJV)

Where He is still today and we have that connection to Him.

4) having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (NKJV)

Again, that being only one name. We have other scriptures that say, "Only one name under heaven through which we can obtain salvation." Only one, being Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:21. *There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, ... (NKJV)*

Not just the removal of the filth of the flesh; not just putting out leaven; not just eating unleavened bread for seven days.

21b) ... but the answer of a good conscience toward God), ... (NKJV)

And we were unleavened at that point of baptism, freed like the Israelites at the Red Sea. But we made that agreement to follow Him, putting away the sin, the leavening out of our lives, not during these days but for our entire lives. It's all done by that power, that love, the grace and mercy.

*21 continued) ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and
authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (NKJV)*

And if all those are made subject to Him, how much more subject are we?