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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning
From the Ramparts Editor: Dewey Engelsma

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MEDITATION

The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

—Exodus 15:3–12

A Man of War

The Lord is a man of war!

It is one of the great truths of our God. Jehovah fights! The Lord is a man of war! The Lord is strong and mighty; the Lord is mighty in battle (Ps. 24:8). The name of the God of Jacob defends us (20:1). In the name of our God we set up our banners (v. 5). The Lord saveth his anointed (v. 6). Chariots and horses are no stay, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God (v. 7). The foe is brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright (v. 8). “The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted” (46:6). He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth (v. 9), which does not mean that in his grace he commands wars to cease and brings peace to every nation, as has been supposed. But God makes the wars against him to cease by so utterly annihilating his enemies that they are too broken and dead to fight back. “He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire” (v. 9). God breaketh the ships of Tarshish with an east wind (48:7). Walk about Zion; God is known in her palaces for a refuge (vv. 12, 3).

Oh yes, the Lord is a man of war! In the history-long enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, God himself enters the fray and fights for his beloved people.

Not as if it is an even fight between God and the foe. God is creator; the foe is creature. God is infinite; the foe is finite. God is sovereign; the creature is dependent. The foe is entirely in God's hand. Without God's will the enemies “cannot so much as move” (LD 10, Q&A 28). Even the warfare between the two seeds was put there by God: “I will put enmity” (Gen. 3:15). The outcome is not in doubt. Already now, though we are killed all the day long through the persecution of the foe, nevertheless “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). For the Lord is a man of war!

So it was at the Red Sea. Pharaoh had iron and brass. Pharaoh had chariots and horses. Pharaoh had a host and chosen captains. Pharaoh had swords and spears. And what did God have? Wind. Water. And without a single weapon formed by the cunning cruelty of man, God's glorious right hand turned the very creation into

the instrument of his power. God blew with his wind, and the sea covered Pharaoh's host; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Oh yes, the Lord is a man of war! But hearken and draw near and learn the glorious gospel of this man of war. For he is indeed a man, a flesh-and-blood man. God the Son, who is and remaineth true and eternal God, was made flesh and dwelt among us. The mystery of godliness is that God was manifest in the flesh. And the Lord Jesus Christ is a man of war! He is meek and lowly in heart. He is humble and the servant of Jehovah. He came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. But the Lord Jesus Christ is a man of war all the same.

For he hung upon the cross as a king, even as Pilate unwittingly declared by his superscription. And as a king Jesus fought our sin and death, fought our guilt and shame, fought our accuser and adversary—by sacrificing himself as an offering to God in our place. And he overcame! Listen again to the herald of his ascension: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle” (Ps. 24:7–8).

The Lord is a man of war! How terrible for the foe. But how blessed for the Lord's beloved people!

—AL

EDITORIAL

A Summons to Jehovah's Passover

This editorial is a warm and open-hearted summons to all those hungry and thirsty members of the Reformed Protestant Churches (RPC), the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), the Reformed Churches in America (RCA), and anyone who has walked with these churches at some point in his life to come to Remnant Reformed Church in order to keep the passover feast unto the Lord God of Israel with us. This summons is made in the fervent spirit of King Hezekiah of old, who “sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel” (II Chr. 30:1). Like Hezekiah, I say to you with rejoicing, “You should come!” (see 29:36; 30:1, 4). And like Judah, the members of Remnant Reformed Church are eager to eat the passover with you, because “the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD” (30:12).

What is this passover feast that we are keeping at Remnant and that you should come keep with us? Very simply, the passover feast is Jesus Christ. “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (I Cor. 5:7). The Old Testament lamb that Hezekiah slew was a shadow of the true “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The spotlessness of Hezekiah's lamb was a type of the perfect and pure holiness of Jesus Christ, the “lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Pet. 1:19). The sacrifice of Hezekiah's lamb was a picture of “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). The blood that was collected from Hezekiah's lamb was a type of our Lord, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). Hezekiah's eating of the lamb was a shadow of God's elect people's feasting on Jesus' flesh by faith. “For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:55–56).

The passover feast for the New Testament church is Jesus Christ.

What a rich meal is Jesus Christ for his church! In Jesus Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). Jesus is the vine (John 15:1) and the root of the olive tree (Rom. 11:16), and the branches partake of his root and fatness (v. 17). He that eateth and drinketh Jesus Christ shall live forever (John 6:51). Whoso eateth Jesus' flesh and drinketh Jesus' blood hath eternal life, and Christ will raise him up at the last day (v. 54). He that eateth Christ, even he shall live by Christ (v. 57). All other bread sustains merely the body. Even the fathers of Israel, who ate manna in the desert, all died; but he that eateth Christ shall live forever (v. 58). In Jesus is our inheritance (Eph. 1:11). With Christ our life is hid in God (Col. 3:3). Christ is the refreshing waters, the wine, the milk, the bread, the good food, and the fatness that is freely given and that can only be bought without price (Isa. 55:1–2). All the spiritual blessings in heavenly places are in him; and his people, chosen from before the foundation of the world, have been blessed in him (Eph. 1:3–4). Jesus Christ is the savior (Matt. 1:21), and Jesus Christ is the salvation (Isa. 52:10). Jesus Christ is the seed (Gal. 3:16), and Jesus Christ is the covenant (Isa. 42:6), and Jesus Christ is the promise (II Cor. 1:20), and Jesus Christ is the elect (Isa. 42:1). His goings forth have been from of old (Mic. 5:2), and his riches are unsearchable (Eph. 3:8). Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace (John 1:16). He that hath the Son hath life (I John 5:12). And he that hath, to him shall be given even more (Mark 4:25). What a rich passover feast is Jesus Christ! And this is the passover feast that, by God's abounding grace, we are keeping at Remnant.

How is the passover of Jesus Christ being kept at Remnant? Very simply, by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The passover in Hezekiah's day was kept by the shedding of blood. The passover in the New Testament is kept by the proclamation of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the old passover feast and who shed his blood once for all upon the cross for the sins of his people. Jesus Christ and all his riches

are given to the people of God through the preaching of the gospel. "We preach Christ crucified" (I Cor. 1:23). Jesus Christ and all his riches as preached are carried into the hearts of God's people by the Spirit of Christ. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). And God's people feed on Jesus Christ and all his riches in the gospel by faith. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

The preaching of the gospel does not merely mean sermons. There are many sermons in the church world that do not proclaim Christ. Many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1). Many preach another Jesus (II Cor. 11:4) and another gospel (Gal. 1:6). Many are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:13–14). These false prophets lie in wait to deceive the simple by proclaiming Jesus very loudly. But their Jesus is always Jesus *and*, never Jesus *alone*. In this other gospel, Jesus is never sufficient for salvation; Jesus is never enough for blessing and peace; Jesus' "It is finished" never quite ends up meaning that it is actually finished. In this other gospel, before Jesus is complete the work and worth of man must be added to him: Jesus and man, Jesus and obedience, Jesus and works, Jesus and *in the way of*, Jesus and conditions. Once man and the appropriate works of man have been added to Jesus, only then is Jesus the savior. The Jesus of the false prophets is not Jesus but Jesus *and*.

The true Jesus is not Jesus *and* but Jesus *alone*. Jesus *alone* is the very meaning of his name *Jesus*: he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). *He* shall save his people from their sins, not *Jesus and his people* shall save his people from their sins. God "hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and

grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (II Tim. 1:9–11). By grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8–9). “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). The Jesus who is Jesus *alone* is the only true Jesus, and the gospel that proclaims Jesus *alone* as the only savior is the only true gospel—which true gospel alone is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

It is this gospel of Jesus Christ alone as the savior from sin that Remnant Reformed Church proclaims, by the grace of God. This is the “pure doctrine of the gospel” (Belgic Confession 29). This is the “ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hath pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testament” (Canons 3–4.6). It is by this preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at 9181 Kenowa Ave. SW, Grandville, Michigan, that Remnant Reformed Church keeps the passover feast unto the Lord God of Israel. And you should come to the house of the Lord to keep it with us!

But why do we make such a specific summons to the Reformed churches mentioned above? Our reason is certainly not to exclude those from other denominations or from no church at all who desire to hear the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. Not at all! As far as those from other churches or from no church who desire to come, our call is this: Come! Let him that is athirst come. Whosoever will, let him take the water of

life freely (Rev. 22:17). Come unto Christ, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and Christ will give you rest. Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For his yoke is easy, and his burden is light (Matt. 11:28–30). Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto God, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Christ; hear, and your soul shall live; and God will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David (Isa. 55:1–3).

No, the precision of our summons is not because we are trying to exclude anyone else who is hungry and thirsty and wretched and poor and blind and naked and weary and dying. Come and be filled and be clothed and be healed and live and find rest! Rather, the precision of our summons is that the Reformed churches mentioned above make up the ecclesiastical lineage of Remnant Reformed Church. Remnant Reformed Church traces her lineage to the PRC as our mother, to the CRC as our grandmother, and to the RCA as our great-grandmother; and we count the RPC as a former sister. Although all of these denominations have been treacherous—the RCA’s departing to the point that the CRC had to leave in 1857, the CRC’s casting out Herman Hoeksema and the PRC in 1924, the PRC’s casting out the RPC in 2021, and the RPC’s casting out Remnant in 2023—nevertheless, these denominations belong to the ecclesiastical lineage of Remnant Reformed Church. We still think about mother. We still believe sister should return to us. Therefore, we say to the members of those denominations who are hungry for righteousness, “Come join us! Come be satisfied with Christ with us!”

Our call to the members of the churches that make up our ecclesiastical lineage is made in the spirit of Hezekiah, who, though he was the

king of Judah, sent letters to the kingdom of Israel. Hezekiah's letters went to Ephraim and Manasseh and even unto Zebulun; from Beersheba in the south of Judah all the way to Dan in the north of Israel. The ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel and the two tribes of the kingdom of Judah together made up the twelve tribes of Israel. Though the twelve tribes had to live apart as two kingdoms because of the apostasy of the kingdom of Israel, they shared an ecclesiastical lineage. The people of Judah had not kept the passover for a long time. The people of Israel had not kept the passover for even longer. So "Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel" (II Chr. 30:1). So also we say to the members of those churches with whom we share an ecclesiastical lineage, "You should come to Remnant to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel."

But why do we insist that the members of those churches come to Remnant Reformed Church to keep the passover? Why do we not instead ask whether we at Remnant may join the RCA or the CRC or the PRC or the RPC for worship with them? We insist that members from the other denominations join us because the other denominations do not keep the passover anymore. In the language of Hezekiah's day, the other denominations must come to Remnant to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel because the other denominations have not kept the passover "of a long time in such sort as it was written" (II Chr. 30:5). Judah cannot leave Jerusalem and the temple to keep the passover in Israel; Israel must come to Judah to keep the passover in Jerusalem.

The spiritual reality that is being described in II Chronicles 30 is the apostasy of the kingdom of Israel. Israel's apostasy was that she had departed as a kingdom from the ordinance of the passover as that ordinance had been set down in the scriptures. Israel's apostasy was not that she never mentioned God. Israel's apostasy was not that she stopped having religious feasts at set

times. Rather, Israel's apostasy was that she had not kept the passover as the scriptures had said. She "had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written" (v. 5). Hezekiah called the people of Israel to come to the passover in Jerusalem, where that passover would be kept according to the word of God.

The New Testament equivalent of Israel's apostasy is the apostasy of those churches and denominations that corrupt the pure doctrine of the gospel. Churches that corrupt the gospel do not disappear from the earth as churches. Rather, such churches still exist in the world as churches, complete with worship services, sermons, sacraments, consistories, and all the rest. Such churches still speak about God, Jesus, salvation, grace, faith, repentance, and "the Reformed faith." But such churches have corrupted the pure doctrine of the gospel, introducing into their sermons another Jesus and another gospel than the true Jesus and the true gospel. Their Jesus cannot finish salvation until man has contributed his part. Their gospel does not relieve the sinner of his burden but adds conditions that the sinner must fulfill before he may have his salvation and his blessing. Their gospel does not exalt the sovereign will of God but the sovereign will of man. Such churches do not celebrate the passover; that is, such churches "had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written."

So it happened with the Reformed Church in America, which introduced hundreds of hymns into her worship and dabbled with the conditional theology of Richard Baxter, so that the CRC had to leave in 1857. The RCA no longer keeps the passover. And so it happened with the Christian Reformed Church, which adopted the theory of common grace, including the teaching of the well-meant offer of the gospel, expelling the PRC in 1924. The CRC no longer keeps the passover. And so it happened with the Protestant Reformed Churches, which sold their doctrine of the unconditional covenant for the doctrine of conditional covenant fellowship, expelling the RPC in 2021. The PRC no longer keep the passover. And so it happened with the Reformed Protestant Churches, which exalted their will as sovereign

in worship, expelling Remnant Reformed Church in 2023. The RPC no longer keep the passover. In departing from the pure doctrine of the gospel in the scriptures, these denominations have “not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.”

The fact that these denominations, by their apostasy and apostatizing, no longer keep the passover is not a statement about the salvation of the individual members of these denominations. It is not an accusation that the members of the RCA, CRC, PRC, and RPC are reprobate or unregenerate. Rather, that these denominations do not keep the passover is a statement about the institutions. The churches as institutions have departed. Israel was apostate, but God still had his people there and called them to come out and to return to his gospel in the passover. So also to those in the apostate and apostatizing denominations today comes the call to come out, to come over, and to keep the passover.

When the call to keep again the passover comes to people, it is extremely humbling. That call confronts men with the fact that they have departed from our God. It confronts men with the surprising and heartbreaking fact that they have been part of apostasy from the truth of the gospel. It confronts them with the fact that their denomination—though it looks outwardly strong and thriving—has lost the most important mark of the true church: the pure doctrine of the gospel (see Belgic Confession 29). The call to keep the passover humbles man to the dust.

Because the call to keep the passover is so humbling, there is tremendous pressure on members of an apostatizing denomination to disregard the call, reject the call, ignore the call, or even mock the call. Man’s flesh rages against the rebuke that comes with the call. One’s family and friends assure him that the doctrine of his church has not changed. One’s fellow church members tell him to ignore the call from those schismatic outsiders. The men of Israel thought that Hezekiah and his passover were a big joke, so that when the messengers arrived, the men

of Israel “laughed them to scorn, and mocked them” (II Chr. 30:10). And yet over against all that pressure comes the call that we “should come to keep the passover” (v. 5).

Therefore, children of Israel, hear the promise of the gospel, including the command to repent and believe, as Hezekiah wrote it to Israel and as I now write it to you. Heed the summons to come to the gospel of Jesus Christ as he is proclaimed in Remnant Reformed Church.

Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him. (II Chr. 30:6–9)

Because God’s call to keep the passover is sovereign and effectual, it will bear fruit. The fruit of God’s call is that some hearts will harden and some mouths will laugh and mock, which response is according to God’s purpose and which hardening was his intent for his foes with his call. But the fruit of God’s call is also that God softens the hearts of his people and powerfully draws them to his passover, which softening is also according to his eternal purpose and which drawing was his intent for his elect people with his call. Both of these fruits were seen in Hezekiah’s day.

So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD. (II Chr. 30:10–12)

So powerful was God's call that it even drew to Jerusalem strangers who were neither from Israel nor from Judah but who were God's elect people from other nations living in the land of Israel and Judah.

And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. (II Chr. 30:25–26)

Yes, God's summons is effectual, and no wonder! For the hand of God is absolutely sovereign in salvation, and "the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king" (II Chr. 30:12).

That God is sovereign to save without the help and cooperation of man can be seen even in the call itself, for the center and focus of the call is God. Behold the God of the call. He is the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. He is the God who returns to the remnant of his people. He is the God who sanctifies his sanctuary forever for his people to enter into. He is the God who turns the fierceness of his wrath away from his people. He is the God who brings his people's brethren and children out of captivity and returns them to their inheritance. He is the Lord your God. He is gracious. He is merciful. He is the God who will not turn his face away from you. The entire call proclaims the goodness and longsuffering and mercy of God.

And the call proclaims Jesus Christ, who is the whole meaning and message of the call. What was the call of Hezekiah, after all, but a call to the passover? And who is the passover, after all, but Jesus Christ? Hezekiah's call, "Come to the passover," was the same as what the Canons of Dordt describes as "the promise of the gospel...that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (Canons 2.5).

Even the summons to the people to turn and to yield and to enter and to serve and to return proclaims the sovereignty of God. When God says to his people, "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God...and he will return to the remnant of you," God is not announcing that he and his people will be cooperating in the people's salvation—the people on their part turning to God and God on his part returning to them. Neither is God announcing that in some important aspect of the people's salvation—their experience, perhaps—man's activity of turning to God precedes God's activity of returning to man. And God is certainly not announcing a condition upon which his work of salvation and blessing depends, so that the people must turn to God as the condition for God's returning to them. All such explanations of God's call turn the good news of the gospel of salvation in Christ into the bad news of the lie of salvation in man.

Rather, God addresses the call of the gospel as a command and summons in order to emphasize the sin and emptiness and folly and vanity and helplessness of man. When God calls the children of Israel to return to him, that call reveals that they are currently facing the wrong way. One does not call people who are already facing God to turn to God; one calls people who have departed from God to turn to God. So also God calls Israel not to be stiffnecked in order to expose that they are currently stiffnecked. God calls Israel to enter his sanctuary in order to emphasize that they have left his sanctuary. The call to turn, to yield, to enter, to serve, to be humble emphasizes that the people are not doing these things. The call exposes them as being

desperately in need of God and his free grace in Christ.

Furthermore, God addresses the call of the gospel in the form of a command connected to a promise in order to emphasize the grace and mercy of God. The sinner who has departed from God may fear that he has made himself so vile that God could never receive him. The sinner feels guilty. The sinner knows that his sin is all his fault. The sinner does not have mercy for himself and cannot imagine receiving someone like himself. But the call of the gospel assures the sinner that God is merciful and gracious. The call of the gospel comforts the ungodly sinner that God will not deal with the sinner after his sin nor reward the sinner according to his iniquity. God sent Christ for those who were at enmity with him! God justifies the ungodly! The call of the gospel restores the sinner by assuring him that God is so gracious and merciful that he will never turn away from those who come to him. The call of the gospel is not another burden placed on the guilty sinner; the call of the gospel is his relief. To all who are hungry: God fills you! To all who are thirsty: God slakes your thirst! To all who are wretched: God blesses you! To all who are broken: God heals you! To all who are guilty: God forgives you! To all who are ashamed: God receives you! “For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and

will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him” (II Chr. 30:9).

By the effectual and sovereign word of his call, God draws his people to himself in Christ, according to Jesus’ word, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). This is the Reformed faith: “As many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God, given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own” (Canons 2.7).

And so from Remnant Reformed Church, we send to all Israel and Judah, also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that you should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel. Be not like your fathers and like your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, lest the Lord chasten you in his sore displeasure. Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified forever. And to all who are hungry and thirsty for Jesus Christ and who return, the Lord your God is gracious and merciful; he will not turn away his face from you, but he will return to the remnant of you.

—AL



Passion Week: Wednesday

Wednesday appears to have been the quietest day of Jesus' Passion Week.¹ On Tuesday evening, after a very busy day in the temple, Jesus had again returned to Bethany to stay at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. On Wednesday Jesus did not depart from Bethany, but he and his disciples stayed with their friends. The next time that Jesus would leave Bethany would be on Thursday, in order to celebrate the passover in an upper room in Jerusalem. And Jesus would not return to Bethany again from Jerusalem. Thursday night he would pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he would be arrested early Friday morning and then crucified. So Wednesday was Jesus' last day in Bethany before his crucifixion.

We are not told what Jesus did in Bethany on Wednesday. Apparently Jesus and his disciples rested, and presumably Jesus continued to instruct his disciples privately. But scripture does not record Jesus' work or instruction on that day. Nevertheless, the events of Wednesday were very important, and the events of Wednesday were part of Jesus' work of saving his church. For there was one disciple—Judas Iscariot—who was busy betraying Jesus on Wednesday, and Jesus suffered that betrayal on behalf of his church.

Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised,

and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude. (Luke 22:1–6)

On Wednesday, then, Judas Iscariot left Bethany and made his way to Jerusalem alone. When he came to Jerusalem, he met with the chief priests and the scribes, who were plotting a way to kill Jesus. They were not interested merely in commanding him to be quiet; they were not interested merely in stirring up the people, as they had done before; now they wanted to kill him. They came to the conclusion that killing Jesus would be the only way to silence him.

Consider what Jesus had done on Monday in cleansing the temple and in asserting his authority over these chief priests and scribes. Consider what Jesus had done on Tuesday in answering all their objections and all their traps and, in fact, in asking them questions that they could not answer. Now, by Wednesday, the chief priests and the scribes had come to the conclusion that the only thing they could do with Jesus was to kill him. And so Judas Iscariot went to find those chief priests in order to plot with them a way to deliver Jesus into their hands.

What we see in this betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot is that there was constant opposition in the world to the Lord Jesus Christ. There was an adversary who all his life long sought occasion to destroy Jesus Christ. That adversary is named in Luke 22:3 as Satan. "Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve." Behind the chief priests' and the scribes' opposition to Jesus, behind Judas Iscariot's opposition to Jesus, stood Satan.

Satan had been opposed to Jesus Christ for the whole history of the world. If you go all the way back to Genesis, you find that opposition of

¹ This article continues the narrative of Jesus' Passion Week, originally delivered as devotional meditations at Pavilion Christian School.

Satan to Jesus. In Genesis 3, after Satan had tempted Adam and Eve and they had fallen, and after God came to meet Adam and Eve in the garden, God spoke this promise concerning Jesus Christ: “I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). That announcement of the seed of the woman was the announcement of Jesus Christ. He was the seed that would come. And that announcement of the seed of the woman was also the announcement of the history-long and worldwide opposition of Satan and his seed to Jesus Christ. God himself put enmity, warfare, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, so that what we see playing out on Wednesday of the Passion Week was that warfare that God had put between those two seeds.

Satan’s whole purpose all history long had been to devour this seed so that Satan and not Jesus would be equal with God. You see that in the first part of Revelation 12, which is a description of the whole history of the Old Testament. We read of a great red dragon that “stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron” (Rev. 12:4–5). That great red dragon was Satan, laboring to devour the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why did Satan desire to devour the Lord Jesus Christ? Why was there this opposition of Satan to Jesus? Because in Jesus Christ there was clearly represented a cause, and in Satan there was clearly represented the opposite cause. The cause that Jesus Christ represented is the cause that you will recognize and that you love: God is God. And the cause that Satan represented, which you will also recognize and which cause you hate by the Spirit of Christ, is that God is not God. Satan wanted to be God. “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:13–14). When Satan was cast down, he came to Adam and Eve and transferred his dream to man. Literally, he told Eve, “Ye shall

be as God” (Gen. 3:5). Satan’s cause is that Satan is God. Satan’s cause is that Man is God. But if God is God, then Satan is not God. And Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed, the Son of God, whose entire life and all of whose teaching and all of whose work testified this glorious truth: God is God. “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do... And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it” (John 17:4, 26). How Satan hated God’s cause! And how Satan hated God’s Christ!

The truth that God is God also implies the truth that God alone saves—only God saves, not man. Jesus Christ also testified that God alone saves. Jesus’ very name *Jesus* means *Jehovah salvation*. That was why the chief priests and the scribes hated Jesus. The chief priests and the scribes agreed with Satan’s cause. The chief priests and the scribes sought to build the kingdom of Man. In man’s kingdom all men must be saved by the priests and the scribes. In man’s kingdom the priests and the scribes had honor and glory. But in God’s kingdom the priests and the scribes and all men were empty and vain and could be saved only by the sovereign, gracious, condescending mercy of God alone. And Jesus represented that cause: Jesus—salvation by Jehovah, not salvation by man.

Because Jesus represented the cause of God, contrary to the cause of Satan, Satan entered into Judas surnamed Iscariot in order that Judas might betray Jesus to the chief priests and scribes.

This betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot was prophesied in Psalm 41:9, when David, speaking of Ahithophel, who had betrayed him, prophesied of Judas Iscariot’s betraying Jesus. “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” That prophecy came to pass in Luke 22:1–6. There Judas Iscariot, who called himself a friend of Jesus, who was familiar with him, who ate with Jesus and who sat at the same table as Jesus, lifted up his heel against Jesus in going to the chief priests and promising them that he would find a way to betray Jesus to them.

The cause that man is God and that God is not God cannot prosper, cannot be victorious. And the downfall of that cause is implied already in this passage. Notice that these chief priests, with all their plotting, with all their marshaling of their might, had to find a way to kill Jesus in such a way that the people would not rise up. The chief priests were afraid of the people. They “sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people” (Luke 22:2). They couldn’t do it openly while Jerusalem was packed with people. Many of the people took Jesus for a prophet. And even though those people did not understand the truth of who Jesus was, and even though the people would ultimately be willing to go along with the chief priests and the scribes in calling for Jesus’ death, nevertheless, the chief priests and scribes were afraid that the people would rise up against them if they killed Jesus openly. They needed a secret way to have Jesus delivered to them. And when Judas Iscariot came, being filled with Satan, he communed with the chief priests how he might betray Jesus unto them, and then he went forth and sought opportunity. He couldn’t just lead them to Bethany; he couldn’t just lead Jesus to the chief priests; he had to find a secret way to betray the Lord. Already the weakness of man is revealed in this.

But there is more, for Jesus was absolutely sovereign even over his own betrayal. Men had their own purpose and their own plans for how they would kill Jesus secretly. But God would have Jesus crucified before the whole world as the sacrifice for sin. The very next day, when it

was the worst opportunity from man’s point of view for Jesus to be betrayed, Jesus would tell Judas, “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). Jesus was in control even of this betrayal, and God used this betrayal to serve the cause of our salvation. For Jesus was betrayed publicly in the midst of the crowd in Jerusalem the next day and would be condemned by Pontius Pilate publicly and openly. Jesus Christ was sovereign over the moment when he would be betrayed and the moment when he would be crucified.

That shows that everything that Jesus was doing on this Passion Week, everything that he did all his life, was for the salvation of his people. Jesus Christ set his face to the cross for you and for me. He determined to deliver his people by his death. And even the betrayal of Jesus by his own familiar friend was exactly according to Jesus’ will, Jesus’ prophecy in Psalm 41, Jesus’ sovereign control of the events. You might think that if there were anything that would show that Jesus was missing some control or that things were out of Jesus’ hands, it would be the activity of Satan and the chief priests and Judas Iscariot. But even the activity of Satan and the chief priests and Judas Iscariot was used by the Lord to deliver Jesus to the cross.

That means, because it was the purpose of God that Jesus be crucified, that your salvation is sure. And this reveals the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for his poor and helpless people like us. Jesus Christ suffered betrayal at the hands of a familiar friend for the sake of the salvation of his church.

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Article LVI. The New King and His Kingdom (continued)

It may be considered beyond dispute that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the most important, while the most basic and all controlling doctrine of Christian faith. It is most fundamental. It is more profound, it is more basic than such doctrines as that of the counsel of God and predestination; it is more highly significant than the reformed doctrine of the covenant. It constitutes the very fountainhead of all Christian dogma. With the doctrine of the Holy Trinity our Christian faith stands or falls. And according as this sublime truth is allowed an all-controlling place in our entire faith, that faith is more firm and sound.

At the same time it may not escape our notice that this profoundest of all doctrines is also the most general basis of all Christian belief. It is not a peculiarly denominational doctrine. It does not belong to any church or group in the midst of Christendom. It is not a particularly reformed doctrine, neither is it the peculiar possession of the baptist or methodist Christians. It does not even separate Protestants from Roman Catholics. It is most general in character. It constitutes the groundwork of the twelve articles of our undoubted Christian faith. Its acceptance does not determine whether one is reformed or not. But its acceptance simply decides that one is a Christian. Nothing more, but nothing less either. He that denies the doctrine of the Trinity is a Christian no more. He has either fallen back into heathendom or is controlled by the spirit of antichrist.

Superficially considered, we would perhaps be inclined to draw the conclusion from this general nature of the dogma concerning the Holy Trinity that in our age this doctrine would

enjoy general favor. We might imagine that especially this doctrine would be pushed to the foreground and that it would live in the consciousness of the entire Christian church. Our age loves the general, it is said. It dislikes distinctive doctrines. We must not emphasize our specific view of the truth. We must not insist too strongly and persistently upon our distinctive character as a church among others. Such procedure is conducive to much ill feeling. It generally creates cold hearts and hot heads. It is not conducive to love and brotherhood. It is an obstacle in the way of united and concerted action. And it is exactly this united action of which we have so much need. Perhaps there was never a time in which the world was so much in need of Christianity as our own. Not of the doctrines of Christianity does the world have need, but of its actual influence. Christianity, so it is said repeatedly and emphatically, must come to realize its solemn duty with regard to the salvation of the whole world. The world must be redeemed. Society especially must be put on a Christian basis. And more especially still after the late world-war the reconstruction of the world is the task of the Christian church! And therefore, our task is a practical one. Not the intellect but the will, the love of man, that tie of brotherhood must be emphasized and called into action. The world has no need of more doctrine, but of the actual influence of Christianity. And for that purpose Christendom must unite. The prayer of the Lord “that they may all be one” we must realize. For only when we realize our unity as Christians in the world can we become a mighty force for the reconstruction and salvation of the world and the establishment of the kingdom of

God. And, therefore, we must forget our differences. We must try to do away with distinctive doctrines and return to a general basis upon which Christians of all churches can unite and extend the glad hand of fellowship. Emphasize not the distinctive but the general, that which is common to us all, and unite in strong and determined action to win the world, — such is the modern task of Christianity.

You understand, of course, that we do not agree with this vicious conception of things. If you know from which direction this modern wind blows you will feel spontaneously that you had better “stop, look and listen” before you allow yourselves to be carried across into this doctrinal no-man’s land. It is, of course, very easy for those that have already abandoned the fundamentals of their doctrine and for whom it has become a practical impossibility to restore them to their place of honor in the church, to extend the invitation to others to follow them in their course. They have nothing to sacrifice. It is the invitation of the cat to the mouse to become part of her. But we cannot see it that way as yet. We fail to see that the church must needs be robbed of that in respect to which it is poor already. It may be said without fear of contradiction that the church in general is poor in knowledge of distinctive truth. It surely cannot boast of too much knowledge. It does not suffer from an over-dose of doctrine. And the course to be followed surely cannot be in the direction of the abolition of more doctrine. On the contrary, it is our firm conviction that doctrine, specific doctrine, must be emphasized, preached, taught, inculcated if we are to nourish a strong and healthy Christianity for the future. And, therefore, we do by no means agree with this spirit of amalgamation and generalization. But it is the beloved idea of the times. And because we hear so often that Christianity must return from its specific and distinctive doctrines to the general basis of all Christian faith, we would expect perhaps that such a doctrine as that of the Holy Trinity would meet with general favor and that it would live in the consciousness of the church.

However, if we should foster such hopes we would be sadly disappointed. On the contrary, of all doctrines this one is least of all understood. Of all doctrines this one would seem coldest of all. Of all doctrines this one would seem to be most shamefully ignored, lives least in the consciousness of the church in general. Mark, I do not say that the Trinity is least of all understood. I do not criticize the fact that the Trinity itself is not comprehended. Such would be foolishness. The profoundest of all truths is naturally the deepest of all mysteries. But I am speaking of the church’s doctrine of the Holy Trinity. If you please, I am referring to the revelation of the Triune God as it is found in Scripture and as it was in the course of a long and bitter struggle appropriated by and reflected in the consciousness of the church, — in short, I am saying that the dogma of the Holy Trinity does not live in the heart and mind of the church today. What is meant by the term “Trinity”? What does it mean that God is one God, yet three in Persons? What is the relation of the Persons of the Holy Trinity to the Essence or Nature of God? What is meant by eternal generation? What is the relation of the Father to the Son and to the Holy Spirit? What relation does the Son sustain to the Father and the Holy Spirit? And what is the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son? These questions are not problems particularly for the Seminary, but they ought to meet with response in the minds of all that confess the Christian faith. However, a majority would fail to give a technically correct answer to them. And if such answer is given there remain still other questions. What do all these things mean to you? Have they become a constituent element of your living faith? Are they significant to you? What is the relation of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity to that of Creation? What is the significance of this doctrine for the entire truth of redemption? What is its relation to the central fact of the Incarnation? How is the doctrine of the covenant rooted in that of the Trinity? In short, what is the significance, what is the value of this basic doctrine for your personal relation to God?

Thousands will pass the sentence that also this most fundamental of doctrines is nothing but a cold dogma. But in so doing they pass judgment, not upon this living truth itself, but upon themselves. They simply reveal that they have no living contact with the most basic, while most general, truth of the Christian faith. No one that really understands the significance of any truth will pronounce it cold and worthless for life. It is ignorance, spiritual ignorance, lack of real conscious spiritual life, that is never able to appropriate the truth of Scripture, that also assigns this important dogma of the Trinity to the waste basket of cold dogmas. It is the shallow mind, devoid of true spirituality, that has invented the slogan: "Away with cold dogma!" And it is for that reason sad to notice that so many of our day listen to their siren's song. A few shallow minds, too shallow to see anything of the beauty and the depth of God's truth, raise the cry "Cold Dogma!" and half of Christianity shivers with cold! The fact remains, however, that the doctrine of the Trinity is the basis of the Christian faith in the most general sense of the word. He that considers this truth cold and worthless passes judgment upon himself. He reveals himself in his attitude, not to some form of Christianity, not to denominationalism, but to Christianity itself. Pity the faith, if such it may still be called, that never sees anything at all of the beauty and significance of the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the meantime, we must not be enticed to follow the direction of the spirit of the age. The danger is not imaginary that we will be allured to listen to its siren's song. Everywhere there seems to be a new spirit exerting its influence especially on the younger generation. It is a spirit that manifests a certain dislike for, antipathy against doctrine and comes with the demand for a practical activity in the world. It is a spirit that conceives of a certain contrast, of a

more or less irreconcilable antithesis between doctrine and life, and comes with the demand of less doctrine and more works. In the Netherlands this spirit manifests itself in the movement of the so-called "jongeren," many of whom have called themselves "ethisch gereformeerd," a term which either implies a tautology for the simple reason that "gereformeerd" is "ethisch," or which historically considered is a contradiction in terms, for in that case "ethisch" stands irreconcilably opposed to "gereformeerd." They are dissatisfied with the current methods of preaching and make it their task to criticize it severely. They want less doctrine and more life. They are imbued with the spirit of the times. And occasionally the same spirit comes to manifestation in our reformed circles in America. Voices are heard that reveal the same tendency. Dogmatics is in disrepute, we are told. There is talk of social preaching. It is thought that the old method of preaching emphasized too much the salvation of the individual. The new method must emphasize the redemption of society. All this reveals perhaps a certain ignorance, a failure to think correctly and to draw the right distinctions, both in regard to society and to salvation. But the fact remains that consciously or unconsciously the spirit of the age, a spirit that ought to be opposed and combated, is followed.

Hence, this spirit is not to be catered to. We must not have less doctrine but more, for the simple reason that there is not a superabundance of knowledge but a sad lack. Dogmatics is to be revived, not to be buried. Not cold dogmatics, but living, real dogmatics is what we need. The false contrast between doctrine and work, between truth and life, must be rooted out. And the entire, full, living truth, as it is controlled by the "locus de Deo," the truth of the living God Himself, must again be developed and understood.

—Holland, Mich.