

## 2091 - HOPE in a NEW LOVE – Easter 15 - 1 Pet 1.3

When you hear the word 'Easter', what immediately comes into your mind? **Holidays!** Chocolate **eggs?** Bunny **rabbits?** Little **chicks?** It actually **ought** to be much **better** than that! The **origin** of Easter was something far more **substantial** and **exhilarating** than little chicks!

To be fair, the person who is writing to us here, was a very **up** and **down** guy! He could get very **excited** about something - and he could go right down to the depths! But when he thought of the first Easter, and what it means, he **always** goes 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] and has given him **hope in a new love!** His **love of Jesus Christ** who died for him and rose again for him! It had given him **so much hope for the future!** Life after life!!

It is a 'new' hope because the hope that he did have has **evaporated!** All of us have hope in something or someone. Even if its false or in nothing, it is a hope! We often read about someones hopes being **dashed!** Hope keeps us going - even false hopes do the trick for a while! But the bible says *The hope of the **godless** will perish+For **what** is the **hope** of the **godless** when God cuts him off, when God takes away his life?* [Job 8:13, 27:8] Nothing - its gone!

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 - especially on telly - if something **feels good** then 'go for it' - thats 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 the Cross of Calvary and the subsequent resurrection! You cannot remove history. You cannot get rid of it. It is a **fact (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 is supposed to be a **celebration** of Jesus’ resurrection from the grave. It seems we have got tired of it - no service or films about it on TV on any of the main channels (as normally)! Jesus Himself of course, has previously **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!

But 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 over the winter. It is a real reminder to us 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! 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 Apostle 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, refusing 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!** See the '**nails**' in the '**V**' in 'love' in our leaflet! **Not stoning!** Stoning was the type of execution **Jews** specified. 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!

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 Good News 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!