

RAISED—TO GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, April 1, 2012

“God-consciousness” is a popular phrase among New Age religions and a host of religions from the Far East. Usually it expresses an ill-defined “sense of God.”

For the Christian, it is much more clearly defined as the awareness that the God of the Bible—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is real, is near, and is attentive to us. This vital awareness has been promised to *every one* of God’s children (not just a select few of the more mystical variety).

And it is directly rooted in our theme for the next several weeks: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s right, if Jesus had not been raised, you and I could only seldom, if at all, be aware of God’s presence.

John 14 ²⁰ *When I am raised to life again, **YOU WILL KNOW** that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.* (emphasis mine)

Because Jesus was raised from the dead, the consciousness of every faithful believer has also been raised to know God in a personal relationship and to be aware of His mighty presence.

His resurrection is also the source of other tremendous spiritual benefits.

Confidence in Christ

People have, from time to time, over the centuries argued that Jesus is not (cannot be) the Son of God. Some have admitted Him to a high level of human spiritual development—an avatar, a guru, a prophet, a great teacher—but something significantly less than God-in-human-form.

Some have pointed to the Scriptures, asking, “Where did Jesus ever say, ‘I am God’s Son.’” While He intimated the same in many things that He said, we cannot find a time when He actually spoke those words, according to the original manuscripts. Yet, He did not need to. In fact, leaving it unsaid may be stronger proof than a verbal assertion.

After all, words are cheap. Many have found it easy to make claims that could not be supported. In such cases, their words meant very little. Empty promises abound. But Jesus offered much, much more. He offered proof.

Romans 1 ² *God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures.* ³ *The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David’s family line,* ⁴ *and he was **SHOWN TO BE THE SON OF GOD** when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.* (emphasis mine)

What He was unable to convince many of during His lifetime—in spite of revelatory teachings and powerful miracles—He undeniably proved three days after His death, when He returned to life. Only the Son of the Living God could pull off that feat!

What kind of power was necessary to raise Jesus from the dead? A power we are unable even to conceive, let alone duplicate! But He did it. And then extended that same power to those who trust in Him as the Son of God.

Ephesians 1 ¹⁹ *I also pray that you will understand **THE INCREDIBLE GREATNESS OF GOD'S POWER** for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. (emphasis mine)*

There is nothing that God ever did for Jesus, or through Jesus, that He cannot now do for you and through you! How can this be? How is this possible? The clues are in the Book.

Spirit-fullness

John 7 ³⁷ *On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to me!³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.' "³⁹ (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But **THE SPIRIT HAD NOT YET BEEN GIVEN, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.**) (emphasis mine)*

Jesus actions on that last day of the Feast were lifted from the scripted actions of the High Priest and transformed by His invitational words. The pageant was turned into reality (but not just yet). This fulfillment must wait for something else to take place. The Spirit had not yet been given. And, why? Because Jesus had not yet been glorified. John was not referring to the praises of men that would exalt His name on numerous occasions, even before His crucifixion. He was writing about the divine glory that Jesus had left behind when He first came to the earth as one of us—that same glory that was to be restored to Him after His death and resurrection, when He would be raised back to the highest heaven to be seated on the throne of God.

That day signified something great for us, as well. Once Jesus had entered back into His glory, that glory could be poured out on the earth through the coming of the Holy Spirit. The glory of the King and of His Kingdom would begin to appear among men in a widespread manner.

Joel 2 ²⁸ *I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions.²⁹ In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike.*

On the Day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, when Jesus' disciples, waiting obediently in prayer, were all filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter verified the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and of Jesus' words on that last day of the festival. Once Jesus had been glorified, extraordinary things were due to come to His people.

Acts 2 ³² *"God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, **gave him the Holy Spirit TO POUR OUT UPON US**, just as you see and hear today. (emphasis mine)*

This marvelous grace—the fullness of the Spirit in Christian experience—is directly related to (and was dependent on) the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Spirit could not be poured out until Jesus was glorified, and He could not be glorified unless He had been raised from the dead.

The more we focus our attention and faith upon the bodily resurrection of our Lord, the more we will become truly God-conscious. Our confidence in Jesus will grow in parallel to our familiarity with the truth of His resurrection. And our actual experience of the Spirit's fullness in our lives depends on the life of our Resurrected Lord. We cannot afford to neglect this amazing, miraculous event!

That's why we celebrate Easter.