

SABBATH FOCUS:

THE BAPTISM – PASSOVER CONNECTION

by Randy Stiver, April 2020

Do you remember your baptism into the true Church of God? Do you remember your personal repentance to God for your sins which led you to seek baptism?

Ask yourself, “What did I promise, or commit to, at baptism?”

Here is the wording of our baptism ceremony drawn from Scripture that God’s Church has used for close to century:

“*Your full name*, as the result of your repentance of all your sins which are the transgression of God’s holy, perfect and righteous law, and your acceptance of Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, your Lord and Master, your High Priest in heaven, and your soon-coming King, I now baptize you, not into any sect or denomination of this world, but I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of all your sins.”

Then you were immersed in the water for a short moment as a symbolic burial of the “old man” (see Rom. 6:6)—your old self. The new person—completely forgiven of sin came up and out of the symbolic, watery grave. Then while you were probably still dripping wet, God’s minister who baptized you laid his hands on your head for that part of the ceremony (ref. Acts 8:18-19), and God placed in your mind His Holy Spirit. We often refer to these two connected ceremonies as the time “when you were converted.”

God called you personally

God’s process of personal calling and conviction is what brings about this change in your life.

First came the dawning of deep personal conviction that: (#1) God does exist! (#2) God’s Word teaches us His true way of life as defined by His law of love. (#3) The realization that God expected *you personally* to live His way of life and obey His righteous laws. Finally, (#4) you repentantly concluded that you personally had—in thought, word and action—violated that great divine law of love and were in desperate need of forgiveness and spiritual conversion.

Suddenly, you clearly understood that critical passage: “... the wages of sin is death...” (Rom. 6:23). You realized that by your own personal, sinful choices, you had fallen short of the glory of God—as have all humans.

You came to see that—even if no one else had ever sinned—you *personally* were responsible for the death of your Savior Jesus Christ! Therefore, you were to blame for bringing yourself under the spiritual death penalty! You felt like the apostle Paul: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24).

But seeking to live—forever in the Kingdom of God—you found hope in the last part of this verse, “for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is *eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom. 6:23, emphasis added).

Yet what to do? Marvelously, our loving Father in heaven revealed the answer in Rom. 7:25, “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Therefore, we comprehend that our Lord and Master died to pay the death penalty for our sins on our behalf, thus He spiritually saves you and me from having to die the second death for our own sins (see Rev. 2:11). Remember there is no resurrection from the second death.

Understanding that logical, spiritual reasoning has led—or is leading—each of us to true, personal repentance and baptism. *Down* with the “wretched,” sinful person, and *up* with the faithful, converted person!

The annual Passover rehearsal

Every year we review and rehearse this process of salvation during the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

We energetically remove the leavening and leavened bread from our homes, as instructed (Exo. 12:14-17), fully knowing that the “old leaven” symbolizes our sins and sinfulness. God’s perfect will is that His people faithfully and systematically put sin out of their lives. It’s a lifetime process of repentance and overcoming so we must make constant progress.

Passover and Unleavened Bread for all mankind

God never intended the Passover and Days or Feast of Unleavened Bread to be merely for Israel of old, or just for the Jews. We don’t even consider that argument!

God commands us as His faithful brethren to keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread so we can annually refocus all the energy He gives us to identify, repent and overcome our sins. He further expects us to eradicate those sinful ways by replacing them with the obedient, faithful righteousness that Jesus Christ Himself portrayed during His first coming!

The godly character built of true righteousness is for all time! When Christ soon returns to directly rule the whole world during the Millennium all peoples and nations will keep these incredible holydays—and be offered true spiritual salvation (see Rev. 20:1-3)!

Following that, during the shorter Great White Throne Judgment (see Rev. 20:11-15) all peoples and nations going back to Adam and Eve—who never knew God’s truth when they lived (even including the vast majority of ancient Israel) will be physically resurrected and spiritually called to understand and keep and all of God’s annual holyday festivals—including the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread!

What an incredible blessing are God’s Holy Days!