

He Is Risen

By T.W. Tramm

SUNDAY, April 12, marks the first day of the week following Passover.

On this day 2,000 years ago, the women disciples arrived at the tomb of Jesus, who had been brutally crucified three days earlier, to find it empty:

“On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!’” (Luke 24:1-6).

Jesus had been raised from the dead as the “firstfruits” of the resurrection, which all who belong to Christ will ultimately participate in:

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [And so] all shall be made alive [resurrected]. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:20, 22, 23).

According to the biblical calendar, the day on which the firstfruits of the grain is offered before the Lord—the anniversary of Jesus’ resurrection—marks the beginning of a seven-week countdown to the Festival of Weeks, or Pentecost (Lev. 23:9-11; 15-17).

Pentecost is called the “harvest festival” as it coincides with the peak of the grain harvest. On this day, a similar offering to the Lord would be made. However, rather than grain, as at firstfruits, the Pentecost offering would consist of baked loaves made from the grain.

Notice that the latter offering, baked bread, depends on the former offering of grain. This is analogous to how the resurrection of believers depends on Jesus’ resurrection. Without the former there would be no latter.

Additionally, the baked bread represents the finished state of the grain, similar to how the resurrection of believers represents the finished state of humanity.

For this reason, the countdown to Pentecost is a time of anticipation. Just as the ancient Israelites excitedly numbered the days to the harvest festival, those who long for the metaphorical harvest we call the Rapture anxiously count the days until we meet the Lord in the clouds.

About that day and hour, Scripture says no man or angel knows (Matt. 24:36).

We believe this to be literally and indisputably true.

However, the seven-weeks countdown, beginning April 12 this year, is a reminder that with each passing day we are closer to the moment that we, like Jesus, will be raised to eternal life.