

**Why Easter is not in the Bible
Selected**

Well, today is Easter and a special day for many reasons. One reason is because, in the three decades or so that I've been around here, I am getting to do my first Easter message... probably going to be my first and last, so we don't want to let this opportunity slip away. So, if you know me, and you kind of been following along with the things I tend to talk about as far as the word of God, we're going to do something that probably isn't happening in a lot of places this Easter Sunday around the world. Lots of celebrations of Easter are going around and lots of sermons are being taught, and, probably, there's a lot of similarities in these. This one might be a little different. We're going to talk about the title. Maybe, if you peeked ahead, you've looked and seen *Why Easter is Not in the Bible*. So, we're really not going to talk about whether Easter's in the Bible, that would be a pretty short time, but more like, why it's not in the Bible.

Now, to understand what we're talking about, we've got to have a definition because I don't want to confuse you. And I don't want you think, what? Easter's not in the Bible? Of course Easter's in the Bible. We've got all these stories of the resurrection, and... Well, let's get oriented here. I pulled this definition from Webster, and I think as you read it, you'll understand what we're talking about. Easter, the definition of Easter "...is an annual Christian festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, held on the first Sunday after the date of the first full moon that occurs on or after March 21st." So, that's what Easter is. It's not the resurrection of Christ. It's the day that is celebrating the resurrection of Christ. So, in the Bible, if you look and look and look, you will not find this. You will not find a day, an annual day, of Christians celebrating the resurrection day once a year. You won't find it. They had in the Biblical times, about sixty years from the resurrection of Jesus until the last book of the Bible was written and through all of that time, there was no celebration of an annual day of the resurrection of Christ. That occurred later.

So, to kind of give you a sense of how we got here, there's Easter - it's a holy day of obligation. There are people throughout the world (millions and millions is an understatement) of celebrating this day as a special day, a uniquely religious day. It was established, actually, at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD - long time ago, but there was three hundred years before this,

from the time of the resurrection to that. Now, as with many of these things that get created by the church tradition, there's people that are practicing it before it becomes official, so I'm not saying nobody ever did it until 325, but I am saying it didn't become an official day of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ until 325. That was when it became official.

The same religious tradition (the same thing that got us Easter) got us other things. So, if you're of the mindset that we need a special day, you know, on top of what the Scripture teaches... because we're here kind of trying to understand the Bible..., and if you're of the mindset that, okay, we have the Bible and it needs some help, and we need to bring some other things to help us in our worship of God and all that, well, that kind of thinking has brought other things. So, I'm going to begin to list for you all these holy days of obligation; these days that you should be treating as, you know (under this way of thinking), as special, religious, set-aside, you must be at a church service - that sort of thing.

The Feast of the Ascension - celebrating the Ascension of Jesus Christ after the resurrection. Right? He appeared to people, and then, finally, in Acts 1, we see the ascension into heaven. Well, in 385 AD, it was established a day to remember that, and it's the fortieth Sunday after Easter, if you're wanting to keep track of those things.

There's All Saint's Day - that was established in 609 AD, a long time ago. That's the day after Halloween that you might be more familiar with. Halloween, the next day, November 1st, is All Saint's Day, and that's a holy day of obligation, obviously regarding saints, not the Biblical term of saints, meaning all Christians. When you read saints in the Bible, that's what that is. It's the day that people celebrate certain people that are Saints.

Going along with this not-really-Biblical way of using, kind of, ideas. We have the Immaculate Conception. That was a day... the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was established in 1708. Now, so you're not confused, what the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is, is not the sinless conception of Jesus, it's the alleged sinless conception of Mary. And I say alleged because there's good evidence in Luke chapter 1, I think, it's around verse 70, 71, that speaks of the need for a Savior, so that is undoubtedly not true. But there is a date where that was established and Mary in the words that she spoke in Luke chapter 1, calls Jesus, calls God, her Savior. So,

obviously, you don't need a Savior if you don't have sin. So, that's confused.

Another day was the Solemnity of Mary. The memorialization of Mary - another holy day, 1931.

The Assumption of Mary – kind of get a theme here going – 1950, the holy day of obligation where Mary allegedly was assumed right into heaven, kind of like Jesus. That's August 15th... keeping track.

Oh, and then there's Christmas. I have “unknown” because, really, it's hard to go figure out when that started, but if you want more about that, I did a message many years ago (it's online) called *Jesus is Not, Never Was, and Never Will be, the Reason for the Season*. So, it's a classic. You see, Christmas... you know, just to help orient you with this, Christmas is, historically, not what we experience today. In fact, if you were you two hundred years ago, you know, you're the Bible believing Christian who not only loves Jesus but loves the things Jesus said and His followers taught in the Scripture, if you're that person two hundred years ago, the last thing you'd want to be celebrating is Christmas. So, Christmas has morphed over the years, and that's a holy day of obligation.

You know, you might be thinking, hey, there's some missing. There's some other days I, kind of of, have heard of that. And they're not, actually, holy days of obligation. They're just other holy days like Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Monday-Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, got these other days that all are kind of leading up to Easter. Ash Wednesday dates, actually, back to 601 AD. So, there's all this tradition that we have had come before us that has established very much of a sense of religion that can confuse people about what, really, the Bible teaches. And if you're in Europe, guess what? There's some other ones. So, if you ever visit there, and you're feeling, like, okay, we've got to keep these special days. There's a bunch of those: The Epiphany, that was established in 385 AD; the Solemnity of Corpus Christi (not the town in Texas), that's Latin for the body of Christ, 1261 AD, 1264 AD; St. Joseph's Day 550-70; the Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul. That's a very old one that goes back to 300, the 300's. You know, it's interesting that different countries actually have different days. You know, they're not all exactly identifiable.

So, this is kind of part of this definition of Easter. Like, you kind of get enough information, you go, wait a second, something's wrong. Remember the definition of Easter, "...an annual festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus held on the first Sunday after the date set of the first full moon that occurs on or after March 21st." It's like, red flag here. You know something's up. We got the full moon going on, and we got a... What? Why? What's going on? It's because the church through the centuries has established things to try to help you out in your worship of God. So, Easter is one of these days that have been established to help you out in your worship of God.

So, now, we'll go on with why it's not in the Bible. And there's, basically, two reasons why it's not in the Bible. Easter, number one, is not in the Bible because the resurrection of Christ is so important. Now, that may seem kind of counter-intuitive. If it's so important, we should celebrate a special day, and, actually, we kind of do. If you look at the Bible, like, in Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1:2, it speaks of the church meeting on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is the day that Jesus rose from the dead, and it stands to reason that that would be the day the church is meeting. They didn't choose to meet on the Sabbath. They chose to meet on Sunday. So, in a real sense, we are doing this. We're just doing this every week. It is important, but it's so important, we do this every week. It's actually so important, this should be central to your life, constantly. And, hopefully, as I lay out the rest of this, you will appreciate why the resurrection should be a part of your consciousness all the time; not once a year, not even once a week, all the time because the resurrection brings our present salvation. Without the resurrection, we have no salvation. We are not delivered. We are dead in our transgressions. We are without hope. So, presently, what we enjoy is our justification. Romans 4:25 says, "He... was delivered... [for] our transgressions...[He] was raised... [for] our justification." If you just want, kind of, a one verse sort of synopsis here, this is both sides of the same coin. The purpose of His death, His crucifixion, was for our deliverance, and the purpose of His resurrection was for our justification. Justification is one of these, kind of, theological words, that we, kind of, use synonymously when we talk, meaning salvation, but what it technically means is we are set right. We are declared righteous. We are viewed by God as being righteous without sin. It's the fundamental thing that forgives our sin... is this death-resurrection of Christ. Our belief in Christ then delivers us because we are declared righteous by God. We are justified - Romans 4:25.

It also brings about our new birth that 1 Peter 1:3 says about the resurrection, that “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” So, it’s “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” that we have our new birth. We’ve been born again, then we have our forgiveness from the transgressions of our sins, “...we were dead in our transgressions...” We were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were without hope. And Ephesians 2:5-6 shows that the resurrection secures our deliverance; “even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...” So, verse 6 is... it’s in the past tense here, “raised us up... and seated us with Him...” That truth that we are looking forward to has been established. It has been secured. We have been delivered.

The manifestation of that deliverance is coming, and that’s this next part; the resurrection brings our future salvation. The resurrection of Christ secures for us our present salvation, and that will be manifested into the future according to 2 Corinthians 4:14 which says, “...knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.” So, this joining together, “...us with you...,” this bringing us together is Jesus raising us with Him. So, He’s bringing us into God’s presence. We will be resurrected into the presence of the Lord. And more data about this resurrection that we will experience is found in 1 Corinthians 6:14; “Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.” So, we will be raised as Christ has been raised. And, specifically, what this raising is going to look like is we will have a new body.

So, we looked at 1 Corinthians 6:14. Now, if we look at Philippians 3:21, we will see that (well, looking at verse 20), “...our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state...” That’s this body that we have. “...into conformity with the body of His glory...” That’s His resurrected body. “...who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” So, the Lord has the power, not

only in the resurrection of Himself, but to raise us and bring us into conformity so we will enjoy the same resurrected body that Jesus had when He rose from the dead and visited with the people, His followers, while He was on earth before He ascended to heaven. And that will be our experience in the millennial kingdom, if we believe in Jesus, that we will gain a new body, and we will be with Him.

More than all of that, the resurrection moves us to holy living. The resurrection is so important, and doesn't just secure salvation, it produces holy living. And here's how it does that; it moves our mind toward God. Colossians 3:1; "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ..." ... "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." Our minds should be moved toward God because of the resurrection. That's what Colossians 1 tells us. The resurrection being if we "...have been raised up with Christ, [keep thinking of] the things above..." ... "...not on the things that are on earth." And we have strength. It moves us in our strength toward God - that we have the power now to walk with God. The power of the resurrection is a phrase from Philippians 3:10; "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..." So, we suffer, but we also have the power of the resurrection to overcome all that and walk in righteousness and overcome sin.

And there's more spoken on this in Romans 6:8-14 which speaks of the will - that it changes our will and moves us to overcoming sin. Our will is moved toward God. Romans 8:8 says, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him." Christ was "...raised from the dead... never to die again..." His resurrection is different than any resurrection you see, like, when He did miracles, and, like, He raised, rose, certain people from the dead - we see with Paul and Peter - these stories. His death is different because He died and rose from the dead, never to die again. These other people die again and need to be resurrected. His death is "...never to die again; death no longer is master over Him." Verse 10; "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all [that one death was for all]; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore [so, the reason this is all been written for us] do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the

members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

So, God has raised Jesus from the dead to give us the ability to now be no longer letting sin reign over us. Our will, our desires, our intentions, our choices, should no longer be for sin because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And there’s that little phrase that I wanted to note again because we’re going to talk about this in a second; “...for you are not under law but under grace.” Romans 6:14, remember that. Finally, it moves our heart toward mankind. And the most well-known passage or chapter in the Bible about the resurrection in terms of the epistles is 1 Corinthians 15. There’s a whole chapter in 1 Corinthians dedicated to the resurrection. It starts with the death and the burial of Jesus; “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...,” and then it talks about His appearances while He was on earth after He was raised, to Cephas, to five hundred, and to James.

And then, verse 8, Paul writes, “and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” Verse 10; “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” So, God’s grace manifested itself in Paul’s life because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, to do what? To labor, to work, and what’s he doing when he’s working? He’s telling people about Jesus and the truth about Jesus. He does that in 1 Corinthians 15 about the resurrection of Jesus, and then if there is no resurrection of Jesus, we are to be pitied because there’s no hope in this world. Without the resurrection of Christ, we are dead in our sin. And he concludes that chapter, in verse 58, saying this, “Therefore [since he’s told us all about the resurrection], my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” So, because of the resurrection and the truth of the resurrection, your toil is not in vain in the Lord. You should always abound in the work of the Lord. The resurrection of Christ should move your heart towards serving mankind, helping people

to know about Jesus, not once a year - all the time. That's how important it is.

There's a second reason. Here's reason number two why Easter's not in the Bible. Easter's not in the Bible because of the New Testament teaching regarding religious celebrations, and there is New Testament teaching regarding religious celebrations, because, guess what? There's a lot of religious celebrations in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is filled with annual celebrations that were decreed for the nation to celebrate, and here's a list of them: Passover, The Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of First Fruits, The Feast of Weeks, The Feast of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, and The Feast of Tabernacles. All these things were established for the nation of Israel to keep, so they were very familiar with the annual celebration. It would kind of stand to reason, don't you think, that they would establish, if this were so helpful... to establish a day to remember once a year the resurrection of Christ. They didn't do that. More than that, this isn't just they didn't do that, it's actually spoken about in Colossians chapter 2. All these celebrations, all these religious things, are referenced by Jesus. I mean, excuse me, by Paul in Colossians chapter 2:16. And it basically says this; these festivals were described as a shadow of the substance and the substance is Jesus Christ. So, read this. It's also found in Hebrews 10:1, that this stuff of the Old Testament is a shadow of the substance that we now have with the coming of Christ.

We have something more. We have something better. But we'll read Colossians 2:16 and what Paul writes; "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—" If there's anything that the Jews were celebrating, it's the Sabbath. We read that in the New Testament, over and over again of the inherence to the Sabbath Day. And they had all these rules that they created to keep the Sabbath holy as they were instructed to. The Sabbath was for the nation of Israel as a sign of the Covenant, the old Covenant to Israel. Paul, now, in the new Covenant, the New Testament, says, let no one be your judge for these days. In verse 17, "...things which are of a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." We have a substance that's in Jesus Christ. We don't need this religious construct because the grace of God has released us from these festivals. God's grace has released us from all the stuff that was demanded of Israel in the Old Testament, and has given us the Law of Christ, has given us the New Testament, given us

the instructions in the New Testament for the church. Romans, just to be clear on this, Romans 7:6 says it plainly, “But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.” We have the Spirit of God that dwells with us, that moves us toward the righteousness that we find in the New Testament, not of the letter of the Law.

So, why establish the religious decrees that have piled up ever since the New Testament and hold to those, since we have the Spirit of God and the substance of Jesus Christ? What has happened, over the centuries, the last two thousand years, as the church has moved along and continually brought us more things that they think will help us in our worship of God. So, sort of like sediment that’s building upon the true core of faith in Christ, the true religion Jesus Christ, the truth of the Scriptures that God has sent His Son to die for our sins, and we have the truth in the Scripture. Over the years, there’s been all this stuff that’s gotten layered and layered on top of it, and these days are just part of this layer. So, when people of the world kind of look at Christianity, they see something very similar to other religions: a bunch of codes and conducts to keep, a bunch of rituals to hold to, a bunch of days to celebrate. And it looks so very familiar, and you can’t almost see the truth of God through the stuff.

Romans 15 - there’s the grace of God that has released us. We’ve been released from that. Romans 14 - excuse me. There’s a little typo in your notes there. Romans 14:1-5 help us to kind of understand this better because, in Romans 14, we see how we should act in regards to these things, these extra things, and, basically, the point is let’s not judge. Let’s not be the judge, but it’s getting spoken of in a unique way - reading Romans 14:1-5; “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.” So the one who is more restricted, the one who has special diets and things like that, the weak one, eats vegetables. The one of faith, “...he may eat all things...” All things are fine. “The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” Verse 5; “One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.”

There's lots of people that are going to hold Easter as a special day, a very religious day, a very holy day. That's okay. You know, we don't need to judge that and say you shouldn't do that. Stop that. But we can recognize that that's unnecessary. It is not wrong. This is not to mean, it's wrong to hold one day above another. That's not wrong. That is acceptable to do, and you can do that, and people can do that, but it's just unnecessary. The Scripture has freed you from this, so don't feel an obligation that is unnecessary. That is not from the Bible. That's from religion. But here's what I will say about religion that does this, and this comes from Romans 14, to establish a day that people are obligated to hold sacred is wrong since it leads people to be judged. So, this whole construct has led people to feel guilty. There are people today that didn't make it to church, and they're feeling guilty because it's a holy day of obligation. There's no need for that, but because of what has been done, guilt has been delivered to people. There's no need to judge regarding the choices that people make in this, and we shouldn't set up a system to judge people by this.

So, finally, to kind of wrap this up, there's kind of an elephant in the room here. That is... so, what're we doing? We just are doing Easter here at Valley Bible. Why? Remember, if you've kind of been with me as we've been teaching through the book of Acts, we see Paul, and he goes to places, and he meets with synagogues on the Sabbath. And, as was his custom, that's, like, the words right from Acts 17:1-2. As was his custom, Paul often used a religious day of obligation to serve the work of the gospel, mainly the Sabbath. Was he feeling an obligation to keep the Sabbath? No. He taught you can hold one day above another or you could hold every day alike. He taught that there's no reason to let anyone be your judge regarding the Sabbath, but yet he participated in the Sabbath for a purpose, and his purpose was to minister the gospel to those people that he came to. And they were meeting on the Sabbath, and he joined with them.

So, what's going on at Valley Bible? Well, we're not meeting on the Sabbath. We are meeting on Easter. We do call it Easter because, guess what? People call it Easter. So, at Valley Bible, we conduct annual Easter services for the opportunity to reach people for Christ because so many people are seeking to attend church on this day due to their religious background. They have a religious background. It has been engrained in so many people that what you do on Easter is you show up to church. So, we

like people to show up to church on Easter because it gives us the opportunity to explain, maybe, once again, that Jesus died for us. Jesus' death wasn't the end. It was part of the deliverance of our sins because it required a resurrection from the dead, and we will be raised from the dead, if we believe in Jesus. We will have eternal life, if we believe in Jesus - not if we adhere to some religion, go through all the rituals and bow, and all this other stuff. If we believe in Jesus, we have eternal life. We will no longer suffer the penalty of death because our sin will be forgiven.

What a great day to get the opportunity to tell people. Maybe you missed it this day; you've got it coming around again in a year. You can invite people next year. You've got Christmas. There are people that think, oh, it's Christmas. Hey, we want to celebrate Christmas. Okay, we do things to help you celebrate Christmas because we want people to know about Jesus, and we do this in lots of different ways, and you should be doing this in lots of different ways, because the resurrection of Christ should move you to want to help people know Jesus and to experience the same forgiveness of sin that you've experienced. That's why we do this. So, may we look for ways that people are open to hearing about faith, about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that they, too, may enjoy the blessing of forgiveness of sin. Let's look for these opportunities, and let's be moved to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that [our] toil is not in vain in the Lord."