

Acts 2:22-32: Biblical Reading and Reflections

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 April 2020

Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0 : 00] Acts chapter 2 verses 22 to 32. For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.

Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.

You have made known to me the paths of life. You will make me full of gladness with your presence. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preaches to the crowd that has gathered to see the spectacle of the disciples speaking in tongues.

[1 : 34] He declares the fact of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, divinely attested with mighty works, wonders and signs, his death divinely appointed by the determined plan and foreknowledge of God, and his resurrection divinely accomplished, as it was not possible for death to hold him.

In Jesus, God has bared his arm, demonstrating his power in miracles and great deeds, through his ability to use the actions of his adversaries to achieve his ends, and through the impotence of the grave to arrest him.

The very thing that the Jewish leaders presumed would destroy Jesus was the divinely intended means of his victory, determined in every particular beforehand. Peter quotes Psalm 16 verses 8 to 11, where David provides testimony for Peter's claim that Jesus is the Messiah.

These verses are also used by Paul in his sermon in Acts 13. Acts 13 verses 26 to 39 have pretty much the same pattern as Peter's Pentecost sermon, providing two examples of the message of the early church.

Paul declares there, Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him, nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.

[2 : 58] And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, You are my son, today I have begotten you.

And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. Therefore he says also in another Psalm, You will not let your holy ones see corruption.

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption. But he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

[4 : 10] Psalm 16, like many other passages used in the New Testament as witnesses to Jesus, is one that seems strange to us, and it seemed like an over-reading of the text. However, such a way

of reading was not unique to Christians, and some Jewish readings understood the meaning of the text to refer to the Messiah also, who would rise from David.

Such an understanding emerges quite naturally from the promise of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7, verses 12-16. When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men.

But my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.

Your throne shall be established forever. The underlying themes are clear here. David would descend to his grave, and lie with his fathers, but David the dynasty, coming from his own body, would be raised up, and endure forever.

[5 : 28] In Jesus, the son of David, David is raised up, as a dynasty, and as a body. Jesus comes from the body of David. Isaiah speaks of this in Isaiah chapter 11, verses 1 to 10, speaking of a time when the Davidic dynasty, which has seemingly perished beyond all hope of return, buried in the grave of exile, would be raised up, and would flourish, even from that which preceded David himself, cut down beyond David to Jesse.

It would rise up from those roots. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his root shall bear fruit, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

[7 : 03] They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples, of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

The bold statements of Psalm 16 are but weakly fulfilled in the deliverances of David's own life.

David seems to be speaking of a rescue from a far more terrible foe.

If David the individual is the subject of this psalm, it is all very anticlimactic. For all of its bold words, David lies dead in his grave. Yet when we read the psalm more closely, we might get a hint that it is about something greater, something much greater, about the body of the king in the fuller sense, about the dynasty that arises from his body, about the beautiful inheritance that God has determined for him.

Knowing that God has promised him an everlasting kingdom, his psalm of praise speaks of something beyond merely the ways in which God delivered him from death on occasions in his own life. It glorified God for his assurance of a dynasty arising from him that would not be ended by death, a dynasty secured in the raised body of Christ, the body of the son of David, also the political body of a people that participate in his life.

Paul speaks about this in Romans chapter 1, verses 1 to 4. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

[8 : 54] The grave eventually swallows all kingdoms and empires, yet in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of David is raised, and a king who has conquered death itself is set on the throne, a king who has come from the body of David, a king who raises up the body of David the man and the body of David the people.

God's richest blessings to you all this Easter.