



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

“Hallelujah! Christ Arose!”

David Anguish

This Sunday, as we do every Sunday, followers of Jesus will spend time together remembering the transforming service of our Lord, Jesus. Whether articulated, or even remembered by every person who assembles, our reason for meeting is the same as it was in 150 AD, when a Christian we know as Justin Martyr explained the church’s practice to the Emperor Antonius Pius:

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration. (*First Apology* 67)

Justin explained that the reason the church gathered on Sunday was because it was the day Jesus was raised. He gave equal emphasis to Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. He also reflected on the event theologically, comparing it to the original creation when God changed darkness to light.

We find evidence of all three thoughts in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. Referencing the hope expressed in Isaiah 35:5 and 42:7, he said that following Jesus meant a “turn from darkness to light” (Acts 26:18). He declared the resurrection to be one of the things that are “of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:1-11). In Romans, he connected the event of Jesus’ resurrection to being justified, (4:25), having new life (6:3-4, 12-18, 22-23), and faithfully dealing with difficulty (8:1, 18, 23, 31, 33-35, 37-39).

At some point, what Justin said happened every Sunday became a once-a-year observance. By 1611, this change was so accepted that the translators of the Authorized Version (commonly known as the “King James Version”) replaced “Passover” (*pascha*) with “Easter” in Acts 12:4. Jesus’ death and resurrection did happen at Passover, but as

Justin illustrates, the understanding of "Easter" as an annual observance was a custom read back into the text from a later tradition.

Still, I am grateful our world gives us at least a yearly opportunity to call their attention to the resurrection. I hope this year, as in all years, the observance will let us help someone see the vital place — and joy — that we can experience every Sunday as we rejoice in the hope of resurrection.

*Up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
and He lives for ever with His saints to reign;
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose! ~ Robert Lowry*

*Revised, March 22, 2016
www.davidanguish.com*