

The Lord Our Righteousness

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This is a unique and interesting day. According to the Hebrew calendar, today is the fourteenth day of the first month of the year. For us here in Kennewick, this is the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the first month—the month of Abib. Last night after sunset was the beginning of the fourteenth. After sunset tonight we will be beginning the fifteenth day of the first month, which is the first day of Unleavened Bread. The first day of Unleavened Bread is an annual Sabbath day—tomorrow is the seventh annual Sabbath day commanded to be kept each year. These commanded annual Sabbaths are in addition to the weekly Sabbath which is to be observed each week on the seventh day. Hopefully, if you are baptized you received the Holy Spirit and if you have received the Holy Spirit you observed the Passover ceremony last night. We ate bread and wine. The bread and wine are symbolic of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. The time of His death corresponds to about the same time we are meeting here today.

Jesus was crucified and died on a cross on the afternoon of the fourteenth. He was killed by the Romans at the request of the Jews and the Priests. At the Passover ceremony, the night before He died, Jesus described the bread and the wine as symbols of His death. The bread and wine were not His sacrifice, they only symbolized His suffering and His sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Lamb in Egypt and thereafter, as an annual ceremony symbolized the death of Jesus Christ. The death of the Lamb, like the bread and the wine, only symbolize the sacrifice of Jesus. The Passover ceremony at the beginning of the fourteenth does not coincide of the actual suffering and death of Christ. Rather, it is a solemn recognition of that sacrifice.

Tonight, we will be celebrating our release from the bondage of sin. The ultimate bondage of sin is the penalty of death. Jesus Christ suffered and died as our redemption for the penalty of sin. Tonight, is a night for the celebration of our freedom. Both the solemn assembly at the beginning of the Passover day and the joyous celebration tonight are both commanded assemblies or commanded observances. As has been demonstrated in recent sermons, Jesus instituted the bread and wine as symbols of His suffering and death. We eat bread and drink wine as part of the annual Passover ceremony.

This historic sequence of events is important and revealing. After sunset and supper, near the beginning of the fourteenth, on the night that Jesus was betrayed, He instituted the bread and wine as symbols of the Passover sacrifice. After He was betrayed and taken prisoner, He was interrogated and suffered abuse and beatings throughout the night. He was crucified and died on the afternoon of the fourteenth; He was buried on the fourteenth. He was in the grave for three days and three nights. He was resurrected by Almighty God the Father. He ascended to the Father and presented Himself as a sacrifice for the purpose of redeeming humanity from the penalty of sin.

His presentation to the Father and the Father's acceptance of that sacrifice are represented by the wave sheaf offering. Each year the wave sheaf offering is commemorated on the Sunday within the seven weeks of Unleavened Bread, as the beginning of the count of fifty days to Pentecost. This year, that time of the wave sheaf is tomorrow. The Passover symbols that Christ instituted were not new. They were introduced before the existence of Israel and Moses. The sequence of events of the Passover on the day Jesus was crucified were laid out as a type in the book of Genesis. I laid that out in my last split sermon on January 30. The sequence of events in Genesis 14 through 15 is that the Priest of God brought the bread and the wine to the meeting with Abram. The Priest is identified as Melchizedek. We know from other scriptures that that person was Jesus Christ. Rick Railston gave a sermon revealing scriptures that showed Jesus is the person described as Melchizedek in Genesis and the Psalms. If you are interested, the title is "Christ Our High Priest" given on October 28, 2017. If you do a search on the Pacific Church of God website you can find that. There is also a transcript of it. When I did a search, I did M-E-L-C-H and there's a few occurrences where Melchizedek will come up.

When Jesus instituted the bread and the wine as Passover symbols, he corresponded the relationship with the bread and the wine to the events of Melchizedek in Genesis 14. Later, after the meeting with Melchizedek, Abram had a vision where God spoke to him. In that vision, Abram asked God about His promise that he would have a child. God renewed the promise and gave instructions to Abram to prepare a covenant sacrifice. After the vision, during the daylight hours, Abram prepared a sacrifice of three animals and two birds for a covenant ceremony. He cut each of the animals into two pieces in preparation for entering into a covenant with God. The covenant is known as the "Covenant of the Parts" and is a covenant of promise. The covenant assured Abram that God would fulfill His promise. Today is the anniversary of that day.

The record of scripture is consistent and true. A person might ask, what's the point of all this? The point is that God is in the process of bringing sons and daughters to glory as His children. God's children must be righteous and holy. He wants us to understand how He will make that happen. The meaning of today is the beginning point for the understanding God's plan. Today memorializes a day of reckoning, a day of settling up. "Settling up" is a phrase that is often used for resolving issues. For example, a couple of business associates may get together and "settle up" any debts or balances due to the other.

Because this is a day of "reckoning" or "settling up" it is also a day of death and darkness. This day is a day of darkness and death because it memorializes the day of "settling up" for the debt of death which is the cost of sin. I hope to demonstrate in an overview approach, that this day memorializes both—the execution of the judgment of death and the promise of life. One might ask, is that not a paradox? Is that not a contradiction? How can the same day memorialize both death and life? The mystery is, God established from the beginning that the penalty for sin is death and God does not change.

We know from scripture that God is also giving an opportunity for us sinners to live forever as His children. The problem is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. None of us have been able to live up to the standard of never sinning against God. The penalty of any sin is death, yet the promise is for eternal life. From the outset, there was a problem of having a death penalty for sin which cannot be commuted. Children, who with free choice and decisions and actions will sin. Bringing these children to maturity would seem impossible to achieve. Fortunately, God has a plan that remedies this question, for this difficult conundrum or problem.

Adam and Eve brought the death penalty onto themselves and all their descendants. God will not allow rebellion to thrive and continue forever. Therefore, He ordained the penalty of death for sin. Sin is rebellion against God, either through ignorance or intentional defiance. We see this in 1 Peter 1:13-17.

1 Peter 1:13 *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

14) as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

15) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

16) because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy.”

17) And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

(NKJV)

God ordained that the penalty for sin was, is and always will be death. God does not change and His commandments do not change. God redeemed humanity and all of His creation by the death of the individual through whom He created all things that were created. By virtue of the fact that all things were created by God through that individual, meant that the value of that individual was and is greater than all of creation. The death of that individual therefore is of greater value than the creation and it could be offered as a sacrifice to redeem creation from the sentence of death and destruction.

Continuing here in 1 Peter.

18) knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

20) He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. (NKJV)

God ordained from the very beginning, that the penalty for sin would be paid by someone of greater value than all of us, than all of creation. Jesus willingly divested Himself of all the power of a God Being and allowed Himself to become part of the creation. This was done through the spiritual conception into the physical seed of Mary

by the Power of God the Father. He lived a physical life without sin. He willingly offered His life as Almighty God's sacrifice to pay the penalty of death for all sins—past, present and future.

Notice Colossians 1:12-15.

Colossians 1:12 ... *giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

13) He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

14) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

16) For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17) And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. (NKJV)

Notice that the sacrifice of Christ qualified for the redemption of everything that was created. People often think that the redemption by the sacrifice of Christ only applies to those whom God calls and resurrects to eternal life. That limits what was redeemed. God redeemed all that was created. The value of Christ's life exceeds the value of everything except God the Father. We see that in 1 John 2:1

1 John 2:1 *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

2) And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, [this is important] and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (NKJV)

Everything was redeemed, not just the church. Also, the whole world was redeemed and as noted in Colossians, that means everything. Recently as part of my work, I listened to a seminar. The fellow who was giving the seminar described how he had purchased a business and when he purchased the business, the previous owner had gone in and showed him all of the things the company had. They had several vans and he showed him all the parts he had in the warehouse and actually had a lot of pride that he had all these parts. He had parts that nobody else could get—they were gone, they were obsolete. People out there had products that needed those parts and he had a certain amount of pride in that. When the new guy bought the business, he said that on the first weekend that he pulled in vans—car haulers—loaded up the guy's vans, shipped them to another state. Then he went through the inventory that this guy was so proud of, and he actually threw it away. You might consider the man bought everything; he paid the man for, everything that he had in that business. As the owner he did not have to keep what he did not want. He had the right to throw everything away and only keep what he wanted. In God's plan, everything is redeemed by the purchase price of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The penalty of death has been paid. However, remember

God does not change. He will still require the death penalty for those who do not mature or who continue in rebellion against God and do not accept God as their God.

Similar to how the new owner could do as he pleased with what he had purchased, now everything that exists will, for now, only exist solely at the discretion of Almighty God. In Genesis 3:15 is the first scriptural reference to this promise of redemption that I am aware of. God will defeat the power of sin and the penalty of death and destruction over the creation. This is where Satan received the word of his punishment for deceiving Eve and enticing Adam and Eve to rebel against God and His instructions. God is pronouncing judgment on Satan.

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” (NKJV)*

Enmity is not a word I normally use. It means “a state of hostility” or “open opposition”. The “seed” of the devil are those who are in rebellion against God. The “Seed” of the woman is a reference to Jesus Christ and His redemption of everything. *He will bruise your head*, means that Satan will be destroyed. *Satan bruising the heel* is a reference to the fact that redemption of all humanity for the penalty of sin would require the death penalty of Christ. The two seeds are contrasted again in Genesis 13, 14 and 15. In Genesis 13:13.

Genesis 13:13 *But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD. (NKJV)*

Sodom and their wickedness and rebellion against God are representative of the “seed” of Satan and his rebellion against God. Satan is the father of rebellion and lies. Sodom in this story, represents the “seed” of the serpent. Sodom, like Egypt in the Bible represents sin. The next verse in chapter 13 is where God is repeating and expanding the promises that He had made to Abraham in Genesis 12. You can see those promises in the first three verses of Genesis 12 and in verse 7. God had promised in chapter 12 that in Abram, all of the families of the earth shall be blessed. He also promised a land of inheritance to the “seed” of Abraham. I’m quoting this from the King James version. I normally quote from the New King James, but I am quoting from the King James version because the King James version uses the word “seed” which relates back to the “seed” in Genesis 3 and also as we shall see in Galatians. Other translations like the New King James translated “seed” as “descendants” but “seed” is actually what it means. In quoting from the King James version in Genesis 12:7.

Genesis 12:7 *And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. (KJV)*

The promise of the “seed” is directly related to the “Seed” that will destroy Satan. In Genesis 15:6 it is speaking of Abram.

Genesis 15:6 *And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (KJV)*

As we will see when we get to Galatians, the promises are dual. One is for the physical descendants and nations and the other is for the spiritually gettle (totally reliant) into the family of God that only comes through Christ. That spiritual family will be innumerable. Consider the contrast between “the seed of Satan” as Sodom and “the faith of Abraham” as righteousness. The last few verses of chapter 14 describe a “settling up” of affairs after Abraham returned from rescuing Lot and his family from the five kings that had kidnapped them from Sodom. Lot and his family lived in Sodom, the place described as exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD. The sequence here is a meeting of a “settling up”. When the king of Sodom offered the goods of Sodom to Abram, in contrast to Melchizedek, the High Priest who brought bread and wine, Abraham could have chosen to accept the gain from the king of evil and wickedness—the king of Sodom—or, as he chose, make an offering to God in tithes and worship of faith. He chose the symbols of the sacrifice of redemption—the bread and the wine. Abraham thought faith in God embraced those promises.

Those who reject God’s rule and authority have no part or way into the family of God. You can’t buy your way in, you can’t bring your wealth and say, “Please let me in.” In chapter 15:17-18 the parts that were killed and cut in two on the fourteenth were still laid out into the next day. The next day of the first month began when the sun set and it was dark.

Genesis 15:17 *And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, [so from the fourteenth we have a new day, this is the next day, the fifteenth] that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. (NKJV)*

So again, on the same day, the animals were killed on the fourteenth and they were still laid out, waiting for God, into the fifteenth.

18) On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram [on the fifteenth], saying: To your descendants I have given this land ... (NKJV)

On that day, the fifteenth day of the first month, God accepted those covenant sacrifices and ratified the covenant. God’s ratification of the “Covenant of the Parts”, which is a covenant of promise. It corresponds to the meaning of the wave sheaf offering when God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the redemption of all things created. We celebrate that acceptance by God and our freedom from the penalty of sin tonight. Tonight, is a night of joyous celebration. We delight in our freedom from the penalty of sin. This night, which is observed annually, is called the Night To Be Much Observed. We become a part of that covenant through our faith in God, by repulsion (inspiring aversion or distaste) of sin and our personal covenant with God through baptism. By our faith, righteousness is imputed to us. However, our righteousness is not enough. Jesus

said He was the only way to the Father and eternal life. Our righteousness only comes through Christ. The promise of our righteousness can be found in verse 5 and 6 of Jeremiah 23.

Jeremiah 23:5 *Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. (NKJV)*

We will see in a moment that that Branch is Jesus Christ—the “Seed” promised to Abram.

6) In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (NKJV)

Our opportunity for meaningful righteousness that is acceptable to God comes only through Jesus Christ. Notice this in Galatians 3:13-19.

Galatians 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) ... (NKJV)*

He paid the penalty; Jesus paid the price of death which we have all earned for sin. He died for us so that the Father could redeem us through the death of Jesus Christ.

14) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
15) Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. (NKJV)

When we, as humans, make covenants, we do not add to them without a separate agreement. God's covenant is even more binding.

16) Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, And to your Seed,” who is Christ.
17) And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. (NKJV)

The covenant of promise was actually before Israel and Moses. The covenants with Israel do not supersede or modify God's covenant of salvation and righteousness through the one “Seed”, Jesus Christ.

18) For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19) What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. (NKJV)

One of the functions of a High Priest is to mediate between God and humans. As we have noted, Jesus was involved as the Priest of the Most-High God at the time of the “Covenant of Parts”. This “Covenant of Parts” was promised on the fourteenth of the first month and ratified with Abraham on the fifteenth day of the first month. These are important for us today. The covenants and events concerning Israel and Egypt and the Exodus do not invalidate, revoke or cancel the significance, meaning or sequence of the events surrounding God’s covenant—a promise between God and Abram. Before the covenant of promise was made, the symbols of that sacrifice—the bread and the wine—were offered from God through the High Priest or the mediator of God, Melchizedek. Continuing in verse 20 of Galatians 3.

20) Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. (NKJV)

Mediator is between two individuals or two parties. There is only one Almighty God. That God requires that we be holy because He is holy. Our opportunity for righteousness which comes before our opportunity to become holy comes only through Christ. Our High Priest and Mediator is Jesus Christ—the Lord our Righteousness.