

Reading: **2 Timothy 2:8-9**

*INTRO. If we can assume our calendars are correct, then today corresponds to a Sunday **1975** years ago when Jesus rose from the dead. All of Christianity is based on the claim that Jesus arose from the dead, & there's compelling evidence to support that claim, not the least of which is Jesus appeared at least 11 times to no less than 500 different people! In a court of law, you don't need anywhere near that many witnesses to prove your case...usually two will do! So, it's comforting to know that we have a solid foundation for our faith in Jesus as the Son of God...& that's His resurrection from the dead.*

*If you have your Bible, please turn to **2 Timothy 2:8-9**, which was read earlier. The Revised Standard Version reads like this: **"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, the gospel for which I am suffering..."** When Paul wrote this, he was an old, worn-out soldier of the cross. He'd been through all kinds of experiences. In his letter to the Corinthian church he told how he'd been beaten with whips & rods several times... how he'd been imprisoned, shipwrecked, spent all night & day in the open sea... how he'd been in danger from rivers, from bandits, from false brethren... how he'd gone without food & sleep... how he'd been naked & exposed to the cold... ALL for the sake of preaching the gospel! Now, as he nears the end of his life, Paul wants to leave a legacy of faith to the young preacher, Timothy. And that legacy is this: **"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel..."** Notice, how this passage divides itself into an outline of four statements. Let's notice each of them today.*

1st... "Remember Jesus Christ..." *That's what we come to do today. And all over the world, today especially, that's what people will be doing. Unfortunately, millions who remember Him today will forget about Him next Sunday, & the Sunday after that, & the Sunday after that until, maybe, Christmas...or, Easter next year! Because for many this is **"the most holy day of the year."** **But why?** Why make it only a once-a-year celebration? Why should this Sunday be a more "holy" day, or more special day, than any other Sunday? Biblically, it isn't!*

In the Bible, we find no statements, commands or examples to suggest that we're to remember Jesus - or celebrate His resurrection - only on this day! The whole Easter tradition is just that... a tradition of human origin born out of an old centuries' practice of remembering Jesus' death at Passover. People thought, "Well, since Jesus died during Passover week, & since the Bible calls Him "our Passover" (I Cor. 5:7), then, why not make Passover an annual festival for remembering His death?" So that's what some did! But it was done w/o Biblical sanction, & it was one of many ways early Christians departed from the faith, just as Paul said they would (I Tim. 4:1).

*But make no mistake, we do come here to 'remember Jesus' today, & every Sunday as we eat the bread & drink the cup from the Lord's Supper. **This** is what Jesus told us to do (Lk. 22), when He instituted this memorial feast, which we've just observed. In fact, it's why we meet every Sunday... to remember Jesus! And by eating the Lord's Supper, we're saying 3 things: 1st, we say, "Jesus died for us, & because He did, we have an answer for sin." 2nd, we say, "Jesus rose from the dead, & because He did, we have an answer for the grave." 3rd, we say, "Jesus is coming again, & because He is, we have an answer for the uncertain future." But this is something we're to do every Lord's day.*

As for Easter itself, most Christians treat it as a family holiday, much like Thanksgiving. Both have a lot of family traditions attached to them. But just as it'd be unthinkable to "give thanks" only once a year for God's blessings, so also it'd be absurd for us to "remember Jesus" in a special service only once a year! This is the Lord's Day, & on this day, God tells us to remember Jesus for what He did for us 1975 years ago, when He died, was buried & rose again from the dead! It's a weekly observance held on the first day of every week.

2nd..."Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead..." This is what we must remember because the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith. Paul said to some whose faith was weak, in I Cor. 15:12f, "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there

is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty & your faith is also empty. Yes, & we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished,”(I Cor. 15:13-17). The resurrection of Jesus is crucial to our faith. Without it, we have no hope!

*Many centuries ago, the **Egyptians** built pyramids in which they buried their loved ones. Those pyramids were elaborate tombs which made a final statement about the person inside **because** on the walls of those pyramids they painted elaborate pictures & inscriptions which told the accomplishments of the one inside. Also the family put personal items around the mummified remains of their loved one, including valuable articles of gold. And all this was for the purpose of 'telling the story' of their loved one.*

*Well, the tomb of Jesus also tells a story. But it's not what's IN the tomb, but rather what's NOT in the tomb that tells the story! For, there's nothing there! The tomb's empty! And that tells it all, doesn't it? Because, today you can find the bones of **Buddha & Mohammed** & other world leaders. Their tombs still hold the lifeless remains of those men! But the tomb of **Jesus** is empty because He arose from the dead, just as He said He would!*

And while skeptics still abound who doubt the resurrection of Jesus, & would tell you that such could never happen, we who believe God have no trouble accepting that He has this kind of power. In fact it's easier to believe that God did raise Jesus than to believe the silly theories of men who try to explain away the empty tomb. After all, if God “...who made the world & everything in it” (Acts 17:24), why should it be a difficult thing for Him to raise someone from the dead? If He could speak the world into existence, then it's no great thing for Him to raise the dead. Jesus said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God,” (Lk. 18:27).

In Hanover, Germany there's a cemetery with an unusual grave.

*It's made of huge slabs of granite & marble which are cemented together & fastened with heavy steel straps. The grave belongs to a **woman** who didn't believe in the resurrection, but she wrote it into her will, as a precaution, that just in case there was a resurrection of the dead, God wouldn't be able to disturb her tomb. She even had her marker inscribed: **"This burial place must never be opened."***

*However, as time passed, a **seed** from a nearby tree, which had been covered over by the stone slabs, started to grow. Slowly it pushed up. As the trunk got bigger, the great slabs gradually shifted so that the steel straps were pulled from their sockets! A tiny seed had pushed aside the stones all by itself, exposing the grave! Now as surely as that tiny seed had the power to open the woman's grave, don't you know God is able to raise her at the resurrection? And she'll stand before Him, as will everyone else who lie in their graves. **"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead..."***

3rd... "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David..." *What's the significance of that? Well, it's Paul's way of saying Jesus is the promised Messiah, the One who'd fulfill the hopes & dreams of every believing Jew. **"Son of David"** was one of the lawful titles that Jesus wore, & it was the most common title people used when speaking of the expected Messiah. And there are **two** important thoughts about this title.*

*First, being **"descended from David"** meant Jesus was entitled to the throne of David. Peter made this point in his sermon on Pentecost day. First he quoted from David (**Ps. 16**), then said, **"Men & brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead & buried, & his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, & knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord & Christ," (Acts 2:29-31, 36)**. So, David was a King! Therefore, Jesus came from a King, & is Himself a King. But not just any king. Jesus is*

King of kings, & Lord of lords. Heaven is His throne, earth is His footstool & one day all men will bow before Him, & confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” (Phil. 2:11).

Secondly, being **“descended from David”** is also significant not only because David was a **king**, but also a **man**. **And Jesus is a man!** Thus, it wasn't simply the **“Man of heaven”** who conquered that tomb that Sunday long ago, but also the **“Man of dust”**. And therein lies our hope! Because if He arose, being a man, then by God's power, so will we! As Paul said, **I Cor. 15**, **“As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; & as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh & blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet,” (I Cor. 15:48-52).**

So, because Jesus **“descended from David”** He was a **man**. And as a man, He gives us a glimpse of the glory that'll be ours one day when God calls us from the grave. Then we will go, not in the weakness & frailty of this fleshly body, but in a **new** body like Jesus had, a body that knows no aches, no pains, no diseases, no disappointments... all of which we know too well in this body of dust. So, remember Jesus was descended from David, both a **King**, & also a **man**.

4th...“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel.” In other words, what Paul tells us here is **“gospel”** or **“good news”**, & it's not just his good news, or ours. It's the good news of Jesus! It's the gospel given by God, & it's the hope of the world because it's true.

You know, we're so familiar with the story of the gospel that it hardly evokes any emotion at all. But imagine people hearing that story for the very first time! **Can you imagine how they'd react?** Well, sometime ago, this happened to a primitive tribe in the jungles of East Asia, when some missionaries went there & showed them a **film** about Jesus. And, these people were so primitive, not only had they never heard the name of Jesus, they'd never seen a motion picture!

But one night, all that changed. For they heard & saw for the first time a motion picture of the Biblical story Jesus' life in their own language.

First, they saw how Jesus healed the sick & restored the sight of the blind. They saw His great love for people as He reached out to them, as He held their children, & as He taught them wonderful truths about God. Then, as the film progressed, it depicted Jesus being betrayed & arrested by the authorities, & then when it showed Him being mocked & beaten without a trial, these natives became unglued! They'd never seen such injustice. They stood up & began to shout at the cruel men on the screen, demanding that this outrage stop immediately. When nothing happened, they turned on the man at the projector, thinking maybe he was responsible for the injustice

Well, the missionary had to stop the film & explain that the story wasn't over yet, that there was more. So, they settled back down on the ground, trying to control their emotions. But then, came the crucifixion. Again, the people couldn't hold back. They began to weep & wail with such loud grief that, again, the film had to be stopped. The missionary again tried to calm them, explaining the film wasn't over, that there was more!

So, again they composed themselves & sat down to see what happened next. Then, came the resurrection. Now, another uproar broke out, but this time, for a different reason, & with a different sound. Now the people were jumping up & down, laughing, cheering & hugging each other. Now, it was like a celebration & the noise was one of jubilation because Christ had risen from the grave! Again, the missionary turned off the projector. But this time, he didn't tell them to calm down because all that was happening - both in the story & in their lives - was as it was supposed to be!

Here were people - seeing & hearing the gospel story for the first

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time - who could appreciate what "good news" really is. What about us? Do we understand what we have in the gospel? Do we appreciate the "good news"

we have in Christ? Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel..."

Where are you in relation to Jesus? Have you obeyed the gospel & made it your 'good news'? If not, why not today surrender your life to Jesus - by faith, repentance, confession of His name, & baptism for remission of your sins? Or if you need to come back home, & renew your relationship with Him, why not do so - by repentance, confessing your sin, & prayer. If we can help in any way, please come now, as we stand and sing!