

The World of the Resurrection

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For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

Romans 8:19

The resurrection of Christ signals the transformation of the cosmos – this physical world – in time and space, in history.

From chapter 1 of his epistle to the Romans Paul progressively explicates the Gospel as God's solution to the disruption of the cosmos caused by human rebellion, climaxing in chapter 8 with the resurrection and life of the Spirit.

Christ's physical body has been raised from the dead as "the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20), guaranteeing that at his coming all those that belong to Christ will also be raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:23).

Rather than the *destruction* of the cosmos, the resurrection promises its *transformation*. God's estimation of this time-space world – the world of matter – is firstly the *creation*, secondly the *incarnation*, and climactically the *resurrection*. At the creation the triune God stood back admiring the world of matter, declaring it as "good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). And then at the climax of history God's ultimate creative *fiat* – God coming as the man, Christ Jesus – deals the definitive death-blow to all dualistic thinking.

John could declare,

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, *which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands*, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—

1John 1:1–2

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

There is, therefore, now no separation or hierarchy of spirit and matter, nor of sacred and secular. All is now equally holy. God has become man. In fact, the new order in Christ is so transformational that our physical bodies have become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).

The ministry of the Spirit therefore, as expounded by Paul in Romans 8, is toward the transformation of the cosmos, not its destruction. We have been given "the *firstfruits* of the Spirit" and "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23). The Holy Spirit in those that are Christ's is the "seal" or "the down payment of our inheritance until we acquire the possession of it" (Eph 1:14). Within every believer is the anticipation of greater things, not only in the age to come, but here and now (Jn 1:50; 14:12). Paul says that it was in this hope that we were saved (Rom 8:24). The activity of the Holy Spirit within us is merely 'faith on tiptoes' as it anticipates our full inheritance as the sons of God in this world (Rom 8:15-17). In fact, the creation, "subjected to futility" (*mataiotes* [v 20] – vacuity, lack of substance and meaning) through man's ethical rebellion and delinquent governance, groans and anticipates "the revealing of the sons of God" and thus its restoration and liberty (Rom 8:19-22). In other words, the cosmos awaits a redeemed and restored humanity to deliver it from chaos—this, the bodily resurrection of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit guarantees.

In response, it demands that our *worldview*, our *eschatology*, and our *mission* be reviewed.

First, we can no longer view the world as governed by the so-called "god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4). That god is a pretender and mere idol (1 Cor 8:4). Any power it demonstrates is a borrowed one, transferred through human collusion and rebellion. The resurrection declares that the one true and living God is the creator and redeemer of all that is. He is sovereign over history and all things are working according to his will and predestined purpose. My world-and-life-view must now see the *whole* of life – every sphere of human endeavour – as sacred.

Second, in light of the bodily resurrection my eschatology (last things) must now view Christ as victorious *in* history. Any doomsday view of *last things* that anticipates Christ and his church defeated in time-space history must be considered erroneous. Because of the resurrection the cosmos, rather than destined for destruction, is destined for transformation. The renewal of the universe – the new heavens and the new earth – has come definitively in Christ's resurrection, is coming progressively in the power of the Holy Spirit, and will come consummatively in the resurrection of all those who believe.

Third, our mission as the redeemed community is revolutionised. The "greatness" of the Great Commission is restored. Rather than a myopic attempt at saving people's souls only, it is now recast in its true light as a mandate to save and transform whole cultures and nations, teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded (Mtt 28:18-20). It is, in fact, the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 now fulfilled in the new creation. This demands the repatriation of the Law as harmonious with the Gospel. God is not conflicted and neither are his covenants. The moral and judicial laws handed down to Moses, Jesus declares as *not* abrogated (Mtt 5:17-19). They are, in fact, the wisdom of God for the just governance of nations, with Israel as the prophetic prototype for the world (Deut 4:1-8; Ex 19:5-6).

Consequently, the world of the resurrection is here and now. But its transformational power will only exert its liberating effect on creation because those who are *led by the Spirit* are the sons of God (Rom 8:14). The creation waits for their revealing. Why? Because the Spirit will give them sensational manifestations and experiences? No, because he will lead them into all spheres of life as artists and musicians, as lawyers and judges, as entrepreneurs and business people, as teachers and educators, as politicians and parliamentarians imbued with the wisdom of God for the integration of all things in one head, Christ, and thus, for the flourishing not only of humankind but also the whole of creation.

Christ has risen—all things are being renewed!

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