

Easter Sunday 2022

1 Cor. 15:1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

In a November 1789 letter to French scientist Jean-Baptiste Le Roy, Benjamin Franklin wrote a quick update about the major event in the United States: the Constitution's ratification a year before and the start of a new government under it. He said;

“Our new Constitution is now established, everything seems to promise it will be durable; but, in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes,”

Nothing is certain except death and taxes. The quote is far more durable than our constitution which is most certainly being challenged and re-written from our current culture's perspective.

Franklin's quote may have preceeded him, we aren't sure, he may have been quoting an ancient axiom that was commonly in use, but we trace it to him. But it is in fact, axiomatic. No one argues with axiomatic truth.

Last week, hardly a day too soon, I paid my taxes. I do that in obedience to scripture. Jesus said, pay your taxes. I do it in obedience even though I am painfully aware that the money is increasingly going to be used for evil.

God judges governments for their evil, He judges me if I don't obey my governing authorities as much as is possible until they are in direct conflict with His commands in this book, and God judges me if I don't obediently pay my taxes. Rome may have been even more evil than our government, although it's getting hard to imagine that, when Jesus told Peter, we pay our taxes.

But of the two certainties that Franklin proclaimed in his letter to Jean-Baptiste Le Roy, I'm not going to speak any further about taxes this morning, I'm going to speak about the axiomatic certainty of death.

My children don't like to hear it, and when I survey the rather large mess I've made that they'll have to dispose of somehow, I don't blame them, but I often remind them that the mortality rate is 100%. Any child that is lucky enough to survive the womb to a healthy birth, will thrive for a time and then perish.

You say, why such a morbid subject on Easter Jim? Don't you worry, I'm setting the stage for the joy of Easter. First we have to understand the severity of the problem in order to calculate the magnitude of the brilliance of the solution.

The Bible tells us: *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* Ezek. 18:20 God told Adam in the garden; *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* Gen. 2:17

Adam lived 930 years. But in the day that he rebelled and sinned against God, sin entered the world, and death and decay which did not exist before that day, became a reality. Mortality, death, which the world had never yet known, became a reality not just for man, but for all created things, even the earth.

From that day forward, mortality became the constant, and sinful men were

removed from the presence and dwelling of God. Mortality is all we know. Sin brought universal death. Even creation, our earth where we live, Paul tells us, groans under the burden of sin and death.

Death isn't a one time event at the end of your life. It turns out that our lives, all we know experientially, is a planet and an existence, captured by sin and mortality. We were born into death on a planet that is under a blanket condemnation.

Listen carefully to Paul's language in Romans chapter 8;

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

A million articles a day are posted on the internet by dead people about how to survive and get along on a dead planet. This book of ours is the only one that explains what we see around us. Corruption, decay, and death on every level, and a million smart people writing about how to fix it.

Our book gives a cogent reason things are the way they are, and it gives a cogent solution with a single example of someone, our prototype, who beat death and decay who is the first fruit of thousands upon thousands who will likewise follow Him in His example that He purchased for us.

How can that happen? How can the curse of sin be reversed, negated, non binding. How can anyone escape Adam's condemnation. We are born into a dead world, captured by sin, condemned. Born condemned before we

ever sinned ourselves. Born into death. Who escapes that universal condemnation?

One man, born outside of those confines, born of a virgin, He wasn't in Adam's family tree, He was born of a virgin, God was His Father, Jesus was His name, He was sent here from above.

He wasn't born into sin and He lived a perfect life. He never sinned. Not once. Death had no claim on Him then. *The wages of sin is death.* Ro. 6:23 He had no sin. Death had no claim.

And yet He did die. A coalition of wicked men, Romans and Jews from His own nation Israel combined together to murder Him by a death so unspeakable there is no death more scandalous. He was nailed upon a cross and He died.

The old testament prophets said; *anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse.* Deut. 21:23 Jesus died a death on a tree, under the curse of God, yet He never sinned. Why? Why did God curse His own Son who never sinned?

The answer is that Jesus took upon Himself our sins. All of our sins. He died in my place as my substitute. My sin and guilt was put on Him, and His righteous life has been put in my account in place of my sin. He died for my sin. He gave me His righteousness.

But then something astonishing happened. After He died in my place and removed all of my sins, past, present, and unfortunately still future, He came out of the grave on the third day.

He took my sins and died in my place, cursed for me, He gave me His righteousness, and ultimately, death has no hold on either Him or me. He burst out of the grave on the third day, and He promises that He will return to gather all who have believed that His death for them was full payment for sin.

We are waiting for that day. 2000 years have come and gone, and many many thousands of christians have fallen asleep in Jesus. They are in the graves but this book says, in fact we'll be studying it together in our study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians, this book says that some day Jesus will return and call all of us who have believed, home. We will join Him in the air.

The dead in Christ will rise first up out of their graves with new resurrection bodies, and those of us who remain alive here, on that day, we will be changed, in a microsecond, in the twinkling of an eye, we will receive our resurrection bodies and join all of the saints who preceeded us, who fell asleep, who have come out of their graves alive, we will join them all, in the air, and be taken to our new home in heaven with Jesus.

That event doesn't end the corruption here on earth. It marks the beginning of a 7 year judgemental wrath on this earth. We've studied all of these things together in the book of Revelation. All of those talks are in manuscript form on line at our website.

Jesus lived outside of the curse of mortality that everyone on this planet was born into. The gospel, the good news is that anyone who believes can be freed from the curse of sin that has captured this place. We are called out of this world.

When we become christians what changes? We still live in a cursed world. We still dwell in bodies that are under the curse of mortality. I'm painfully aware that I get older and more decayed each and every year. In case I forget, God has blessed me with a wife who reminds me.

This flesh of mine still loves sin, still craves things that God forbids. What has changed. Well, I'm glad you asked.

When I believed, when I asked Jesus to come and live inside of me and forgive me of my sins, He sent His Holy Spirit to dwell inside of me. Some things inside of me did actually change.

The Spirit who has quickened my spirit to life, together with Him, has begun a regeneration that has been ongoing for 52 years now. As I read this book and dwell on the word of God, and obey what the precepts of this book prescribe, I subject myself in obedience to God's word by the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit, God has been changing me from the inside out.

I look at it this way. Paul tells the Thessalonians, again, that we are body, soul, and spirit. **My body** is degenerating at the normal levels of a 70 year survivor on a planet cursed by sin. It's on track to be dead some day soon that sovereign God has pre-determined for me. Or perhaps I'll be alive when Jesus comes and skip physical death, who knows.

My spirit, which was dead in sin, has been quickened to life, joined together with Jesus by His indwelling Holy Spirit. I was made alive together with Jesus on August 26th 1970. I was given the downpayment of all of the future promises, the Holy Spirit who dwells with me and in me. Quickened from death to life!

That's body and spirit, what about soul. **My soul** is undergoing a lifelong regeneration as I abide in the words of this book. I'm not sinless, but as I abide in the word and it changes me, little by little by ever so precious incrementally little, my soul is becoming more Christlike day by day.

Why would anyone believe any of this stuff? Because Jesus lived outside of the sin caused mortality of this dead from sin world, and when wicked men murdered Him so that HE could bear my sins away, He defied death and rose up from the grave on the third day.

Jesus rose up from the grave and He has gone to prepare a place in heaven for me, and He will soon return to gather us to Himself in our new bodies to our new eternal home where we will dine with Him at His table, in our spotless wedding clothing, white and clean.

The church will be His wife, and then we will return with Him to judge this wretched sinful world. Satan will be deposed and locked up in prison, and evil men will be judged and removed. He will reign here, on this planet, changed to pre-sin non mortal conditions, for a 1000 years, a millenium of His reign here. And then He will create new heavens and a new earth.

Beloved, do you understand that the platform I've just described in a very few short minutes answers all of the so-called "big" questions of the universe? Why is there evil? What is the ultimate meaning of things? Whatever else people are blindly asking and trying to find answers to, it's all here in this book.

Of course Vladimir Putin is assembling an axis of evil that surrounds Israel from both north and south. He's right on schedule. Duped by Satan. We aren't surprised.

Of course the nations are abandoning God's laws and God's design, and God's creation. Again, right on schedule, duped by Satan, blinded in their understanding.

Of course the planet is showing signs of aging and death. All of it under God's sovereign control. Warming this week, cooling the next, disease, pestilence, whatever. It's all right on His schedule and under His sovereign control. Most nights when I take a nice shower of warm water squirting out of a pipe on the wall I think to myself, of course this is unsustainable. But I love it.

We aren't surprised by anything the news is telling us. Did you know that the Bible repeats the phrase "Do not be afraid" 365 times. It is the most repeated phrase in the entire Bible. Fear not.

The world is collapsing into chaos around us on every side and this book says, fear not. Is that logically true. It is . . . but . . . it's conditional.

We began our thoughts in Romans 8 and I would direct you there again so

that you can understand the conditional admonition . . . *fear not, Be not afraid*. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid.

Romans 8:31 gives the condition upon which that biblical statement stands; *What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

That's the condition. *Be not afraid . . . if . . . God is for you*. If however you are at war with God, on any level, be very afraid. The world is collapsing in on itself into chaos, and if God is not for you, if you are at war with God, in rebellion on any level against God, be very afraid.

Honestly, I'm a little amazed people cope as well as they do. We dwell in the remnant of a once civilized society, a culture that respected at least some of the restraints God designed into this fallen world for our benefit and thriving, and we're like the final generation, sort of clinging to what little is left . . . of thriving.

But it seems like we can't wreck it fast enough. More and more each day as I watch the news it seems like the whole world is raging and shaking it's little fist at God. We aren't surprised.

Battle lines are being drawn. The entire world it seems is in array to do battle with Yahweh.

*4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.*

*5 Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury:* Psalms 2

Be not afraid will become the most important words to understand. Those words are conditional and the conditions of God being for you and not against you are incredibly important to comprehend and implement.

Who is God for and who is God against? The answer is simple. God is furious with the whole earth. God's wrath is about to be unleashed on everyone on this entire rebellious planet.

Well, not quite everyone. God has called a remnant out of this world to belong to His Son and who have had their sins forgiven. That little remnant can claim those 365 times the Bible says "be not afraid" as their own.

We hold the answers to all the questions that face this world in the palms of our hands. We have the final solution to sin at our disposal. And it's free. Salvation is free.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, Born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, but died a criminals death, cursed by God, hung on a tree. He bore the curse of my sins. He received the lashes and punishment I deserved, in my place. He received the curse of God that I deserved.

He gave me His righteousness in place of my sins. He rose from the grave and appeared to over 500 reliable sane witnesses who saw Him die, knew He was buried, and then He was alive again.

The good news, the gospel, is that you were born into a world at war with God, born into sin, guilty of rebellion against God, but Jesus offers to pay that debt, in your place, at the cross. The offer of grace is still open. If you take it, God will be for you instead of against you. You will be made an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ.

On Easter Sunday mornings we celebrate the resurrection from the dead that proves once and for all that everything this book claims is real and true. The church has celebrated the resurrection every year for nearly 2000 years. The church of Jesus has celebrated His resurrection weekly every time we meet on the first day of the week, Sunday, the day Jesus was raised from the dead.

But a day is coming that this book compares to Noah's day. There was a day when the doors to enter into the safety of the ark were sealed shut and the floods overwhelmed everyone on earth within minutes.

Like a tidal wave that sweeps in unannounced and drowns everyone. A day is coming, a moment in time, when the offer of grace will be over. The door will be sealed shut. Grace will be over. The church will be removed. And terrifying judgement will begin. Jacob's trouble.

Many of us think that time is very near. No, we don't know the day or hour, but Jesus spends a lot of time in the letters to the churches saying Be ready. Keep oil in your lamps. The bridegroom cometh.

Satan has done his best to make everything I've said this morning sound like some kind of bizarre movie plot or ancient philosophical greek mythology legend. It isn't. It is reality and we watch the news daily ticking off the boxes just as this book predicted.

We began this morning considering the plight of a world at war with God, in rebellion against God, removed from the presence of God. Some of us like to flip to the last pages and spoil the book by reading the end so we can see how the plot will ultimately come out.

Let's do that with the scenario we've talked about this morning, a world at war with and removed from God. How does it finally end? After all of the evil is crushed and every created thing bows the knee to Jesus the Christ.

*1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, 4 and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; **and there shall no longer be any death;** there shall no longer be any*

mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” 5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” Rev. 21:1-5

It isn't a fairy tale, a Hollywood movie plot, an ancient greek legend. This is reality. *And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”*

Death is gone. Tears are gone. Mourning is gone. God dwells with His people. The curse is gone. Satan is gone. Pain is gone. *Behold, I am making all things new*

We believe these words because we have a faithful prototype. Jesus rose up from the grave. Jesus conquered mortality. Therefore, we believe every word of this book is faithful and true.

Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.” Eph. 4:8

Ro. 5:13 *For sin was in the world before the law was given; but sin is not*

taken into account when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who did not sin in the way that Adam transgressed. He is a pattern of the One to come. 15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many!