

Jesus: The Reason for the Season

By Ronald L. Dart

There is an old hymn I remember singing in church when I was just a boy. It is striking to me today because it represented an understanding of the Bible, in earlier generations, that I think has been lost in many churches today.

The song was, “Christ our Redeemer died on the cross, died for the sinner, paid all His due, all who receive Him need never fear. Yes, He will pass, will pass over you. When I see the blood,” repeated three times, “when I see the blood, I will pass, I will pass over you.”

I sang that song for years and never realized where the theme, Passover, came from. There was a time when the great hymn writers had a sense of the connection between old and new. They realized there was a strong tie between the death of Jesus and the Passover of the Jews, but just as that connection presented problems for the early church, which it did, it presents problems today as well.

Many don't like the idea of anything Jewish being connected with their Christianity and yet here is this old hymn and what God said to Moses, in Exodus 12:23, “For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you.” Verse 13, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

The Blood of the Lamb

The implications of this are far-reaching. It is the blood of the Lamb applied that enables God to pass over us and spare us the destruction around us. It seems a shame to me that some Christian churches have lost touch with this great Passover Festival. They see Christ in it, when they bother to look, but somewhere in history, they stopped observing it annually on its anniversary.

In observing communion, or the Lord's Supper every Sunday, monthly, or quarterly, they forgot that it was originally an annual observance. I suppose in the process

they forgot that it was the Passover.

God spoke to Moses and said, “You shall observe this for an ordinance to you and your sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when you come into the land the Lord will give you, just as

he has promised, you shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say, What does all of this mean? You shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed their heads and worshiped” (Exodus 12:24-27).

Christian theology has the blood of Jesus Christ applied to our lives and God passes over us and our sins.

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A Grateful Heart . . .

God is such a merciful God. He knows we're just human beings with doubts, fears, and disappointments. Sometimes when things look the bleakest, God steps in with an unexpected encouragement. March 7th *Born to Win* went on 450 new small satellite stations across this nation. We here at *Born to Win*, are constantly getting calls from people who want to hear Ron Dart's *Born to Win* broadcasts. Thankfully, God has opened a big door. This will be a big investment, but we stepped out on faith and agreed to do this. We knew we could count on you to help support these stations. May God richly bless and guide you.

Synthetic Faith

By Ronald L. Dart

Can you remember your first ideas about God, or how old you were when you first became aware of the existence of God? Perhaps you can remember praying as a child. Do you recall who or what you were praying to? Probably from the very earliest times, you thought of God in some way as a father. The common child's prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep," addresses God simply as "Lord," but the Lord's Prayer starts with the words, "Our Father. . ."

There probably is no easier way to introduce a child to God than in terms of a Heavenly Father, even though the role model may be bad or missing.

If you are like most people, somewhere along the way you began to develop a simple child's theology. God was all powerful. God was everywhere. God knows what you are doing and thinking. God will punish you if you do wrong. God will reward you if you do good. God judges you on some scale of good and evil, and perhaps you can offset some bad things you do with some good things.

It is an interesting exercise to sit down with a pad and pencil and sketch out what you can recall of your very earliest beliefs about God and religion. Chances are you will be able to recall generalities about your early beliefs but very little about how you came to them.

Even though you will remember few specifics about your early beliefs, it is no mystery where you got them. You heard things. You asked questions. You got answers or non-answers, and you began, as naturally as you breathe, to sort and compare all the things you heard and to form them into your own belief system.

Most of us come of age with a set of beliefs, which we have never critically examined. They may reflect the religion of our parents, or they may be a reaction against that religion. Rarely, if ever, are they the result of study and reflection.

Imagine the difficulty then, when something comes along that conflicts with those beliefs. Take heaven and hell, for example. If you are like me, you grew up believing that bad people go to hell when they die and good people go to heaven. I know precisely where I got that belief. I got it from the Baptist Church on East Walters Street in Harrison, Arkansas. It was reinforced in a little Assembly of God brush arbor meeting out on Route One.

I was much too young at the time to be swayed by theological arguments and lengthy expositions of Holy Writ—even if they had been offered. They were not. But when the preacher got up there and talked in the most graphic terms about burning forever, he scared me to death. I had burned myself once or twice, and it hurt like hell—I mean, it hurt like hell is supposed to hurt. The idea of burning all over took root in my vivid imagination, and persuaded me that I wanted to be baptized because baptized people didn't go to hell—at least according to the preacher.

Funny thing about it is that I don't think my belief in hell or my baptism changed the way I lived one whit and there's the rub. Our inherited belief systems grew up with us, and along the way there were adjusted to suit our way of life. I believed that bad people went to hell, but I was not a bad person, so why worry.

As long as we stay out of the Bible and our lives seem to work, we can go on for years believing what we believe. But when things start going bad, or when we stick our noses into the Book—which often happens at the same time—we may have some surprises in store. Consider the dilemma presented by the funeral of an "unchurched" loved one. If you are the preacher at a time like this, what do you say? Do you acknowledge, right in front of his survivors that, even as we speak, poor old Uncle Bill is roasting in hell? As a minister, you are expected to give comfort to the family at a funeral, and it is not especially comforting to visualize the old boy in some version of Dante's inferno. (I always liked the picture that showed feet sticking up out of steaming holes in the ground).

The fact is that many in Uncle Bill's "Christian" family believe that when he breathed his last, his next moment of consciousness found him in the presence of the great Arch Demon himself—being assigned to his own special torment—forever.

And forever is a long time. Preachers are fond of thinking up new ways of expressing how long eternity will last. My favorite is the mountain of granite one mile high and one mile in diameter at the base. Only once a year, every year, a tiny sparrow flies to the peak of the mountain and proceeds to sharpen his beak. When the sparrow has finally worn down that mountain to a

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pebble you can hold in your hand, one *day of eternity will have passed*. At least that is what I heard in some tent camp revival meeting. The question, “Where will you spend eternity?” is downright sobering after that. My problem came when I reflected on my own Uncle Bill, and Fred, and Luther, and Leonard, as well as my own father and grandfather. (We usually assume that aunts and mothers are saintly.) As far as I know, none of them were members of any church—they surely weren’t active. They were known to take a drink from time to time, and their vocabulary was adequate for almost any frustration known to man. Yet they were generous, good hearted, harmless, and kind men. Maybe they deserved a day in hell for their sins. Maybe even a month.

But the idea of a million years of torture offended my sense of justice. And so, since the idea of hell was presented as though it came from the Bible, I had nowhere else to go to answer my questions. When I got there, I found that the Bible did not say what I had been told it said.

Over the years the Bible has forced a lot of changes in my inherited theology. I am particularly grateful for a short passage found in the prophet Jeremiah: “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the

rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 9:23).

If it were not for these words, I might despair of ever coming to know God. But I can know him. I cannot only know him; I can glory in knowing him.

But I have come to see that knowing God is the work of a lifetime. Childhood assumptions about the nature of God and the demands of God will not hold. Nor will the assurances of preachers any more. I have found them wrong too often.

Most of us carry a set of synthetic beliefs through life—that is, we have synthesized a set of beliefs from things we have heard and things we have experienced. Over time, we modify those beliefs so they fit better. But while a synthetic faith may be adequate to serve a synthetic God in a synthetic world, it does not wear well in real life.

A real faith can only be found in coming to know the real God. The only way to know him is by going to the source. A good place to start is with Ron Dart’s *Knowing God* and *Knowing Jesus* CD bundle

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The Lord Smote the Firstborn

Well, “. . . the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they. And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle” (Exodus 12:28-29). What a terrible, terrible tragedy to befall Egypt.

So after midnight, when the destroyer had done his work, they were able to go out.

Get Out

“Pharaoh rose up in the middle of the night, all his servants, and all the Egyptians and there was a great cry in Egypt because there was not a house where there wasn’t somebody dead. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Get up and get out. Go serve the Lord as

you have said. Take your flocks. Take your herds, be gone, and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in haste, to get them out of here because if we don’t we are all dead men. And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders” (Exodus 12: 30-34).

Israelites Ate Unleavened Bread

In verse 39 it says, “They baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they brought out of Egypt for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out and couldn’t wait and had not prepared themselves any food.” Any cook will understand that you have to have time for yeast bread to rise. So, they ate unleavened bread.

I’m not trying to prove anything to anyone. I’m reaching for an understanding of what God is doing and why he is doing it, and I hope that you’re reaching out too. Part of the understanding we are looking for focuses on the curious question of unleavened bread.

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Justice, Mercy, and Compassion

By Mardy Cobb

“Then the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.’ But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 7:8-12).

God has provided guidance to his people throughout time. In the verses above, God gives four simple directives: execute true justice; show mercy and compassion, do not oppress the weak, and do not plan evil against your neighbor. These are broad in scope, but they are not vague concepts—not theoretical ideas without application in the real world.

- Justice is defined in our duties and roles as prescribed by God’s righteous teaching. What is the right and honest way to treat the other person? Are we fair in our dealings?
- Mercy and compassion—the words and the context carry the sense of exercising a faithful love and a tender compassion in all our relationships among the covenant people of God. Are we kind to our

brothers and sisters in faith? Do we speak the truth in love or in harshness?

- The weakest of any society are usually the widow, the orphan, and the alien. We are not to take advantage of their weakness. Many big businesses love to have an alien workforce because they can be easily mistreated and paid much less. Do we do that? Do we take advantage when we know we are dealing with a widow who can do nothing to us if we fail to treat them right?
- Bitterness and vindictiveness will cause us to “plan evil in our hearts.” But our natural selfishness tends to make us bitter when we feel mistreated. These two immoral outlooks can easily move into our lives. Have we opened the door to bitterness and vindictiveness?

Israel did not listen to the message sent by those who served God: “they refused to heed.” What was the result? “Great wrath came from the Lord.” It is not okay to ignore God. He is the sovereign power in the universe. No one can ignore God and get away with it. Certainly not his own children. Because Israel refused to listen to God, so God refused to listen to Israel. And they were scattered among the nations. Let’s make sure we are listening to our Father in heaven and following his Word in our lives.

Memory Scriptures

Topic: Assurance: Inner Peace and Security

1 John 5:11-12
 John 14:1
 John 14:2-3
 John 14:6
 John 14:27

Isaiah 26:3
 Isaiah 53:5
 Isaiah 53:6
 John 20:21
 Philippians 4:6-7

In Memory

Born to Win continues to receive special, generous donations in memory of Ronald Dart. Your expressions of love and condolences have meant a lot to all of us at *Born to Win*. These offerings will be used to see to it that

Ron’s *Born to Win* broadcasts continue to be heard by many. Many thanks to all of you for your generous gifts.

Born to Win

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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.

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Christ our Passover was Sacrificed for Us

Paul said to the Corinthians, “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). The impression from the Exodus is, that it was merely a matter of the Israelites fleeing out of Egypt and having no time for their bread to rise, but somehow, it seems to me there ought to be more to it than that. Paul certainly thought so. In fact, Jesus gives us a very strong indication of it.

Jesus is the Bread of Life

There is a long passage in John 6 to focus your attention on. “After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberius and a huge crowd of people followed him, because they saw his miracles that he did on people who were diseased” (John 6:1-2). It is really easy to understand why people would be fascinated by this, not to mention why they would want to go if they were sick,

“But Jesus went up into a mountain, and He sat there with his disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near” (John 6:3-4). It’s a seasonal thing—a time of year when things like Passover and unleavened bread are going to be on Jesus’ mind and the minds of all his listeners.

“When Jesus lifted up his eyes, he saw a huge company had come to him and he said to Phillip, ‘Where can we buy bread to feed all of these people?’” (John 6:5)? You may wonder why Jesus would even concern himself with all that, but this is Middle Eastern hospitality and he felt that these people had come to him and he felt a sense of responsibility. What follows is not exactly in line with what we want to talk about, but it is this incredible miracle of the five loaves and a few fishes with which Jesus fed thousands of people.

In verse 14, it says, “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, ‘This is of a truth that the prophet that should come into the world,’ and when Jesus began to realize that they’re going to come and take Him by force and try to make Him a king, He departed to a mountain himself alone” (John 6:14-15). At this point, Jesus did everything he could to get away from the people. He went off into the mountain and finally got into a boat and crossed the sea because those people were ready to start a revolution. He didn’t want any part of it, because he had something else that he had to do.

“Now when they found Him on the other side of the sea, They said to Him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come over here?’” Jesus didn’t consider that worth answering because he immediately answered what was on their mind. He said, “I am going to tell you the truth, You seek me, not because you saw miracles, but because you ate bread and were filled. You know, you people really should not labor for the food which perishes, you should work for that food that endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give you, for him has God the Father sealed.” Then they said, “Well what shall we do that we might work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” And then, ready to argue with him, they were back and forth, back and forth. They asked, ‘What sign will you show us then that we may see and believe You. What are you going to do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert, and as is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat,’ which proves that Jesus was right in judging their motives” (John 6:25-31).

They couldn’t make it through three or four sentences without coming back to, you did this five loaves and two fishes thing again and it was good food. We want to see it again! Implicit in all this is, they were not satisfied to see it once, they wanted to see it again, not because they wanted to see the miracle, but because they wanted to fill their belly. Jesus said to them, “I will tell you the truth, Moses didn’t give you that bread from heaven, My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world” (John 6:32-33). Jesus is starting into a theme here that is connected to the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread which is on his mind at this time. He is thinking of himself, presenting himself as the bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

“Then they said to him, ‘Lord, evermore give us this bread.’” Now Jesus is ready to drop it on them. He said “I am the bread of life, he that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst” (John 6:34-35). Here, we begin to find the connection with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover, which was fast approaching.

A Difficult Crowd

This was a difficult crowd for Jesus. For some reason, they seemed to be very much at odds with him and he was within his own area of patience with them, and still pretty firm with this group. It is worth remembering that when

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all was said and done and after 3 1/2 years of his ministry, Jesus had the grand sum total of 120 disciples.

He says to this gang: “You have seen me but you don’t believe. All the Father gives me shall come to me and he that comes to me I will never cast out. I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father’s will, which has sent me, that of all that He is given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone that sees the Son and believes on Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:36-40).

The Jews listened to this and murmured at Jesus, because he said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” They said, “Isn’t this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he say, “I came down from heaven?” Jesus said, “Don’t murmur among yourselves, No man can come to Me, except the father which sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:41-44).

There are interesting circumstances about the spirit of the Father drawing him are in verse 45, “It is written in the prophets, they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes to me.” That speaks volumes for the religious audience of that time. They were not listening to the Father; their faith was not the faith of the Father. They were not following in the steps of Old Faithful Abraham, not at all. They had a form of godliness but there was no power to it. There was no strength to it. Jesus said, “Anyone who has been taught of God, who follows God will come to me. No man has seen the Father, save he which is of God, He has seen the father. Verily I say unto you, He that believes on me has everlasting life,” and then Jesus makes a remarkable statement. “I am that bread of life” (John 6:45-48).

What are the Days of Unleavened Bread All About?

When you come to the Days of Unleavened Bread, and you ask, “What is that all about?” It is a little bit hard for people to grasp at first, but the command in the Bible is that you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. This is not merely an abstinence from leaven as some people might think. There’s actually the receiving of unleavened bread for the seven days of the festival. What would that unleavened bread be? It is Jesus, the bread of life.

Sin symbolically is a kind of leaven. In that sense, Jesus as the bread of life must be himself unleavened and without sin. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they are all dead. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, that if a man eat of it He will not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat this bread, he will live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:48-51).

When I read this passage, I couldn’t help reflecting on all the years I thought, read, and sang about, trusted the blood of Jesus Christ to take away my sins, which is fundamental—Christianity 101. But I never gave a thought to the flesh of Jesus which he said he would give for the life of the world. Somehow that has not made it very far or very deeply into the Christian consciousness. The blood of Christ has. The blood of Christ is very well recognized, it is shot through all of your hymnals, there is that thin red line of blood that people say runs in the beginning of the Bible all the way through the end and I understand that. We all do.

Jesus said he would give his flesh for the life of the world, and there is a distinction here. Jews who were listening did not like this. “The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:52-56).

It doesn’t take much to realize the connection directly with Passover—a little wine and a little piece of unleavened bread as symbols of the shed blood and the broken body of Jesus Christ. This is why at the Passover, Jesus handed them the cup and said, “Take this and drink it. This is my blood of the new covenant.”

A hard saying, even for Jesus’ disciples, and in the end some of them turned back and walked no more with Jesus. What is inescapable is the connection between the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread which he would soon institute with his disciples. Order your *FREE* copy of this entire message, *Christian Holidays #4*.