

The last two weekends we have considered the uniqueness of the Christian religion. Today we begin considering the meaning of Jesus's resurrection.

In the Old Testament, God told his people that they would be able to tell if a prophet was truly speaking a message from the LORD, if the prophet spoke in harmony with what God had revealed through Moses and if what he proclaimed and prophesied came true (Deut. 13:1–15; 18:21–22; cf. Jer. 28:8–9). Of course, Jesus made the ultimate such prophecy and prediction. Matthew tells us that on several occasions, Jesus told his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, be killed, and on the third day be raised again (Matt. 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:17–19). On one of those occasions, he specifically told them that the chief priests and experts in the law would hand him over to the Gentiles, that is, non-Jews, who would mock, flog, and crucify him, and that he would be raised on the third day (Matt. 20:19). Even Jesus's enemies were aware of these prophecies (Matt. 27:62–63). If Jesus had prophesied about a weather event or political event, we might have been able to say he got lucky. But no one else has ever dared to prophesy his own death and resurrection from the dead, much less then fulfilled it, like Jesus did—and as I mentioned a couple weeks ago, he made sure not to do it in a corner to just a few people, but in front of a multitude of eyewitnesses. Jesus thereby demonstrated that he was the ultimate true prophet of God.

But if Jesus's resurrection demonstrates that he was and is the ultimate true prophet of God, what does that mean for us? We could probably make any number of applications, but over the next three weeks we will consider how his resurrection means first, that his claims are true; second, that his promises are true; and third, that the Scriptures are true. Today let's look at Jesus's claims about himself. To set the stage for these claims, listen to this one from John chapter 10:

JOHN 10:14–18. (EHV)

[Jesus said,] **"I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me (just as the Father knows me and I know the Father). And I lay down my life for the sheep. I also have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock and one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This is the commission I received from my Father."**

When we are considering Jesus's claims about himself, a good place to start is with Jesus's series of "I am" statements recorded by his apostle John.

In John 6, Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life." He said this meant that whoever believes in him will never be spiritually hungry or thirsty again. If anyone eats of him in this way, that person will not die but live forever (6:35–40, 48–51).

In John 8, Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (8:12).

In John 10, which I just read from, Jesus said both that he is the door or gate for the

sheep, namely, that whoever enters the sheep pen through him will be saved, and that he is the Good Shepherd who leads his sheep to good pasture with his voice, and gives them life by laying down his own life for them, only to take it up again (10:1–18).

In John 11, not long before he raised Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus from the dead, after Lazarus had been dead for four days, Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (11:25–26).

In John 14, Jesus made of his most explicitly exclusive claims: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me. If you know me, you would also know my Father. ... The one who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:6–7, 9).

And in John 15, Jesus called himself the true vine, from which all of his followers or believers have life and through whom they bear fruit. "I am the Vine; you are the branches," he said. "The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing."

Perhaps most shockingly, Jesus once told his Jewish audience, "Your father Abraham was glad that he would see my day. He saw it and rejoiced." To this, the Jews replied, "You aren't even fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?" And Jesus told them, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:56–58).

In another place, Jesus challenged anyone in his audience to prove him guilty of any sin (John 8:46). (We are not told that anyone could.) In another place, Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), and on another occasion he said that God wanted Jesus to be given equal honor to himself (John 5:22–23). In many places, Jesus made the claim that he had come down from heaven or was from above (e.g. John 3:31; 6:38, 51; 8:23). On another occasion, he said he had the authority on earth to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6), and after he rose from the dead, he said that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him (Matt. 28:18). On one occasion he not only said he had come from heaven, but also that he was in heaven even as he was speaking on earth (John 3:13).

Then there are the claims he made while he was on trial before the Jewish leaders and before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. When Caiaphas the high priest charged him under oath to tell them whether he was the Messiah, the Son of God, Jesus told them, "Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:63–64; Mark 14:61–62; Luke 22:66–70). The Jewish leaders all understood what Jesus was claiming about himself, except that since they didn't believe those claims, it caused them to tear their robes, accuse him of blasphemy, and condemn him as worthy of death. They had also understood that Jesus was claiming to be God even before he was arrested and put on trial (John 10:33).

When Jesus was taken to Pontius Pilate and Pilate questioned him, Jesus told him, "My kingdom is not of this world. ... [M]y kingdom is not from here." And when Pilate asked him, "You are a king then?", Jesus replied, "I am, as you say, a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:36–37). Even though Pilate didn't believe Jesus's claims, his interactions with Jesus assured him Jesus was innocent and caused him to be uneasy and afraid, and he unsuccessfully tried to set Jesus free (John 18:38—19:12).

Many people who don't believe in Jesus will still speak well of Jesus and say that he was a great moral teacher. The Doobie Brothers once sang, "Jesus is just alright with me." John Lennon of the Beatles once said that he was "one of Christ's biggest fans." But C. S. Lewis showed that that position is an irrational one. C. S. Lewis lived from 1898 to 1963, and he taught at both Oxford and Cambridge. He is probably most well known for authoring the children's books *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which put Christian truths into fairy tale-type allegories. But he was not always a Christian. He was raised in the Church of Ireland, but he became a self-proclaimed atheist at age fifteen, and he didn't convert to Christianity until after age thirty. Even then, he described himself as "the most reluctant convert in all of England," who was looking for any chance to escape the reality of the Bible's teachings, but was unable when he weighed what it said.

One thing struck C. S. Lewis more than anything else when he was weighing the Bible. What struck him was how shocking the claims were that Jesus made for himself. That is why he later wrote that it was a "really foolish thing" to say, "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." He wrote: "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. ... Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being [merely] a great human teacher. Her has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (*Mere Christianity*, Book 2, Chapter 3). C. S. Lewis was exactly right.

And of course, the point I am trying to make with this devotion today is that Jesus's resurrection from the dead is the ultimate proof that his claims are true. He is the Bread of Life; the Light of the World; the Door; the Good Shepherd; the Resurrection and the Life; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the true Vine. He is the Son of God, who is one with God, who came down from heaven and returned to heaven. He has the authority to forgive sins and give eternal life, and he does. He came to seek and to save what was lost (Luke 19:10), and he has. He is the Savior of the world, and he is your Savior and mine.