

THE CORE VALUE: We value _____ and expect _____
and _____ to follow us as we make disciples of all _____.

1. Everyone _____ for a sign

2. Everything _____ on a sign

3. Every soul _____ in the balance over a sign

The Take-Off

Today - above all days in the Christian calendar - is the most important, because today is the day that points to the greatest sign the world was ever given by God, and so it fits perfectly with our 9th core value, which says that

We value **radical evangelism** and expect signs and wonders to follow us as we make disciples of all nations.

Let's quickly break that statement apart before we dive into the teaching:

1) We value radical evangelism

- ▶ By radical, we mean that it doesn't happen unintentionally
- ▶ The Great Commission involves a first step: Go! (Matthew 28:19)
- ▶ The kingdom grows through intentional steps (Matthew 11:12)

2) We expect signs and wonders to follow us

- ▶ Jesus foretold them (Mark 16:15-18)
- ▶ The church fulfills them (Acts 2:43b)
- ▶ The crowd is fascinated by them (Matthew 15:31; Mark 2:12)
- ▶ The kingdom is focused through them
 - They point to the right foundation (1 Corinthians 2:5)
 - They proclaim the full gospel (Romans 15:18-19)

3) As we make disciples of all nations

- ▶ It is a clear command (Matthew 28:19)
- ▶ It is a continual process (2 Timothy 2:2)

Bottom line is this: signs and wonders point people to Jesus, and today we're going to see that the death, burial, and resurrection comprise the greatest sign and wonder in history.

1. EVERYONE HOPES FOR A SIGN (Matthew 12:38-40)

▶ **Unbelief wants more**

- Leaders had heard about or seen...
 - Mass healings (Matthew 4:23-24)
 - Lepor cleansed (Matthew 8:1-4)
 - The Centurian's servant healed (Matthew 8:5-13)
 - Peter's mother-in-law healed and demons exorcised (Matthew 8:14-17)
 - The healing of 2 demon-possessed men (Matthew 8:28-34)
 - A paralytic healed and forgiven (Matthew 9:1-8)
 - A dead girl raised and a bleeding woman healed (Matthew 9:18-26)
 - The blind receiving sight and the demon-possessed receiving freedom (Matthew 9:27-34)
- They still wanted more (Matthew 12:38)

▶ **Unbelief needs less**

- Basically, Jesus said enough
- He pointed them to one sign: the sign of Jonah
 - Jonah was in the fish 3 days and nights
 - Jesus was in the tomb 3 days and nights
 - Jonah came out of the fish alive with a message of power and forgiveness
 - Jesus came out of the tomb alive with a message of power and forgiveness
- The sign of Jonah was a reference to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus

2. EVERYTHING HINGES ON A SIGN (1 Corinthians 15:13-19)

- ▶ **Without the resurrection we are empty** (v. 14)
 - The word for useless is “kenos” and it means
 - “empty, vain, devoid of truth”
 - “vessels containing nothing”
 - “empty-handed, without a gift”
 - “one who boasts of faith as a transcendent possession, yet is without the fruits of faith”
 - Satan’s best strategy? Create doubt about the resurrection!
 - His attempts through the years fall into 2 categories: occupied tomb theories and empty tomb theories:
 - Occupied Tomb theories
 - ➔ Unknown Tomb Theory
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: Jesus’ body was thrown into a common pit after being taken off the cross and His disciples didn’t know where the body was
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - For years it was assumed bodies from crucifixions were put into common pits
 - In 1968 remains were found in a private tomb of a crucifixion victim that ended this myth
 - Even if no one knew which tomb, Joseph of Arimathea would have. It was his tomb! (Matthew 27:59-60)
 - ➔ Wrong Tomb Theory
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: The women went to the wrong tomb; Jesus was in the right tomb
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - If the women went to the wrong tomb, so did Peter, John, the Jews, the Sanhedrin, the Romans, the guard, the man who owned the tomb, and the angel!
 - ➔ Legend Theory
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: The stories of the resurrection are just that - stories. They are legends passed down over time.
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - This is impossible because the account of Jesus’ resurrection was circulated while the eyewitnesses were still alive.
 - They would have put an end to the myth and it wouldn’t have survived.
 - ➔ Spiritual Resurrection Theory
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: Jesus’ body decayed in the grave and His spirit was resurrected.
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - Jews wouldn’t have believed it was a resurrection if the body coming out didn’t look like the body that went in.
 - The reason Lazarus’ resurrection caused such a stir (John 11:45-47) was because it was physical and obvious.
 - The disciples initially thought this, and Jesus told them it wasn’t true (Luke 24:37-39)
 - Spirits don’t eat fish! (Luke 24:42-43)
 - ➔ Hallucination Theory (the most popular of the “Occupied Tomb” theories)
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: People only thought they saw Jesus, but they were hallucinating
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - Hallucinations are very personal and it is almost impossible for 2 people to have the same on at the same time

- For 500 people to have the same one at the same time would be a far greater miracle than the resurrection itself! (1 Corinthians 15:6)
- Empty Tomb theories
 - ➔ Stolen by the Disciples (the first and most popular of the “Empty Tomb” theories - Matthew 28:11-15)
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: Jesus’ disciples stole the body while the guards were sleeping and made up the resurrection
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - If the guards were asleep, how did they know?
 - Guards were put to death for sleeping while on guard
 - Guards would have to be deep sleepers not to be stirred by the moving of a 2-ton stone
 - Disciples all died violent deaths for a lie
 - The disciples were terrified when Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:51-52), denied Jesus while He was on trial (Mark 14:66-72), and hid away after Jesus died (John 20:19). Hard to believe they’d have the courage to pull this off.
 - ➔ Stolen by the Authorities
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: The Roman or Jewish authorities took the body and hid it so that no one could say a resurrection happened
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - Perhaps the dumbest of them all.
 - All they had to do was produce the body.
 - You can’t produce what you don’t have!
 - ➔ The Swoon Theory
 - ◆ WHAT IT SAYS: Jesus didn’t die on the cross. He just fainted, buried alive, and was revived in the cold tomb.
 - ◆ WHY IT’S WRONG:
 - Jesus went through 6 trials and a scourging and then carried a 110 pound crossbeam to His crucifixion
 - He had spikes driven through His hands and feet, a crown of hard thorns thrust on His scalp, and a spear pushed into His side
 - 4 Roman executioners actually pronounced Him dead
 - He had over 100 pounds of spices and gummy substance put on Him in burial preparation and yet, somehow, managed to breathe through all of it
 - After all of this, He would have had to break through the burial garments, move a 2-ton stone and then defeat an entire Roman guard (at least 16 - Acts 12:4).
- ▶ **With the resurrection we are energized**
 - We can live our lives with passion
 - Our words (preaching) are not useless
 - Our walk (faith) is not directionless
 - We can live our lives with power (Romans 8:11)
 - The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead can raise you from the ashes
 - The same Spirit that moved the 2-ton stone can move you in power
 - “Gives life” literally means “to spring up”

3. EVERY SOUL HANGS IN THE BALANCE OVER A SIGN (Romans 10:9)

- ▶ **Belief is more than logic**
 - After reviewing man's attempts at refuting the resurrection, it's not much of a leap to accept that the resurrection did indeed happen
 - For some of us, it is an awesome feeling to find that believing in the actual, physical resurrection of Jesus is a logical thing, not a crazy thing
 - But coming to grips with the logic of the resurrection isn't enough
 - We must come to grips with the Lord of the resurrection
- ▶ **Belief is more about the Lord**
 - Right now, every one of us are standing before a gaping hole where the body of Jesus used to be
 - We must come to terms with what the resurrection really means:
 - JESUS IS LORD (Romans 1:4)
 - The empty tomb validates everything Jesus claimed and frustrates everything we claim
 - Because He rose, His claim to be the only way to God is true
 - Because He rose, our claims that there could be many ways to God is false
 - Bottom line: we cannot claim the resurrection if we're not willing to crown the Resurrected

The Landing

- All across the world today people will be applauding what was without a doubt the greatest act in human history.
- Some years ago I saw a vision on Easter Sunday of millions of believers standing in front of empty tombs applauding the resurrected King, only to then turn and go back into the tombs they had been standing in front of
- Easter is more than a day
- Jesus rose again to do more than just give us a great storyline for powerful passion plays
- He rose again to once and for all establish Himself as Lord and King, and to give the world the only sign they would ever need to know that He is able to save them completely
- The only question is: will we bow our knees and yield our lives to a resurrected Lord?