

20. The Gospel of John—2:18-22

“The Sign of the Resurrection”

(2/25/18)

Over the past few weeks, in our study in John’s gospel, we have seen how Jesus cleansed the temple—v.13-17

This so infuriated ‘the Jews’ (the religious leaders in charge of the temple—scribes, chief-priests and Sadducees) that they came to Jesus and demanded a sign.

I. The Jews Demand a Sign—v.18

John 2:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

First of all, in saying this they’re challenging Jesus’ authority.

They’re demanding to know by who’s authority does He have the right to stop the temple concessions (the selling of animals for sacrifice and the changing of money)?

I’m pretty sure they knew what He was going to say—*“By the authority of God since I have been sent by Him as Messiah of Israel”*.

And since they anticipated what Jesus was going to say, they pre-emptively challenged Him to give them a sign from heaven to prove He was sent from God.

The Greek word for ‘**sign**’ is a word that means a *miracle*.

All throughout His ministry, the Jewish religious leadership constantly challenged Him to prove He was the true Messiah of Israel sent by God.

We see them challenge Him once again in Matthew 12:38, "*Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.*"

You have to wonder just what they wanted Jesus to do in the way of a miracle.

By this time (Matt. 12), He had already healed the sick and the physically handicapped, He had cast out demons and even raised the dead—so what more did they want?

Luke tells us they said, "*Show us a sign from heaven...*"

It seems they had rejected all the miracles that Jesus had done up until that point because, no doubt they were thinking—"other prophets had done similar kinds of miracles".

If Jesus was really *the* Messiah, as He claimed to be, then they wanted something really spectacular as a sign to prove it.

They wanted a sign from *heaven*—they wanted something to happen in the *sky*.

They wanted a divine fireworks display or something ... something that was unmistakably heavenly—something that had never been done before.

Jesus said He wouldn't appease their hunger for sensationalism—but God would give them a sign that had never been done before or since in the history of the world—

Matthew 12:39-40 (NKJV)

³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Comment)

Jesus said that the final and ultimate sign that God would give to authenticate Him as the true Messiah and Son of the Living God would be the resurrection.

Now, you might be thinking, *"What are you talking about? God raised people from the dead before Jesus in the O.T., and others have been raised by God since—so how can you say that Jesus' resurrection was a sign that had never been done before?"*

While it's true that others were raised from the dead before and after Jesus—they all died again.

Jesus was the only One who has ever been resurrected never to die again—that is until the Rapture. (Explain)

And so, in John 2, Jesus gives the Jewish leadership the same basic response to their demand to show them a sign that He gave to others in their group in Matthew 12—

II. Jesus Declares the Sign—v.19

John 2:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Now, since they're standing in the temple precincts (the complex of buildings and courts surrounding the temple proper)—they assumed He was referring to the literal temple building (containing the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies).

Let me stop and say this—the temple in Jerusalem at that time was not the temple that was built by Solomon.

Solomon built the first temple on Jerusalem's Mount Moriah in 1050 B.C.

More than four hundred years later, the Babylonians utterly destroyed Jerusalem and with it that temple in 586 B.C.

After the Babylonian captivity was over and the Jews were allowed to return to the land of Israel—the building of the second temple began in around 536 B.C. under Zerubbabel and Joshua.

It was completed in 519 B.C.—but was a relatively low budget operation when compared with glory and expense of Solomon's magnificent structure (considered a wonder of the world at that time).

Five-hundred years later, King Herod the Great shows up and begins building, what some scholars and historians refer to as, the “third” temple in 20 B.C.

The reason I say that not all scholars and historians call it the third temple is because it really wasn't a new build—but rather a massive reconstruction project of Zerubbabel's temple.

Wanting to garner favor with the Jewish people, King Herod renovated, expanded and greatly beautified the temple—a project that took 46 years to complete.

Jesus referred to this temple when He said, *“There shall not be left one stone standing upon another”* (see Matthew 24:2).

Thirty-eight years after Jesus’ resurrection, His prophecy came to pass—while sacking the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Romans burned the temple.

The fire was so hot that it caused the gold in the ceiling to melt and run down the temple walls into the cracks of the massive stones.

The soldiers pulled down every stone from the walls to extract the gold—fulfilling Jesus’ prophecy to the letter.

But getting back to our text—

John 2:18-22 (NKJV)

¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ **Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"** ²¹ **But He was speaking of the temple of His body.** ²² **Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.**

Let me key in on v.22 first and then we’ll come back to Jesus’ resurrection.

It’s important to realize that miracles, by themselves, won’t force people to believe in Jesus.

However, as the disciples of Jesus demonstrated—a miracle will help to bring out a person’s faith, *if* they are willing and open to believing in Jesus.

The Word of God is living and powerful (Heb.4:12) and can save a person all by itself without being accompanied by a miracle—

1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV)

²³ having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

In the case of Jesus' disciples, it took a miracle from God to confirm their faith in His Word—

John 2:22 (NKJV)

²² Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and [then] they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

So, it was the miracle of the resurrection that caused them to believe that the Scriptures (Ps. 16:10), and the word of Jesus (John 2:19) were true.

Whenever a person needs to have something supernatural happen before they will fully believe what God has said—it proves their faith is small and not very strong—

John 20:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."

Some years ago there was a teaching blowing through the church called "Power Evangelism" which basically said that evangelism was impossible without signs and wonders.

John 10:41-42 (NKJV)

⁴¹ Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." ⁴² And many believed in Him there.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

It's important to realize that miracles, by themselves, won't force people to believe in Jesus if they don't want to—even the miracle of resurrection (Luke 16:19-31)

Luke 16:27-31 (NLT)

...²⁷ “Then the rich man said, ‘Please, Father Abraham, at least send him to my father’s home.
²⁸ For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them so they don’t end up in this place of torment.’²⁹ “But Abraham said, ‘Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read what they wrote [the Word of God].’³⁰ “The rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham! But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will repent of their sins and turn to God.’
³¹ “But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t listen even if someone rises from the dead.’”

The rich man didn't believe in God's Word—but a miracle like sending Lazarus back from the dead—something that spectacular would force his brothers to believe!

It's interesting that Jesus did raise someone from the dead, and his name happened to be Lazarus (not the same Lazarus as here in Luke 16)—did the Jewish leaders believe? No.

Jesus Himself rose from the dead—did it force everyone to believe—no.

Once again, a miracle can bring faith where there is a willingness to hear the truth of God and believe.

Also, a miracle will strengthen faith where it already exists—but a miracle will never force someone to believe who is unwilling and hardhearted.

And that's primarily why when Jesus told these hard-hearted Jewish leaders the sign to confirm He was the Messiah and God incarnate would be—"**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**"

And they responded, "**It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?**"—He didn't even try to correct them.

John tells us, He was speaking of the temple of His body in v.21—and yet Jesus never said, “*Hold it guys, I’m not talking about the literal temple, I’m talking about the temple of My body*”.

The reason He didn’t try to explain what He meant to these men was for the same reason He started teaching in parables and only explained them to His disciples—because people had so hardened their hearts that the truth of God would now be hidden from them.

Matthew 13:10-14, 16 (NLT)

¹⁰ His disciples came and asked him, “Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?”

¹¹ He replied, “You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. ¹² To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. ¹³ That is why I use these parables. For they look, but they don’t really see. They hear, but they don’t really listen or understand. ¹⁴ This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says, ‘When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend...’ ¹⁶ “But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Listen, parables can be used to *reveal* truth, but they can also be used to *hide* truth—as Jesus uses them here in Matthew 13 against the Scribes, Pharisees and everyone else who had constantly hardened their hearts to the gospel.

There comes a point in the life of every unbeliever, who continually rejects the light of God’s truth, where God eventually “turns out the lights”—where their eyes are blinded to the truth.

At that point the opportunity for salvation has been officially withdrawn, they have passed the spiritually point of no return and have committed, what Jesus referred to as, “*blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*”.

The ‘day of grace’ has ended for them and their eternal destruction is sealed—and I think this group of religious leaders fell into that category.

But let's get back to the heart of the passage as we bring this to a close.

The heart of the passage and the foundation upon which our salvation rests is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is so foundational to Christianity that anyone who denies the physical, bodily resurrection of Christ cannot be a genuine Christian—it is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith for salvation.

You see, without the resurrection there is no Christian faith, no salvation—and no hope for man.

As Paul the Apostle said, *"If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is useless, your faith is meaningless, we are still in our sins, those who have died believing in Christ are lost and we are of all men the most pathetic. We might as well eat, drink, and be merry for there is nothing more to life than this."* (paraphrase of 1Cor.15:12-19)

However, Paul went on to say, *"But now Christ is risen from the dead and is the first fruits from the grave of those who have died believing in Jesus."* (1Cor.15:20)

The two essential doctrines that a person must believe to be saved are: 1) The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ; 2) The Divinity of Christ (Explain).

Romans 10:9 (NKJV)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Both of these are embedded in the sign that Jesus spoke of in John 2:19—

"Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

He prophesied to these religious leaders, that when they destroyed (killed) His body—it would be raised three days later—so the resurrection is presented (obvious!).

But notice that the Lord says—He would be the One who would raise His body from the dead—that's Deity, because only God can raise the dead!

John 10:11, 15, 17-18 (NKJV)

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep...

¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep...

¹⁷ Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again..."

Of course, there wouldn't be any resurrection if there wasn't a crucifixion.

And there wouldn't have been a crucifixion if Jesus hadn't loved us as much as He did and does.

If it weren't for our Savior's love for us—He would never have died on our behalf.

So, I guess the real heart of the passage is the love of God!—

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

One of the greatest hymns ever written on the subject of God's love was written by Frederick M. Lehman in 1917—it's called "*The Love of God*."

*“The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell,
It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell,
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win:
His erring child He reconciled and pardoned from his sin.
When years of time shall pass away and earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men, who here refuse to pray, on rocks and hills and mountains call,
God’s love so sure shall still endure, all measureless and strong:
Redeeming grace to Adam’s race—the saints’ and angels’ song.”*

The final stanza was added to it later, after it had been found scratched on the wall of a cell in an asylum by a man said to have been insane.

*“Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky.”*

The man who wrote that sounds pretty sane to me!

Maybe he was considered ‘crazy’ for simply being a follower of Christ.

Don’t worry what the world thinks of you, they may call you crazy—but God calls you sons and daughters!