

## **A SIGN OF THINGS TO COME**

What is Easter and why does it matter? I think the question is important for those of us who look to Jesus in faith. And a number of answers can be given which are in various degrees true. Easter was the vindication of Jesus. It was the source of the early disciples' courage. It was an indication that the grave is not the end of life. And many more statements could be said about Easter that are true.

If I were to condense the meaning of Easter into one sentence, I think it would be this: "Easter is a sign of things to come." Easter is more than just an astonishing event that happened to Jesus two thousand years ago in which he came back alive. And it is more than an inward experience had by his disciples, no matter how vivid and compelling it might have been. Yes, I believe Easter involves something amazing happening to the body of Jesus and the hearts of the disciples but it is more than only those things. But there is more. Easter is not just an odd event locked in the past or a powerful experience inspired by Jesus. What happened to Jesus is not a one time only affair. Rather it is a promise about something yet to come that involves us. It is a glimpse of glory to be revealed. Adopting the language of agriculture, the scriptures declare, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The resurrected Jesus is like the first apple to ripen on the tree. But he's not the last. A whole crop will follow the first one and in many ways will be like it. The resurrection of Jesus is a wonderful sign of our future. In the transformed and risen Christ we see what we will be like beyond the confines, not of bodily existence, but of corruptible physical existence. "All flesh is not the same... The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:39, 42).

An intriguing passage of scripture says of life yet to come that "what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). We will be like the risen Christ. In some ways we will remain as we are now and in other ways we will be delightfully different. This is a hope that changes the way we see everything. It is a hope that already begins new life into our present lives. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).