

**1 Timothy 3:16**  
**Jesus Vindicated By The Spirit**  
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**Introduction**

This morning we are going to consider 1 Timothy 3:16. We will primarily be considering the phrase, “vindicated by the Spirit.” The context of 1 Timothy 3:16 suggests that Paul had the resurrection in mind when he talked about the Spirit vindicating Christ. Thus, from this passage we can conclude that the Spirit vindicated Christ through raising him from the dead. Before we discuss this in greater detail it might be appropriate to define the word *vindicate*. *Vindicate* is a word that is better illustrated than defined; I will illustrate it first and then I will define it.

When I was in college I played racquetball on a regular basis, about 4-5 times a week. I was starting to get to place where I could hold my own. One day of my classmate friends named Chuck (not his real name) said that he wanted to play me. I consented. When we got to the racquetball court Chuck told me that he heard that I was pretty good, but then he started to brag about himself. He went on and on and on about how he is pretty much God’s gift to any and every sport. However, it became quite clear as soon as we started warming up that although he was certainly athletic, he wasn’t all that good at racquetball. After hitting the ball with him for a few minutes I realized that I could have beat him quite easily, however I decided that I was going to take it easy on him so as not to make him look stupid. So, we played the first game. I played soft. I hit slow serves that were easy to get, lost points here and there on purpose, whiffed on purpose, and whatever else I could to make sure that I didn’t humiliate him (this is what you do when you go to a *Christian* college). Well, I ended up taking it a bit too easy on him. I had loafed so much that I didn’t realize how many points I had given him. He ended up beating me by about 3 or 4 points. After the game Chuck walked around the racquetball court like he had just won the Heisman Trophy, all proud of himself that he had beaten me.

Once he finished his victory march I quickly asked him if he wanted to play again. He said, “Of course!” Then with a victorious tone in his voice he said, “Since I won the last game you can serve first.” You know, it was his way of giving me, the more inept player, a head start. As I took the ball and walked up to the service box I knew that I had to *vindicate* myself. I knew that he thought he was God’s gift to sports and I needed to prove to him that I could handily school him on the racquetball court. In essence, I needed to prove myself to him, to show him what I was truly made of. Because I had given him so many points in the first game, he thought I was no match for him. Well, in order to *vindicate* myself I beat him 11-0 the second game and 11-0 in the third game.

In light of the illustration given above, check out dictionary.com’s definition of the word *vindicate*: “To clear of accusation, blame, suspicion, or doubt with supporting arguments or proof: to provide justification or support for.” What we see in 1 Timothy 3:16 is that the Spirit *vindicated* Christ, he justified the claims of Christ by raising him from the dead. Let’s take a deeper look into this truth.

**Just Another Hitler?**

There have been many men in recent history who have set themselves up as messiah figures (e.g. Jim Jones, David Koresh) For instance, Adolph Hitler, commander of the Nazi party and leader of the *Third Reich* in Germany, promised Germany a utopia of sorts. When Hitler first came to power, Germany was in the middle of a great depression (which was the effect of the Great Depression here in America). Hitler came on the scene and promised a revitalized economy, improved standards of living, and political and military prowess. The interesting thing about Hitler was that he made good on his promises in the short term. Without a doubt, the beginning of Hitler's reign was marked with success. Hitler's success even led him to put himself on par with Jesus Christ. Observe what Robert George Leeson Waite had to say about Hitler:

*The parallel between Hitler and the Messiah was made explicit in German schools. On March 16, 1934 children wrote out the following dictation approved by Hitler's Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda:*

*"Jesus and Hitler. As Jesus freed men from sin and Hell, so Hitler freed the German people from destruction. Jesus and Hitler were persecuted, but while Jesus was crucified Hitler was raised to the Chancellorship ... Jesus strove for Heaven, Hitler for the German earth."*<sup>1</sup>

This is not to say that everyone in Germany bought into his larger-than-life propaganda. The interesting thing about Hitler, though, is that on April 30, 1945 all of his larger-than-life claims and promises were put into perspective when he, after realizing he had lost the war, shot himself. Hitler's climb to god-like status came to a screeching halt that day. Would it not be appropriate to say that the last day of Hitler's life exposed the nature of his claims and promises? At the end of the day, Hitler died a defeated man, putting his every word and deed into perspective. Hitler took the defeated, chicken's way out, suicide. Hitler's suicide revealed to the world that Hitler was not a messiah, he was not a savior, he was not even a respectable leader; rather, he was a megalomaniac,<sup>2</sup> a kook, a crazed psychopath. The nature of Hitler's death exposed the fallacious nature of his claims and promises.

This morning we are going to be considering the resurrection of Christ. If you notice here in 1 Timothy 3:16 Paul states that Jesus was "vindicated by the Spirit." The Spirit vindicated Christ by raising him from the dead.

The question that I want to ask this morning is this, "what would have happened to the reputation of Jesus if the Spirit had not vindicated him; if Jesus had not risen from the dead how would the world have looked at him?" You see, if the one promising eternal life could not have defeated death, what would be the worth and value his promises? If the one claiming to be God-in-the-flesh could have been so easily defeated, how could his larger-than-life claims have any credence whatsoever? If Hitler's dismal death put a question mark over everything he did, said, and promised, what would have become of the claims and promises of Christ if he died never to rise again (and especially considering the fact that he died a death deserving of only the worst of criminals, a death

<sup>1</sup> Robert George Leeson Waite, *The Psychopathic god: Adolph Hitler* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 31.

<sup>2</sup> According to [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), a megalomaniac is someone with "a psychopathological condition in which delusional fantasies of wealth, power, or omnipotence predominate."

on a Roman cross). After all, Jesus' claims (being one with the Father, bestowing eternal life, "before Abraham was I AM") were much loftier than those of Hitler.

What we find, and what I have become convinced of, is that in the same way that the dismal death of Hitler put all of his glorified claims and promises into perspective, proving their fallacious nature, the resurrection of Jesus Christ put his entire earthly life, including his gruesome, humiliating death, into perspective, proving him to be the son of God. In fact, this is something that we see in Romans 1:3-4 (speaking of Jesus):

*Concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup>and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In this passage we see that Jesus was "declared to be the son of God in power." What was it that solidified and won this honor, status, and position (*Son of God*) for Jesus? It was the resurrection "in accordance with the Spirit". Romans 8:11 makes it quite clear that Jesus rose from the grave because of the power of the Spirit. In other words, it was the resurrection of Christ which won and confirmed for Jesus his status as "Son of God." It is not that Jesus wasn't the Son of God before the resurrection, however the resurrection officially affirmed this to be Jesus' title and status forever, for all of eternity. A true victory was won on the cross, and the resurrection is the announcement of that victory, officially confirming and affirming who Jesus had always claimed to be.

And it must be made known that this resurrection by the power of the Spirit asserted to the world the reign of Christ—the victory of Christ over sin, Satan, and death. The grave could not hold him. Thus, the resurrection surely does put Jesus' death into perspective. Jesus did not die as some sort of a Divine pushover who was forced up on the cross against his will. He did not wield a weak sword. Jesus' humbling and gruesome death did not discredit his entire life and ministry as Hitler's did. No! Jesus willingly and boldly went to the cross to win a victory. In essence, therefore, it is accurate to look at the resurrection as the vindication of Christ. The resurrection was God's way of asserting his victory over sin, Satan, and death through the death of his Son. Jesus defeated death with his own conquering life, and the resurrection is the proclamation of his death-defeating power.

Thus, in the words of S. W. Gundry:

*He hell in hell laid low,  
Made sin, he sin o'rethrew  
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so  
And death, by dying slew.<sup>3</sup>*

The resurrection is God's affirmation to the world that all of the promises he has made through his Son are "for real." In other words, he does not offer an eternal life that he cannot give. No, he can give eternal life because he has defeated death.

We must think of what the implications of the death of Christ would have been for those who were alive in the first century. We have grown up with a knowledge of the

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<sup>3</sup> S. W. Gundry In F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 86.

resurrection—in fact, the reality of Jesus’ resurrection is just as real to us as his death. Whenever the death of Christ is taught today the resurrection is taught right alongside of it (and really, that is how it should be). However, in order to really understand the importance and the need for the resurrection, imagine with me that you lived in Palestine during Jesus’ day. It goes without saying, before the resurrection occurred in real space-time history those in the first century had no understanding of the resurrection—they had no categories to even begin to imagine it. Here you have this man, Jesus, who was certainly special. From the get-go his ministry attracted the attention of everyone in Palestine because of his authoritative and profound teachings, and because of the many signs and wonders that he performed (Matt 4:23-25). We can see from John 6:14 that Jesus was so special that the people wanted him to be their leader—they saw him as the fulfillment of God’s promises to them. We also see from Matt 16:22 and 21:11 that it appeared to the disciples that Jesus was really on his way to becoming something great. Then... all of the sudden, out of nowhere, this miracle-working, sin-forgiving, storm-calming, corpse-raising man was arrested, tried, crucified, and buried.

You see, we have the luxury of living on the other side of the resurrection. Imagine that you are just a regular old chap walking the streets in Palestine in the first century. In that day Jesus had become a household name. His claims were too big and bold, his teachings too profound, cutting-edge, and authoritative, his miracles too pronounced for him to slip under the radar. Jesus could not escape immediate attention. Here you are in Palestine, you have (of course) heard of Jesus, his teachings, his healings, and everything else that accompanied his ministry. You knew something of his teachings: you knew that he claimed to be the long-awaited Messiah, you knew that he promised eternal life to all those who would believe on him and eternal judgment on those who would reject him (John 3:16-18; 6:40), you knew that he offered living water and commanded other people to feed on him, you knew that he claimed to be able to forgive sins, and now here you are walking through the markets downtown and you hear that this man Jesus has just been arrested, crucified, and buried.

Imagine what would have gone through your mind. Here you have a man who is known for all sorts of things: offering forgiveness, raising the dead, healing the blind, promising eternal life, and now you hear that he has been crucified and is lying in a tomb. Would you have thought nothing of his death in light of both the larger-than-life claims he made and the larger-than-life miracles he performed? Of course not! Here we have a man claiming to be God who is now lying dead in a tomb! And on top of this, you have to know that before Jesus was even crucified, he was considered by many to be a megalomaniac, a kook, he was considered to be one brick short of a load, one French fry short of a happy meal, one crayon short of a box! His claims were constantly under attack; his miracles were constantly contested; even his own people, the Jews, thought he was demon possessed. And now you hear that this Jesus who claimed and promised all these things is dead. You, just like everyone else in the ancient world, were probably already skeptical of his claims before hearing of his death. Would not his death solidify the fact in your mind that he was nothing more than a megalomaniac? The man promising eternal life is now dead; the man claiming to be God-in-the-flesh has just died the death of mere mortal.

Think about the disciples, what would have happened to them if Jesus didn’t rise again? Imagine them running around the ancient world preaching a Gospel, promising

eternal life to those who repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. How would the world respond? “Oh, you mean Jesus, the carpenter’s boy, the man who claimed to be God-in-the-flesh, claimed to give eternal life to those who would believe on him, and yet still lies in the tomb? HA! Good one!” You see, the Spirit vindicated Jesus through raising him from the grave. Jesus asserted his authority over death, his ability to bestow eternal life, and his Divinity by rising from the grave. Without the resurrection there would be no assurance that Jesus was who he claimed to be, and there would be no assurance that he could deliver on his promises regarding forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

### ***The Romans/The World***

Try to imagine what the world would have thought of Jesus if he had not risen from the grave. Think about it, who in the world claims to be God? Even if you were not a Christian, what would you think of someone if they claimed to be God, the creator of the universe? You would immediately write them off as a quack. You would advise them to go get help, wouldn’t you? Even if you were to take them seriously for ½ of a second you would expect them to do something in front of your eyes to validate their claim. And their death would be the “nail in the coffin,” that which proves once for all the delusory nature of their claims.

Take a look at the following 9 things about Jesus. You have to remember that (1) Jesus claimed to be a King, a ruler, a sovereign and yet he (2) was born in a backwater, insignificant town, Bethlehem, to poor, insignificant parents, (3) wielded no sword and had no intention on doing so, (4) had only a few faithful followers, most of which were poor, unlearned, and quite unrefined, (5) was rejected by the very people whom he claimed to be King over, the Jews—in fact, they considered him to be demon-possessed and handed him over to be crucified because of his wacked-out blasphemous teaching (it is never helpful when the very people you ‘claim’ to represent discredit you, and especially in such a demeaning way), (6) his own family thought he was crazy, nuts, one brick short of a load, (7) claimed to be eternal, (8) claimed to forgive sins, (9) and ultimately, he called himself “the Savior” not just of the Jews, but of the “world” (John 4:42).

Take a look at these 9 things and tell me that you would have sacrificed your life for him if he would have died never to rise again. If Jesus wouldn’t have risen from the grave he would have went down as the most exaggerated, delusional spook in the history of mankind.

Without a doubt, even without the resurrection, Jesus proved his divinity and his ultimate sovereignty over all creation. After all, Jesus did calm the storm (Mark 4:39), was transfigured before the eyes of Peter, James and John with Moses and Elijah (Matt 17:1-13), raised Lazarus from the dead even after his body had already begun to decompose (John 11:38-44), and, in the words of the Apostle John,

*“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written”* (John 21:25).

Even though this is true, we still must ask the question, “What would have happened to the reputation of Christ if he had not risen from the grave.” Surely, the resurrection vindicated Christ and who he claimed to be. If Jesus did not defeat the grave his claims and promises would have been completely null and void. Everything Jesus claimed and promised hinged upon this one event.

If you want to get an idea of what the world thought of Jesus before the resurrection, take a look with me at Matt 27:27-31

*27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. 28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him...*

This is one of the most gut-wrenching passages in the entire Bible. So often the temptation when we read this passage is to sort of feel sorry for Jesus. Without a doubt, Jesus was mistreated and ultimately degraded. However, the true horror in what happened here is the judgment which the soldiers were heaping upon themselves. What we see here is that these Roman soldiers were beating the God who created them, mocking him. Look at what they did to him; they played dress up with him. They gave him a cute little cape, with a cute little crown, and a cute little paper mache scepter. All of these things were symbols of authority and sovereignty in the ancient world. The greater a king’s sovereign reign, the more extravagant his robe, crown, and scepter. In the same way that a parent may give their child fake, plastic swords and guns for Christmas so that they might play fake commando, these soldiers were doing the same, suggesting that Jesus’ claim to be a King was nothing but a childish, fanciful dream.

They were rejecting and actually making fun of the childish claims he made about being King of the Jews. “Here you go Jesus, here is your scepter! You are such a powerful, authoritative King. So, where is your palace? That’s right, you don’t have one. Oh, and where are your loyal subjects. Yeah... that’s right, you only have about a baker’s dozen and they all fled upon your arrest. Oh, and how many kingdoms have you conquered, how much land have you seized? Oh, that’s right, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man doesn’t even have a place to lay his head” (Matt 8:20)? How many have you slain with the edge of your sword? Oh... that’s right, you don’t even have a sword. Ha! You don’t even believe in swords!”

They were painting Jesus out to be a little 8-year-old boy who was so caught up in his own fake world of playing King that he actually began to think it was true. “There’s that little Jesus, he’s always had such a wild imagination. We just thought he would have grown out of it at least by the time he got out of high school.” You have to see here that the soldiers were not contesting Jesus, they saw him as too pitiful to contest—they were poking fun at him. Sometimes the worst offense is not when someone viciously attacks you; rather it is when they think you are so out to lunch that they simply won’t even take you seriously. These soldiers, along with Pilate, felt no threat from Jesus; they just saw him as some 33-year-old stuck in an 8-year-old’s mind. Imagine how President Obama

would respond to a 33-year-old man addicted to Spiderman comic books (not that that is bad) if he were to come up to him, flip out his arm in an attempt to, like Spiderman, shoot a web out of his wrist, crouch down, and yell “I am Spiderman and I have been sent to web you Mr. Obama!” Would Obama respond the same way to a guy like this than he would to a man who aimed a gun at him? Of course not! Obama wouldn’t really even see him as a threat. This is how the Romans saw Jesus.

To them, Jesus’ claim to be King was rather funny, humorous. He lacked absolutely every quality that it took to be a king—no following, no palace, no army, no scepter, no money. However, the thing that these soldiers didn’t realize was that Jesus was a King. In fact, he was (and still is) the King of Kings. The thing that these soldiers did not realize was that every little ounce of energy that they used to mock and beat Jesus ultimately came from Jesus. They did not realize that every breath of air they used to mock him ultimately came from him. They were beating and mocking him with the very life he graciously gave to him.

You see, Jesus was a King; it is just that the soldiers had such a small, finite understanding of kingship and sovereignty and authority. The stupid little men of this world get all giddy and puffed up when they establish themselves over this or that region, when they occupy this or that territory. The finite, pitiful men of this world think they are all tough when they take their little sharp metal objects and slice each other open with them, spilling each other’s blood on the ground. Jesus, however, isn’t preoccupied with such silly ambitions. His interest in coming to earth was to defeat sin, Satan, and death through his death on the cross. Do you remember what Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 10:28?

*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

The thing that the soldiers did not realize was that Jesus’ weapons were not of this world. Jesus didn’t have the time to build an earthly kingdom; he was too busy building an eternal, heavenly one; he was too busy destroying sin, Satan, and death. It’s like someone going up to Tiger Woods and saying in a condescending tone, “You call yourself an athlete and yet you don’t play mini-golf on your computer?” Tiger would respond, “Play on the computer? Yeah Right! Umm... hello! I am little too busy winning the PGA Tour!” Jesus didn’t wield a physical sword, because physical swords do you no good when you are conquering sin, Satan, and death. Physical swords are only useful when you fight pitiful little humans. Jesus’ had no desire to conquer earthly territories, because the entire world was his in the first place. Jesus had no need to recruit puny, little skilled humans to do his bidding; he is the commander-in-chief over the angels. The soldiers mocked Jesus out of complete ignorance.

Jesus told Pilate in John 18:36,

*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.*

And because his kingdom is not of this world he does not use the battle tactics of this world to defeat his enemies; he does not use the petty little weapons of this world to

protect and advance his kingdom. The enemies Jesus came to defeat make Hitler, Alexander the Great, and Caesar look like little choir boys—wait... no, like a choir boy's little sister sucking on a pacifier.

You see, the beatings, scourgings, crown of thorns, nails in his hands and feet were nothing more than his entrance to the battlefield. "Well," you might ask, "why on earth would someone going to do battle be so passive, put up no fight? If he came to do battle why didn't he fight the soldiers?" Because, he didn't come to do battle on such a small level. He wasn't interested in fighting humans. No, he came to do battle with evil and death itself to rescue, deliver, and save humans. He did not come to establishing himself as King in Palestine, Egypt, or any other part of the world, he came to establish himself as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So many people misunderstand Christ; they think that he came with no weapons. Although this is true on a physical, earthly level, this is not true on a spiritual level. Jesus came wielding the greatest, sharpest, and fiercest sword in all existence, the sword of an unconquerable life. And in order to slay death and its rulers, Jesus had to plunge its depths.

And what we see is that the resurrection is the announcement of the great victory that he won. The Spirit vindicated Christ through the resurrection. Jesus died a pitiful, humiliating death that put his entire life and ministry into question. However, unlike with Hitler, Jesus' story did not end with his death. Everything that Jesus ever did or said would have been considered nothing but a bunch of rubbish if he didn't rise again. However, he did rise again. He vindicated himself, he was vindicated by the Spirit. Jesus' resurrection surely does put his entire ministry into perspective, and it validates every claim and promise that he ever made.

### ***Two Applications***

*1. Submitting to His Reign:* The resurrection of Jesus validates his claims and promises. The Spirit vindicated Christ through rising him from the dead. The question which needs to be asked is this, 'Have you submitted to the Kingship, the reign, of Christ?' Although it is true to say that Jesus graciously offers salvation to sinful men, we must never forget that the call to come to Christ is not a suggestion, it is a divine mandate from the King who rose from the grave. To reject Christ is to reject the King over all. To reject Christ is to reject the rule and reign of the one who has defeated sin, Satan, and death. Paul warns the unbelievers in Athens in Acts 17:30-31,

*"<sup>30</sup>The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

Notice here that repentance and belief are commanded. The King of Kings, Jesus Christ, the one who has defeated sin, Satan, and death, commands each and every human being to repent of their sins and to throw themselves upon him and him alone as their only hope of salvation. Peter, in Acts 4:12, says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." To reject Christ's offer of salvation is to reject the word of the King. What we see in Acts

17 is that the resurrection is the assurance that Christ has the authority to judge you for your sin. I plead with you to consider this Christ. This Jesus is no mere man—he is not a divine-pushover. Surely, he is a God of infinite love; however he is the King of Kings and he rules with a rod of righteousness and justice (Hebrews 1:8). One day you will stand before him, how will you fare?

2. *Trusting in His Promises:* Although Jesus is a victorious King of justice to whom we must give an account, he has graciously and lovingly offered eternal life and forgiveness of sins to those who would submit themselves to his reign, his Kingship. How do you submit yourself to his reign? Peter answers this question in Acts 2:38,

*And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

What we find is that Jesus has promised eternal life and forgiveness of sins to those who do submit themselves to his reign by repenting, believing, and being baptized. Look at what Jesus said in John 3:16-18,

*<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."*

And because Jesus rose from the grave, because he defeated death, we can have confidence that he can bestow eternal life on those who believe. Without question, the one who has defeated death can give eternal life. In the same way that Jesus conquered death through his death on the cross, he will conquer death on our behalf at the end of the age (Romans 8:11). We also know that Jesus will forgive us our sins because he defeated sin on the cross by being made sin and removing its punishment (Romans 3:21-26; 2 Cor 5:21).

If you do not know Jesus I implore you to submit yourself to his reign by repenting of your sins, trusting in him alone, not in yourself and your good works, for salvation, which includes forgiveness and eternal life. If you go to him you will not be disappointed. The King of Kings who has risen from the grave has called sinners like yourself to come and receive the wonderful gift of forgiveness and eternal life that you might know and be with him forever.

You can trust his claims, you can trust his promises because unlike Hitler Jesus was vindicated. The Spirit vindicated Jesus by raising him from the grave which is the basis of our hope. We now know that Jesus is not some sort of a softy who died the death of a finite, defeated man; rather, we know that he is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords who has defeated sin, Satan, and death so that sinful humans might have a relationship with himself through the forgiveness of sins.