

2153 - AN EASTER BEGINNING – Easter 16 - 1 Pet 1.3-5,8,9

Well, although it is **evening** it is **still** Easter Sunday! This is the **best** day of Easter! I think Friday should be **bad** Friday and Sunday is the **good** day! I thought I would follow the poster ‘An Easter Beginning’ for this service. After all Easter **was** a new **beginning** for the world! The **resurrection** of Jesus Christ **changed** the whole world! It brought **real hope** to every single person - **Jew** or **Gentile**!

To be fair, the Apostle Peter who is writing to us here, was a very **up** and **down** person! He could get very **excited** about something - and then go right down to the **depths**! But when he thought of the first Easter, and what it means, he **always** went OTT! He talks about Easter in terms of a *joy that is **inexpressible** and **filled with glory*** [8]! He cannot find a good enough adjective to describe it! He is talking about something that has come to him *through the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the dead* [3]. It has given him **a zeal through a new love**! He has a **new love** for **Jesus Christ** since the resurrection! His love for Jesus has altered - it has been **enlarged** and **deepened**!

His **original** love for Christ **evaporated** with his own denial and then the death of Jesus. These two circumstances diminished his love and his zeal for Jesus! But he has been **revived** to say the least!

Peter talks about loving someone you **haven’t even seen**! *Though you have **not seen Him** you **love Him**!*[8] That is so different from our **post-modern** way of thinking. We today are so **impressed** with **image** and **feelings**! If something looks good - if something **feels good** then we ‘go for it’ - that’s the philosophy of our age. Not so Peter. He has **more solid credentials** for faith and hope! Peter puts his hope and faith in a **historical event** - the **history** of the Cross of Calvary and the subsequent resurrection! You **cannot eliminate** history. You cannot get rid of it. It is a **fact (a scientific fact!)**

Years after the resurrection, Peter wrote *Blessed be God who has caused us to be **born again TO A LIVING HOPE**...through the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ!* He claims that those born again have obtained something - a new life, **a living hope**. Peter got **new life** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and a **new hope**. Now ‘hope’ is a **‘noun’**, not a verb. We normally use ‘hope’ as a verb. This was a

hope of something **tangible** - *an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading* [4]. Peter is speaking of something like a lawyer's **title deeds** for a home - and indeed **it is a home**, an eternal home! Paul spoke of the same thing. Look how certain Paul is about it, *we know that if the tent that is our **earthly home** is destroyed, we have a building from God, a **house** not made with hands, eternal in the heavens* [2Cor 5:1] Our ultimate home is **this earth renewed!**

This weekend was supposed to be a **celebration** of Jesus' resurrection from the grave. Yet, no service or films about it on TV on any of the main channels (as previously)! Jesus Himself of course, has **appointed every Sunday** as a **weekly celebration** of the event! *The **resurrection** of Jesus Christ was the **source** of Peter's **new hope!** It **energised** him for the **future** thus *preparing your minds for action...set your HOPE fully on the grace that will be brought to you* [13] Peter became a **re-newed man** after the resurrection of Jesus. And also thousands, and thousands of people since then! From almost **every nationality** and culture! It **ought** to create a **zeal!**

God too, as Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has done a lovely thing **at creation** – He appointed a **yearly visible reminder** of the **reality** of the resurrection - to **encourage** us! God has given new life to **daffodils/flowers** so that after the **death** of winter, there is the wonderful **visible resurrection** of new life - **every** year! Spring time is a **proof** of the reality of the **regeneration of life after death!**

I think we will all agree, that there is nothing so **dramatic** as the **change** from death to life! You cannot get a bigger **contrast** than life and death! But that is what we get each Springtime – in **nature**, God brings to life the dead roots which have lain death over the winter. It is a real reminder of the resurrection that awaits the dead! I really love the spring time with its **promise** of **life** and **freshness/hope!**

Have you ever met anyone who was so **depressed** that he walked with his head down for days? There used to be a young fellow sitting on the pavement with a shawl over him at **High St** corner outside Slaters – staring down at the pavement all the time! If that fellow was suddenly **transformed** into an **enthusiastic, vibrant** and **ecstatic** preacher who 'inspired' people everywhere – what a

testimony that would be to **whatever power** changed him! Well, that is what happened to the disciples of Jesus after His resurrection.

The **impact** Jesus and the resurrection can make is spoken in terms of **darkness** and **light!** Peter calls it that *But you are a **chosen** race...that you may **proclaim** the **excellences** of Him who called you out of **darkness** into his wonderful **light*** [2:8] The closest friend Jesus ever had was John. He called the change that the resurrection can make, a transformation from **darkness** to **light!** Darkness and light conveys a tremendous **contrast.** My **art teacher** used to say that there is **no greater contrast** in the world of colours, than **black** and **white!** No two colours contrast as much as do black against white!

Now, **do you realise** that most of the things that people seek after in this life are actually spiritual? Eg, **Peace! Joy! Love! Faith** that is **more precious than gold that perishes** [7] These are **not fleshly** things! It is a **spiritual joy** that Peter talks about here. It has reference to our **souls.** In fact he mentions *the salvation of your **souls*** [9].

These NT people we so **enthusiastic** – much **more** so than Xns today! Of course, they **actually saw** the resurrected Jesus and spoke to Him - John said they **saw, heard** and actually **handled** the **Word** of life! We do not have that privilege – but we **really can enter** into an ecstatic experience of joy/gladness that is **second to none!** And although there has been **great sin** in our **past** which deeply **grieved** God, He casts them behind His back and wants us to enjoy the pleasures of salvation! Peter informs us *you...**rejoice** with **joy** that is **inexpressible** and filled with glory* [8]. He has **no problem** about our living life to the **fullest joy** despite the awful things we may have done to Him in the past years of our lives. God does not hold grudges and does not remind Himself, or others, of past wrongs! God does not withhold the **best** of blessings from the **worst** of sinners. It gives Him great pleasure to give the **very best** to the **very worst!** Ask Paul!

The only preacher who enjoyed **two spiritual revivals** was a great **philosopher/scientist/theologian** (Jonathan Edwards) said, 'God created us for nothing else but **happiness!** God created man for the sole purpose of communicating happiness to him!' We were **not** created for **boredom** or for **sorrow** but for **enjoyment** and to bring

joy and glory to our Creator. But something went radically **wrong!** We went our own way trusting our feelings, rejecting God's Word!

It is so sad that so many people think Xnity is a **gloomy** faith! Xns who are gloomy, are not **practicing** their faith! Contrary to public opinion, as Sam Storm says: 'God does **not forbid** us **any pleasure** except the pleasures which will bring us **temporary misery** and eternal woe'. God is saying is 'I am not against you seeking happiness, I truly want you to be happy – but you are **looking** for it in the **wrong places!** Places that bring misery, short term, long term!

The Message of Easter is for **all** nations. Not just Jews, but for all ages/generations throughout the whole world! God **sent** His Son into the world to **die** for for the world! Just think of the **type** of death He died! **Crucifixion!** Stoning was the type of execution **Jews** specified. But God appointed Jesus to die on the Cross to give His death a **Gentile dimension!** God wanted all the **world** to know that Jesus died for the **world**, not just the Jews! He is the *Saviour of all men* and He said Himself *I did not come to judge the world, but to save it* [John 12:47] **God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life** [John 3:16] There is **no greater expression** of love than dying for the **unworthy!** Many die for a **good cause**. But who would die for an evil man. **Only Jesus!** Paul said that in [Rom 5:7].

We need to remember that the Good News is an **announcement** about a **historical fact** - and we are called to **believe it!** Of course the **real significance** of His resurrection needs to be grasped too!

It is **not** simply a **bare mental assent** to the **historicity** of the event. It is grasping that Jesus died for **OUR SINS**, made **atonement** to God for them all, **cleared our debt** to God, and **rose again as OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. **Twice** in Scripture we are told **the Lord IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS** [Jer 23:6 + 33:16]! The significance of the Gospel is that **BY FAITH** we are joined to Christ, and we are saved from the wrath to come on sinners. We are **guarded through faith for a salvation...more precious than gold**. We say Happy Easter! Either to **remind** you, if you're a Xn, of your **status** in X - or to **invite** you to come in **faith** to X **trusting** in His Word and work!