

RISING TO THE OCCASION

EASTER MESSAGE

Jesus Christ rose to the occasion and accepted His destiny with courage and determination even though in meant death by crucifixion. As a result, He rose again from the dead victorious over death, hell, and the grave. Not for Himself only, but for the whole world. Time and chance comes to all of us. If we will rise and accept our divine destiny as He did, we will share in His victory.

I. THE EASTER HOLIDAY AROUND THE WORLD:

A. Customs around the world:

1. Spain: They dance to gay music and attend bullfights.
2. Hungary: Boys sprinkle perfumed water on girls and receive Easter eggs as rewards.
3. Mexico: Children break *piñatas* (symbolizes Judas) spilling candy to their delight.
4. Bulgaria: They exchange eggs and bake almond cakes.
5. Denmark and Norway: Children decorate branches with paper streamers and strike adults until they respond by giving them hot cross buns.
6. Italy: They eat Easter cakes in the shape of rabbits.
7. America: They hide eggs, eat candy, snuggle Easter bunnies, wear spring clothes, have family reunions, and go to church.

B. Easter is a collage of ancient faith, folklore, Christianity, paganism, and holy horseplay!

C. It is a blend of three traditions: Jewish Passover, the Christian celebration of Jesus' resurrection, and pagan rites of fertility and spring.

1. Easter actually predates Christ. It is named after an Anglo-Saxon goddess of light, "Estra."
2. The date varies from year to year: The first Sunday after the first full moon, after March 21. It cannot come before March 22 or after April 25. The first Nicene Council (325 AD) set this method of determining the date.

D. Why celebrate Easter since it is such a hodge-podge, mish-mash, mumbo-jumbo of paganism, foolishness and faith?

1. Christians do not observe particular days as holy days per se (Colossians 2:16; Romans 14:5). Nevertheless, we should take advantage of the

opportunity within our culture to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and to reach people with the gospel on this special day.

II. JESUS: A MAN WHO ROSE TO FACE HIS DIVINE DESTINY

A. Jesus Christ was a man of destiny: Jesus accepted His role of servanthood. He endured the harassment and ridicule of His enemies. He endured and overcame the temptations of Satan.

1. It was prophesied that He would die a sacrificial death:

a. “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world...” (I Peter 1:19-20).

b. (Isaiah 53:1-12)

c. Mary learned from the angel that He would be a Savior (“Jesus,” means Jehovah has become our Savior).

2. At twelve years of age, He knew of His destiny and did not shrink from it (Luke 2:41-50).

B. Jesus knew He would have to die, yet He rose to the occasion with courage and dignity.

1. “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). (See also Isaiah 50:5-7.)

2. His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26): Jesus knew that His hour of death was eminent. His human nature was repulsed by the thought of dying, so much so, that He fell on His face and sweat profusely in agonizing prayer. He prayed a prayer of submission to His divine destiny. Jesus, in reality, died in the garden. This is where He rose to the occasion and committed Himself and to save the world.

3. He accepted Judas’ kiss of betrayal, submitted Himself to the soldier’s arrest, endured the crude trial, and bore the beating, crown of thorns, spiting, and mockery, and stood silent while the crowds cried “crucify Him!” At any point He could have taken control of the situation. Yet He rose to the occasion and demonstrated His love.

C. Calvary is a picture, frozen in time as a permanent reminder, of how to rise to the occasions that life brings to every man or woman. Sometimes the sacrifice is great but the rewards are worth it. The will of God will is always best!

1. He gave the ultimate proof of His love: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

III. EVERY MAN AND WOMAN HAVE DIVINE DESTINY:

A. We were preordained before the world began in that God has an ideal plan for each of our lives.

1. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:4-6). (See also Ephesians 1:11.)

2. Everyone is given time and opportunity: “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

a. We are urged to number our days and plan them productively, timely, and wisely.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

B. If we will rise to the occasion and do His will, God will make us successful.

1. That entails walking in the will of God, using our talents, abilities, time, money, hearts, energy, and so forth for His kingdom.

2. His will may take us down the path of sacrifice. We may have to carry a cross. There may be a messenger of Satan to buffet us.

3. In the end God will reward us: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (II Timothy 4:8).

IV. RISING TO THE OCCASION OF SALVATION:

A. God does not want anyone to be lost.

1. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

B. He gave His life a ransom to purchase our salvation. His death, burial, and resurrection is the gospel message (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:1-6).

1. We die with Jesus in repentance.

2. We are buried with Jesus in water baptism.

3. We rise to a newness of life when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

C. Today is the day for salvation: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold,

now is the day of salvation.” (II Corinthians 6:2).

1. Rise to the occasion — be born again of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5).
2. Jesus rose to the occasion and did the redemptive work *for* us. If we will rise to the occasion of His calling, He wants to do a work *in* us!