

Introduction: It seems everybody loves Easter. This year, because of all that is happening, stores are closed today. This is good. For some, Easter is mostly about spring, creation coming back in bloom, and a little indulgence in sweets and chocolate. For others, Easter is celebrating The Resurrection Life of Jesus The Savior. But neither of is fully adequate. *** God built a principle into our world after the initial rebellion that resulted in the loss of paradise: Death must precede Life. Without The Cross and The Death of Jesus on Friday, there is no Resurrection or hope of new birth to new life IN The Savior. *** What happened on The Cross? Jesus gave a hint on Thursday afternoon in the Temple courts. Philip and Andrew brought some Greeks to Jesus. He told them all that a seed must fall to the ground and die in order to produce many seeds (*John 12:20-33*). *** Jesus further explained The Cross at His last Passover when He gave the Sacrament of Communion. After He and His disciples had finished the Passover, He added two more elements to fulfill the prophets (*Isaiah 52:13-53:12* being the most specific). First He broke bread, gave it to them and said, 'This IS My body given for you all' (*Luke 22:14-19*). Next He took a cup of wine and said, 'This IS The New Covenant of My blood poured out for you all' (*Luke 22:20-22*). *** Jesus had previously explained all this to the Jews, but they were repelled by what He said SO all except Peter and the other apostles went away. (Read and reread *John 6:25-68* slowly and prayerfully, allowing God's Truth to sink into your soul.) *** For us, some 2,000 years later, the bottom line is this: Unless we crucify our sins, every way in which we fall short of God's perfection, WITH Jesus on The Cross on which He died FOR our sins, it is impossible to share in His Resurrection Life. (*Galatians 2:19-21*; *Romans 6:5-14*; *2 Corinthians 5:11-21*) Doing this will necessarily require pain and suffering. The only way to know Jesus and be united with Him and His Life by faith IS to first die with Him to our sins. Then we will share in His Resurrection Life. However, IF we do not know Jesus at all, we will suffer in our innate incompetence. *** NOW we are ready to look into the extreme joy of the resurrection life available to us IN The Savior Jesus.

I. Father God is blessed for giving us new life through His resurrected Son and protecting us through faith to the end.

(*Verses 3-5*)

A. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ gives us new birth by His great Mercy into an inheritance kept in heaven. (*Verses 3-4*)

Praise: Peter opens by blessing God. He uses a word from *Psalms* where Yahweh is the object of the praise of His people. (A sample from *Psalms*: *18:46-50*; *28:6-9*; *31:22-23*) He is blessing: The God and Father of The Lord of us Jesus Christ, nine words in the original. Ten reasons follow. (*Verse 3a*)

But notice: This blessing of praise comes from those who have surrendered in faith and love to The Savior given by God. Only such people are able to give God unrestrained praise. (*Verse 3a*)

1. Who according to His great Mercy – one of His great character attributes. (*Verse 3b*)

2. Has given new birth (lit. caused to be born again) to us. (*Verse 3c*)

3. Into a living hope. (*Verse 3d*)

Now: As the worldwide death count continues rising, people need hope today – some more than others.

4. Through The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (*Verse 3e*)

Death before New Life: Remember, for Jesus to rise from the dead He had to willingly give up His Life in the first place. He died on The Cross in LOVE so we might be reconciled to God.

Long planned: The death of The Savior on The Cross for humanity was planned by The Trinity before one particle of physical matter was created. (*Revelation 13:8*)

Predicted: David predicted His resurrection one thousand years before it happened. (*Psalms 16:7-11*; *Acts 2:22-36*) The Cross was necessary and The Resurrection put the stamp of approval of Father God on Jesus' sacrifice.

Putting it together:

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5. Into inheritance. (*Verse 4a*)

Land and Sanctuary: Miriam's inspired song after the crossing of the Red Sea puts together the inheritance of land and a sanctuary in which God's people would worship. (*Exodus 15:16b-17*)

6. The inheritance is: imperishable and undefiled and [unfading]. (*Verse 4be*)

7. Kept (guarded) in heaven to you all. (*Verse 4c*)

Kept-guarded: This guarding carries the sense of a protected place or fortress. David used fortress (and many other words of security) in a poem-*Psalms* to describe Yahweh, his loving God. (*144:1-2*)

B. In power, God is watching over us through faith into salvation to be revealed in the last season. (*Verse 5*)

8. Those watched over in the power of God. (*Verse 5a*)

Watch over: This word describes God's providential care as He always sees His people. We might not always be aware of this care. But in the fifth of fifteen songs pilgrims sang on their three times a year pilgrimages to Jerusalem this power of God is beautifully expressed and praised. (*Psalms 124:6-8*)

9. Through faith to salvation. (*Verse 5b*)

Faith to save: It is by grace through faith people experience salvation. (*Ephesians 2:8-10*)

10. It is all ready to be revealed in the last season (time). (*Verses 5c*)

II. You are experiencing extreme joy even in trials that test faith, and you love Jesus Christ while waiting to see Him. (Verses 6-9)

- A. This joy is even in the short necessary times of sorrow to prove The Faith, of greater value than gold, to glory in the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Verses 6-7)
1. In which salvation you all are experiencing extreme joy, IF now for a little while it is necessary you all are being sorrowful in various tests-trials. (Verse 6)
James: Jesus' half-brother James wrote that trials test faith and produce perseverance that leads to maturity so brothers IN Christ lack nothing. (James 1:1-4)
Jesus' last blessing: Jesus' last Beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount says those who are persecuted for righteousness (a great trial of faith) are in The Kingdom of heaven and will have a great reward. (Matthew 5:10-12)
 2. The reason for trials and sorrow is the proof of The Faith of you all, which is of greater value than gold that perishes through fire. (Verse 7a)
The Faith: The Faith is all in, nothing held back, surrender to Jesus in response to His demonstrated LOVE on The Cross and power demonstrated in His Resurrection.
 3. And, being tested, The Faith may be found to praise and glory and honor in the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Verse 7b)
Second coming: This is a clear reference to Jesus' second coming to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5)
- B. Having not seen Him, you all are loving Him and believing, being extremely joyful while obtaining the end of your faith: salvation. (Verses 8-9)
1. Whom [Jesus Christ] not having seen, you all are loving Him. (Verse 8a)
Loving The One not seen: Consider the blessing Jesus gave after he showed Himself to Thomas: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. (John 20:24-31)
Challenge: What matters most is our relationship with Jesus. To know His Person is more important than knowing all He has done for us. So, may we give ourselves to Him for what He did on The Cross and in His Resurrection; but, even more so, may we give ourselves to Him because He did this for us out of His character of LOVE.
 2. And not seeing him now, you are experiencing extreme joy, inexpressible and filled with glory. (Verse 8b)
Lifestyle of faith: God has given us everything IN His Son, The Savior, so we may have extreme joy as a result of a lifestyle of faith. Let's live every moment of our lives by faith in The Faithful Savior.
 3. As you all are obtaining the end of The Faith: salvation of your lives. (Verse 9)
Continuing to the end: The end of our lifestyle of faith is salvation of body, soul and spirit. Salvation gives life that is ongoing, abundant and with true purpose. We get to serve the resurrected Savior in His Kingdom, now and until forever. This is hope gained through His Resurrection.

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III. This salvation by Christ's sufferings, and the glories after, had prophets seeking what was being revealed to them by The Spirit in them. (Verses 10-12)

- A. Concerning salvation, the prophets searched and investigated, seeking what person or season The Spirit of Christ was making clear to them, predicting Christ's sorrows and the glories after. (Verses 10-11)
1. Concerning this salvation, prophets searched out and investigated concerning the grace to you all they prophesied. (Verse 10)
Prophecy witnesses to Jesus: 'For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus' (Revelation 19:10e, NLT). And Jesus is full of grace and truth to bring salvation to all who receive Him in humble, dependent, obedient faith. (John 1:1-18)
 2. They were seeking what person or season (time) The Spirit of Christ in them was making clear as He was witnessing beforehand of the sufferings of The Messiah-King. (Verse 11a)
Seeking: After Jesus finished His mission to earth, James wrote that the one looking into God's perfect 'law' of freedom, which enables people to do God's will, is blessed in the doing of His will. Until Jesus actually came, God's people had incomplete understanding of Who He IS and what He does. With the Gospels and New Testament, we have more than even God's prophets had.
Sufferings: His sufferings are most fully expressed in Isaiah (52:13-53:12). Paradoxically, the extreme joy of salvation may be strongest when we share in Christ's sufferings. (Philippians 3:7-11)

Salvation and faith bring extreme joy even when we share Christ's sorrows

3. And the 'after this' glories. (Verse 11b)
Glories: Isaiah also spoke of the glories of the gift of The Holy Spirit, peace among all in God's Creation, and how 'the Root of Jesse' (Messiah) will be a banner for all nations! (Isaiah 11)

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B. It was revealed to them they were not serving themselves but you all. (*Verse 12*)

1. It was revealed to them they were not serving themselves but you all, in what has now been announced to you all through those who preached The Gospel to you all. (*Verse 12ab*)

Gospel: The Gospel of Jesus' Death and Resurrection gives grace for salvation SO people can work the works of God (*1 Corinthians 15:1-10*)

2. Preaching is in The Holy Spirit having been sent from heaven about things which the angels have a strong desire to 'bend over and look into carefully'. (*Verse 12c*)

Look into: This last word (phrase) of the passage was used of Peter (*Luke 24:12*), [John] the 'other disciple' (*John 20:5*) and Mary Magdalene (*John 20:11*) at the empty tomb after Jesus' Resurrection. Their depression and dread because of Jesus' death on The Cross was turned to hope and joy when they saw Him alive! Even though we have not seen Him alive, we have the testimony of The Holy Spirit through the apostles SO we may have their joy and hope.

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Conclusion: When we have made The Savior King to be our Lord by The Faith that knows He BOTH died for our sins AND was raised from the dead to give us new birth into a living hope, we will have extreme rejoicing even in necessary sorrow and testing that proves The Faith. While we wait for His return, we are loving Him even though we don't see Him now because, as we continue to believe, we have extreme rejoicing with inexpressible and glory filled joy, as we are obtaining the end of our faith, full salvation. About this the prophets were seeking what person or season The Spirit of Christ was giving them as a pre-witness of both the sufferings and the glories to follow.

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