

The Sign of the Resurrection

Intro: There is no event of ancient history that has more eye-witness proof than the resurrection of Jesus. The NT gives us an impressive array of evidence in the form of numerous post resurrection appearances of Jesus, what Luke called “many infallible proofs,” making it as certain as any historical event could be. Every first day of the week when we gather together as a church we proclaim the resurrection of Jesus.

But it is a truth that should impact us every day of the year! It is not only a fact to be believed, but a transforming truth to be lived! It is one thing to believe that the resurrection occurred, quite another to appreciate what it means that Jesus was raised on the third day.

During His ministry, even after performing many miracles, His enemies came to Him seeking a “sign” as to who He was. In response Jesus said:

“An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:39–40, NASB)

Jesus called the resurrection a “sign.” And a sign is a miracle that points to some important truth. So what does the resurrection tell us about Jesus? To what truth or truths does it point? The resurrection is a sign that confirms that...

He has authority over the worship of God.

Early in Jesus’ ministry He witnessed the abuses of the temple courts. The area around the sanctuary was noisy with the cacophony of hawkers selling their animals for sacrifice and exchanging foreign money for the temple shekel. All their merchandise would be offered no doubt at a handsome premium for the “convenience” of the travelers, but for the enrichment of the merchants.

In a surprising act, Jesus made his way into the temple courts and began to disrupt their business by driving out the animals and turning over the tables of the money changers. What had been designed to be a place of reverential worship had been turned into a noisy marketplace.

The Jews took umbrage at Jesus’ actions and asked him this question:

“What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?”” (John 2:18)

“Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”” (John 2:19)

The disciples later realized after the resurrection that Jesus had used the prediction of His own resurrection as proof of His right to cleanse the temple. By His resurrection Jesus had given proof that He has authority over the worship of God.

The resurrection is a sign that confirms that...

He is the Good Shepherd of OT prophecy

The prophets of the OT strongly condemned the leaders of Israel for their misuse of power and their neglect of God's people. They longed for a king like David who would shepherd God's people with humility and justice; and the prophet Ezekiel prophesied that God would give Israel such a king:

"Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd." (Ezekiel 34:23)

Jesus claimed to be that prophesied shepherd of Israel:

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

His love for God's people would be so great that He would give His life for them, giving them abundant life. However, everyone would know that though it would be noble for a shepherd to lay down his life for his flock, they would all soon be victims since they would no longer have a shepherd. So Jesus took his claim further by promising that this shepherd would not only lay down His life for the sheep, he would come to life again in order to care for His flock.

"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17-18)

Jesus pointed to His death and to His resurrection as proof that He was the true Shepherd of Israel. His resurrection is a sign that He is the good shepherd of God's fold.

He is the unique Son of God

Jesus once again stirred up the Jews by healing a man in Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Again they questioned His right to tell a man to take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath, since to them it was permission for him to "work" on the Sabbath. But Jesus made this surprising response:

"But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." (John 5:17)

The Jews rightly understood Jesus to be claiming to be the unique Son of God, equal with Him in nature; and they sought to kill him for blasphemy. But Jesus responded to them by teaching them that His power to awaken the dead limbs of that man was only a foreshadowing of what he would do for all people.

"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes." (John 5:21)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." (John 5:24)

As amazing as that sounded, Jesus promised to do something even greater.

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good

deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28–29)

Thus, Jesus pointed to the resurrection as proof of His power to give life to the dead both spiritually and physically in the resurrection. In all this He was simply imitating what His Father was doing. It is a sign that He is truly the only begotten Son of God. No wonder Paul described Jesus this way:

“who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,” (Romans 1:4)

Moreover the resurrection is a sign that...

He is the prophet of the new covenant.

In the gospels we can see that the Jews were looking for a prophet like Moses. They based their hopes on the promise of Deut. 18:18 where God had said to Moses:

“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.” (Deuteronomy 18:18)

And so when Jesus came speaking in the name of God, the Jews challenged Him to demonstrate His prophetic credentials by performing a sign like Moses had done when he gave Israel manna from heaven.

“And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him.” (Mark 8:11)

Jesus refused to accommodate their request immediately, but He did give them a sign they would witness later that made it clear He was a prophet of God.

“But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:39–40)

Just as Jonah had established his credentials as a prophet by being in the belly of the sea monster three days and three nights, so Jesus would establish His credentials as the prophet like Moses by coming forth from the dead after three days and nights in the tomb.

The resurrection is a sign that He is the prophet of the new covenant, the one through whom God speaks in these last days (Heb. 1:1-2).

The resurrection is a sign that confirms that...

He is the promised King of OT prophecy.

The apostles would witness the fulfillment of Jesus’ promises to rise again; and His resurrection caused them to take a fresh look at the OT prophecies of the coming Messiah or king.

For example, God had promised David that He would raise up someone to sit on His throne and build His temple.

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12–13)

It might have been thought that God was speaking about Solomon; but the apostles could see a new meaning in the promise when Jesus was raised. So Peter on the day of Pentecost affirmed that God’s promise of a son sitting on the throne of David was being fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus and His ascension and reign from heaven.

“Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. “And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS UPON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:29–32)

Thus, Peter affirmed that because His lives we can know that He is Lord and Christ.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”” (Acts 2:36)

The resurrection is a sign that He is our living Lord.

The resurrection is a sign that confirms that...

He is the high priest of the new Israel.

The Hebrew writer makes clear that God’s Son was given a body in order to offer his sinless life as a sacrifice for us; but through His resurrection, He has been raised to be our great high priest at the right hand of God.

“And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:23–25)

Because He lives He is our great high priest.

“Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19–22)

The resurrection is a sign that confirms that we can come boldly to the throne of God in order to find help in time of need. The resurrection is a sign that He is our great high priest in heaven.

Applying the Message to Ourselves

Because Jesus was raised we can know that He is all these things.

However these are not merely intellectual facts to be believed, but spiritual truths to be lived! Have you seen the sign and acted upon it?

Do you acknowledge the authority of Jesus over your worship?

Ironically many people today will celebrate the resurrection and then neglect to gather with the church weekly on the day that honors His resurrection—the first day of the week! Others will worship as they choose rather than according to the teaching of His apostles.

Is Jesus your good shepherd? Do you hear His voice and follow Him?

Do you rely upon His protection and provision for your spiritual life?

Have you confessed Him as the Son of God? Have you maintained your allegiance to Him?

Have you been raised to a new spiritual life?

Is He your reigning King and High priest? Have you become a citizen in His kingdom? Do you obey His law? Do you rely upon His intercession as our great high priest?

Do you have the hope of eternal life through Him?

Conclusion: What a “sign” God has given us! It is a sign that declares Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God, our great prophet, priest, and king, our loving Shepherd and Lord of all that we do! Have you put your faith in the resurrected Son of God?