

<b>Series:</b> Signs	<b>Reference:</b> John 20:1-18	<b>Title:</b> The Eighth	<b>Date:</b> 04.09.23
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
The resurrection of Jesus shows us there's re-creation to come. The signs in John show us God's active in the world; now God calls us to be His sign to those around us.			

### Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

On Good Friday we watched the beginning of a film talking about sacrifice & atonement in the Old Testament leading to Jesus, but there's an ending you did not see - let's watch that now! **(VIDEO)**

#### **NARRATOR - Dylan:**

A reading of John chapter 20, verses 1 through 18...

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb & saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter & the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said...

#### **MARY MAGDELENE - Kristin Hinde:**

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

#### **NARRATOR - Dylan:**

So Peter & the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter & reached the tomb first. He bent over & looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came along behind him & went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw & believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head & the other at the foot. They asked her...

#### **ANGELS - Jason:**

"Woman, why are you crying?"

#### **MARY MAGDELENE - Kristin Hinde:**

"They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him."

#### **NARRATOR - Dylan:**

At this, she turned around & saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. He asked her...

**JESUS - Ronald:**

“Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

**NARRATOR - Dylan:**

Thinking he was the gardener, she said...

**MARY MAGDELENE - Kristin Hinde:**

“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

**JESUS - Ronald:**

“Mary.”

**NARRATOR - Dylan:**

She turned toward him & cried out ‘Teacher’ in Aramaic...

**MARY MAGDELENE - Kristin Hinde:**

“Rabboni!”

**JESUS - Ronald:**

“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers & tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father & your Father, to my God & your God.’”

**NARRATOR - Dylan:**

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, and what He had said to her...

**MARY MAGDELENE - Kristin Hinde:**

“I have seen the Lord!”

The Disney film *Tangled*<sup>1</sup> begins with the narrator Flynn Rider stating, “This is the story of how I died.”

And sure enough, toward the end of the movie, the evil witch, who was holding Rapunzel in the tower in order to use her magic hair to stay forever young, stabs Flynn & he’s dying. Flynn was there to take Rapunzel away & reunite her with the king & queen, her true parents, since she was the lost princess - stolen away by the evil witch when she was just a baby. And only Rapunzel’s hair can heal Flynn & save his life. So she promises the witch, “If you let me heal him now, I will go with you, and never try to escape.”

But, rather than let Rapunzel heal him which would make her a prisoner to the witch, Flynn sacrifices his own life & cuts off her hair at the last moment which takes its power

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<sup>1</sup> directed by Nathan Greno [Walt Disney Pictures, 2010]

away giving up any chance of his being healed. Without her hair, Rapunzel is useless to the witch, and she'd at least be free to return to the king & queen. In the next moment, the witch, tangles herself in Rapunzel's cut hair & falls to her death from the tower window. And miraculously, although her hair is cut off & when all hope seems lost with Flynn breathing his last breath, her tears fall upon his cheek, healing his wound & bringing him back to life.

If we could imagine Jesus narrating each of the four Gospels, He could start each Gospel with that statement, 'This is the story of how I died,' since that's the story the Gospels tell. But fortunately, like *Tangled*, the story doesn't end there, since they also tell the true story of how Jesus rose from the dead. If I could be poetically bold to say, the tears of the Heavenly Father at the loss of His Son, fall upon Jesus as all the weight of our sin was born on Him on the cross, bring healing & resurrection. To those who would repent & believe, the wrath of a holy God is averted by way of Jesus' sacrifice!

That's the final sign we look at today as we conclude our series on the signs of Jesus in the Gospel of John this Easter Sunday.

The resurrection of Jesus shows us there's re-creation to come. The signs in John show us God's active in the world; and now God calls us to be His sign to those around us.

The signs we've looked at all show how God is at work through Jesus in the world, pointing out God's overwhelming grace & love through Jesus. Today's sign shows us God's power. After His crucifixion, Jesus was buried in a tomb. On the third day, some of His disciples went to the tomb, but the stone was moved away, and the tomb was empty. At this point in the story, they didn't understand what had happened. Mary Magdalene ends up being the first one to fully understand, when Jesus appears to her outside the tomb. He sends her to tell the other disciples, so she goes & reports, "I have seen the Lord." Probably the best 5 words ever uttered for humankind!

In this sign, Jesus is showing the world the one problem we still haven't figured out, death, was no problem for God. When Jesus died on the cross & was buried in the tomb, it was not a setback, but rather a part of God's plan to restore creation to its former relationship with Him!

But this is a sign which has been shown to us since the beginning, since just after the Fall, God gave us the protoevangelium in Genesis 3:15 which we looked at last week - the first gospel proclaimed & promised by God. God, speaking to Satan, states...*"I will put enmity between you & the woman, and between your offspring & hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

The first gospel introducing two basic elements of Christianity - (1) the curse on mankind because of Adam's sin, and (2) God's provision for a Savior from sin who would take the curse upon Himself.<sup>2</sup> Then God illustrated that all throughout the Old

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/protoevangelium.html>

Testament with ritual sacrifice of spotless lambs. Spotless to symbolize the perfection of Christ, and the blood to represent payment for the sin of the people.

In the Temple of God, in the very inner room, referred to as the Holy of Holies, where the divine presence of God resided, once a year leading up to this moment, the Great High Priest would enter with the blood of the sacrifice of this spotless lamb & sprinkle it on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant & everything in that room to cleanse away the sin of the people - as we saw in the film on Good Friday.

Let's linger on that Ark of the Covenant for a moment. On top was the Mercy Seat, inside were 3 things: the Ten Commandments - the Law of God given to Moses shortly after the Exodus which summarize the 613 commandments contained in Old Testament law. The first 4 of the 10 having to do with our relationship to God, the next 6 having to do with our relationships with each other in light of our relationship to God.

Then there was the Golden Pot which held Manna, which we remember is the bread from Heaven sent by God to save the Israelites from certain death in the wilderness. And which Jesus claimed to be representative of Himself in John 6 - He was the true bread coming down from heaven which gives life.

Then lastly, there was Aaron's Rod which had budded. Aaron's rod was the one which turned into a snake in Pharaoh's court; when the Egyptian magi also turned their staffs into snakes, and the snake that had been Aaron's rod swallowed theirs up (Exodus 7:8-10). It was Aaron's rod which God used to turn the water of Egypt into blood (Exodus 7:19-21). And it was Aaron's rod which summoned the plagues of the frogs (Exodus 8:5-6) and gnats (verses 16-17). All signs of justice for & salvation of God's people.

After Moses & Aaron had led the Israelites out of captivity, God set apart Aaron & his sons as priests (Exodus 28:1; Numbers 18:1). The rest of the Levites were to minister to the Lord in the tabernacle, offer sacrifices, and hear from God for the good of the whole nation.

When there was trouble brewing in Israel as to the role of each tribe, God commanded Moses to have the leader of each tribe of Israel bring his rod or staff to the tent of meeting, with Aaron's rod representing the tribe of Levi. Each of the twelve leaders was to have his name inscribed on his rod. The Lord told Moses, "Buds will sprout on the staff belonging to the man I choose. Then I will finally put an end to the people's murmuring & complaining against you" (Numbers 17:5).

They left their rods before the Lord, and in the morning "Aaron's staff, representing the tribe of Levi, had sprouted, budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds" (verse 8). Aaron's rod didn't just sprout buds; it brought forth flowers & fruit, a clear demonstration of the power of the One who gives life. Verse 10 says, "And the Lord said to Moses: 'Place Aaron's staff permanently before the Ark of the Covenant to serve as a

warning to rebels. This should put an end to their complaints against me & prevent any further deaths.”

Hebrews 9:4 tells us that Aaron’s rod remained in the Ark of the Covenant as a testimony of God’s choice of Aaron & Moses to lead His people. Aaron’s rod was also a reminder that God does not put up with rebellion against Himself or His chosen representatives on earth (1 Corinthians 10:10).<sup>3</sup>

Aaron’s rod clearly represents God brings life from death! It was the rod of the great high priest, a title Hebrews tells us Jesus would hold...*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* (Heb 4:14-16)

This dead rod had budded, brought flowers & fruit, and was placed under the cover of the Mercy Seat which was overshadowed on each end by two angelic figures fashioned of gold.

*And in our story today, as Mary looks into that tomb, it says, “...she bent over to look into the tomb & saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head & the other at the foot.” She witnessed a mirror image of the Mercy Seat in the Temple where the Great High Priest would use the blood of the lamb to cleanse everything of sin!*

And we also remember, upon Jesus’ death the veil of the Temple which was 60’ high, 30’ wide, and 4” thick of woven yarn was ripped in two, symbolizing that Jesus is that final sacrifice prophesied in Genesis 3:15 - Jesus, the perfect final lamb of God slain for the sin of the world. Justice for sin accomplished, the wrath of God averted, now all can enter the presence of God by way of the blood of Christ at any time!

Every one of the Old Testament sacrifices typified Christ. The Passover, or paschal, sacrifice symbolized Jesus as the Lamb of God. The Passover Lamb sacrificed during the bondage of Israel under Egypt, and then its blood painted on the doorposts of Jewish homes to cause the Angel of Death to passover their homes. The paschal lamb was to be a male, without spot & blemish, and not a bone was to be broken - remember they did not break Jesus’ legs on the cross as they usually would of those crucified, given they were assured He was already dead. Jesus fulfilled this picture perfectly. As the Israelites applied the blood of the sacrifice in faith, so we today apply the spotless blood of Christ

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Aaron-rod.html>

to the “doorposts” of our hearts. In all these ways, “Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).<sup>4</sup>

Jesus’s resurrection shows, God has re-created humanity, and this new creation will be lived out in His presence, as He intended it to be in the garden of Eden. N. T. Wright makes the case that the signs of the Gospel of John mirror the six days of creation & then Sabbath rest. Wright says, “The resurrection of Jesus takes place, [John] is careful to tell us twice, ‘on the first day of the week,’ and I believe this is best interpreted as the start of [God’s] new creation. On the Friday, the sixth day of the week, Jesus stands before Pilate, who declares ‘behold, the man!’ (19.5), echoing the creation of humankind on the sixth day of creation. On the cross Jesus finishes the work the Father has given Him to do (17.4), ending with the shout of triumph (*tetelestai*, ‘it is accomplished,’ 19.30), corresponding to the completion of creation itself. There follows, as in Genesis, a day of rest, a sabbath day (19.31).”<sup>5</sup>

God is pulling out every single stop in the most obvious & creative ways in all these signs He shows us to communicate His absolute commitment & love to take on the weight of sin for you, including this final sign, Jesus rising from the dead after 3 days in the tomb.

The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate sign that God isn’t against us but for us. When Jesus rose from the dead, God visibly demonstrated two truths to the world: (1) that punishment for sin is not the end of the story, but there is something good on the other side of Jesus’s death; and (2) that God wants a relationship with us forever, made possible by the death & resurrection of Jesus. Not that it’s just *possible*, but Jesus actually did it. Died & rose from the dead. The sign now reads “Welcome home.”

The rise of urban gardens, oftentimes nurtured by Christians in cities such as Detroit, give everyone a tangible example of re-creation. Blighted yards & sometimes abandoned blocks can be transformed from overgrown & trash filled places to gardens overflowing with life. One such example is Alice’s Garden in Milwaukee or Central Detroit Christian Farms & Fishery in Detroit. In those & many other places, what was dead has been brought back to life, and we’re reminded one day God will make all things new.

Not long before He rose from the dead, Jesus had shed tears over the death of His friend Lazarus. Now Jesus sees Mary Magdalene weeping & comforts her with the news that He’s risen from the dead. Death no longer has the sting it once had, because Jesus has shown us visibly people can die & rise to new life in Him. Knowing the good news leads to the next step: testifying to others about it. As Jesus said to Mary in John 20:17, “Go instead to my brothers & tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father & your Father, to my God & your God.’” Listen to those words, since He says them to us as well in Mt 28, the Great Commission - go tell all peoples, I’ve opened the way to my Father, who is your Father, my God, who is also your God!

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-Passover-atonement.html>

<sup>5</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection and the Son of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003], 440

If the symbols in John are God's way of showing Jesus is active in the world, then we have to recognize that *we* are now God's sign to the world. By our faith shown in a confidence in the resurrection & in the actions of loving others, demonstrating a culture of repentance & forgiveness (v. 23), and showing faith in the face of adversity, we can be signposts pointing others to Jesus.

As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:13...*And now these three remain: faith, hope & love. But the greatest of these is love.* Faith which is trust in the promises, person of Jesus & story of the Gospel. Hope of a future final re-creation & the resurrection to eternal life, and the love of Christ filling our hearts going to the greatest extent possible to save.

We have been sent into the world, our purpose being the same as the entire Gospel of John: to help others believe in Jesus's name - and by believing, they can be saved experiencing the resurrection & re-creation in Jesus to eternal life. **Remember, it says in John 20:31, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."**

Because we who have believed, can say with Mary, "I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!" After He was dead & buried alive once again!

Say that with me now, "I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!"