

CHURCH OF THE
E T E R N A L

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; and then shall the end come." – Matthew 24:14

March 6, 2013

Dear Members and Friends:

As the sun lingers in the sky for longer periods of time and as the snow melts here in Fort Collins, I anxiously anticipate the springtime. I can't say that this winter has been any colder than any other, but I won't hesitate to admit that I have enjoyed enough of the brisk, crisp winter air to last me until next year. Even though the imminent warmer weather is something to look forward to, much more than that, God's Spring Holy Days offer us all a much-needed regular opportunity to reflect on the plan of God unfolding before our very eyes.

As I write to you now, the annual Passover—the first event we observe in God's Spring Holy Day season, which is followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread—is just around the corner. This solemn memorial was established thousands of years ago when Moses led Israel out of Egypt, and it remains in effect for Christians today. When the Passover was initiated, the nation of Israel was instructed to sacrifice a lamb, consume the meat, and prepare to leave their situation of bondage in the land of Egypt. Thousands of years after Israel fled from the slavery of Egypt, Jesus Christ gave Himself to be our Passover lamb, so that we might obtain freedom from the slavery of sin. It turns out that this was God's plan from the very beginning of man's creation.

As converted Christians, you and I are the fortunate benefactors of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. The benefit that we have, if we believe in Jesus Christ and the effect of His sacrifice, and obey Him, is no less than eternal life (compare John 3:16-17, 36, Revised Standard Version). Can we fathom what that means? It may seem obvious, but let's take a moment to consider that if Jesus Christ returns within our lifetime, we will have an opportunity to never experience death in the way that we understand it today. Because Jesus Christ sacrificed His life for the sake of converted and faithful Christians, at the end of the age those who are alive will be changed into spirit in the blink of an eye (compare 1 Corinthians 15:52). This is not to say that those who are alive when Jesus Christ returns are any more blessed than those who will be resurrected to eternal life. "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). The gift of eternal life is there for the taking for all who accept the tremendous and awesome sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ. This season serves as our regular reminder of this fabulous truth.

If we have this understanding, we also have a responsibility and will be held accountable for it. What this means is that accepting the gift of eternal life offered by Jesus Christ requires that we make every effort to live in a manner so that we are worthy of it. Preparation for the participation in the Passover service involves honest, genuine self-examination. We all must test ourselves to see if we are doing all that we can to free ourselves from sin—knowing that God will do it for and through us, if we allow Him to do so (compare Philippians 2:13). Paul wrote to the Corinthians about this very topic: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:28-31). Paul may have written these words for Church members who lived a very long time

ago in very different circumstances, but the meaning applies directly to you and me. For our own benefit and salvation, we need to take the time and effort to meditate on the magnitude of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, how we ought to work to honor that sacrifice, and the greatness of the gift that comes from it all.

The solemnity of the occasion of the Passover, and the great size of the meaning should not intimidate you if you discover that you have a lot to work on. The fact of the matter is that until we become perfect, we all sin, and therefore we all have a lot to work on. However, we must remember that if we have been called and have accepted the calling, we are very blessed. Giving up now is not the intended result of our self-examination. We can be encouraged to know that God would not have called us if He did not think that we would succeed. Rather, we can be "...confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in [us] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). We must commit ourselves to ever improving our behavior so that we may bring glory and honor to God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

I expect that this message should be familiar, and perhaps even repetitive. Indeed, I have not written anything that has not been written before. But this is intentional. Since last year at this time, we have changed, and the world around us has changed. Because of this, we need to test ourselves against the immutable standard of God, which does not change, to make sure that we are changing in the right direction. Now is the time, more than any other point of time during the course of the year, to carefully consider our calling and the greatness of the gift set before us.

On behalf of the Church of the Eternal God and its corporate affiliations, be encouraged to know that you have hope. Please have a fulfilling, meaningful, and enlightening Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. As a special gift, we are pleased to enclose a new appealing booklet, "Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever." This extraordinary booklet explains what is ahead of us, and why we are created in the first place. Even though this world is facing terrible times of unparalleled calamity, God offers and promises us a tremendous and incredible future. We trust that you will find great comfort in reading this booklet—especially during this time of year.

In Christian love,



Eric Rank