

# The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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## Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fundamental truth of the gospel and a cardinal doctrine of biblical Christianity. All of the gospels end their historical narratives with the climactic resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (Mt. 28; Mk. 16; Lk. 24; Jn 20; 21). In the preaching of the apostolic church the resurrection and exaltation of Christ is emphasized (Ac. 2:24-36; 3:14, 26; 4:10-11; 5:30-32; 7:55-56; 10: 39-43; 13:30-38; 17: 3, 31). Luke gives a summation of Paul's preaching of the gospel saying, "Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ'" (Ac. 17:3). In the epistles the resurrection is also presented as a crucial aspect of the gospel. Paul says in Romans 10:9 that we must confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead if we are to be saved. In 1 Corinthians 15:14 Paul says that if Christ has not risen then the preaching of the gospel is empty (i.e., void, vain, false, a waste of time, meaningless). In verse 17 of the same chapter the apostle says, "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." "Everywhere in the NT the resurrection is proclaimed as the decisive turning point in the life of Jesus and in the history of the world's redemption."<sup>1</sup> Given all these considerations (and the union of believers with Christ's resurrection and the saving benefits that flow from that union), Christ's resurrection must never be treated as an interesting epilogue to His suffering on the cross. The resurrection itself is an indispensable aspect of the redemption that Jesus had to complete. There are a number of things regarding our Lord's resurrection that need to be considered.

## The Veracity of a Literal, Bodily, Historical Resurrection of Christ

Given the skepticism and unbelief of secular humanist scholars and modernist theologians it is important to emphasize that the resurrection of Jesus was a real historical event. Early on a Sunday morning Christ literally rose from the dead in the same physical body, which had been crucified and placed in a tomb. This fact must be stressed because there are many dangerous and heretical theories circulating regarding the resurrection.

(1) One popular idea first circulated by Jewish unbelievers was that Jesus never really arose. Supposedly what actually occurred was that the disciples stole His body and then spread the lie of the Lord's resurrection. The idea, however, that a small group of frightened disciples could overpower well-armed Roman soldiers and steal the body of Jesus without the treachery becoming immediately and widely known is preposterous.

(2) Another idea is that Jesus did not really die but had only passed out (the swoon theory). Then when He was placed in the cool tomb he revived and showed Himself to His

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Schep, "Resurrection of Jesus Christ" in General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1975, 1976), 5:75.

disciples. That the swoon theory is absurd and incredible is proved by the following facts. First, the gospel narratives make it perfectly clear that Jesus really did die on the cross. He was beaten (Mt. 26:67; Mk 14:65; Lk. 22:63ff.), severely whipped (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Jn. 19:1) and then nailed to a cross with large spikes (Mt. 27:35; Mk. 15:24; Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:18). As a result He endured a large and steady loss of blood for at least three full hours (Mk. 15:33; Mt. 27:45; Lk. 23:44). Then every Gospel account records that fact that Jesus gave up His spirit (Mk. 15:37; Mt. 27:50; Lk. 22:46; Jn. 19:30). In order to make sure that our Lord was dead the soldier thrust a spear directly into Jesus' side, which penetrated His heart (Jn. 19:24); out of which flowed blood and water. The phrase "blood and water" is significant because it indicates that Christ's heart had already stopped, allowing the blood cells to descend under gravity. Second, the idea that a man who had just endured torture and crucifixion could roll away a stone weighing over a ton and then fend off a group of armed Roman soldiers is ludicrous. Third, all of the post resurrection appearances of Jesus (Jn. 20:14, 18, 26; 21:1; Mt. 28:2, 10, 18ff; Lk. 24:13-31, 34; etc.) indicate not a man in dire need of medical attention, but a perfectly healthy and powerful-King over kings. Fourth, if the swoon theory is correct one must then discount the ascension of Jesus and His rule at the right hand of Power. One must assert that Christ lived the rest of His life in secrecy and seclusion. Such thinking is blasphemous nonsense.

(3) Currently the most popular theory among modernists is that the resurrection is an embellishment of the early church. In other words, the post-apostolic church (perhaps following an earlier delusion) perpetrated a huge fraud to honor their savior. These dangerous heretics dress up their unbelief with pious platitudes such as, "although Jesus did not literally rise from the dead, the resurrection story or myth has a deep metaphorical meaning that gives us spiritual strength and hope;" or, "Jesus has arisen in the kerygma [i.e., the gospel message]. Why worry or concern ourselves with historical facts or legends when Christ is really alive and present in His gospel word." Such pious sounding phrases may give comfort to the deluded followers of "Christian" liberalism. Such assertions, however, cannot detract from the fact that modernism teaches that Christ lied (Jn. 2:19) and the gospel is founded on an untruth, a major fraud. The gospel offered by "Christian liberals" is pure speculation. It is the religion of secular humanism disguised as Christianity. The theological and religious terminology is retained but is redefined according to anti-supernatural presuppositions. If what modernists say is true, there is no real reason for people to pray, read their Bibles or go to church. Perhaps that is why modernist churches have been losing members at a rapid pace for over a generation.

(4) Another view is that the disciples were so excited and upset regarding recent events that they had an imaginary vision or hallucination of the Savior (the subjective vision theory). This theory is disproved by the fact that Jesus appeared to several different people on many separate occasions over a period of forty days. He even appeared to five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. 15:6). "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Ac. 1:3). He appeared to: the woman who came to the grave (Mt. 28:2, 10); Mary Magdalene (Jn. 20:14, 18); Peter (Lu. 24:34), the eleven in the absence of Thomas (Jn. 20:19); then eight days later to Thomas and the eleven (Jn. 21:1); the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-31); the seven fishing disciples (Jn. 21:1); the eleven in Galilee (Mt. 28:16ff.), the five hundred brethren (1 Cor. 15:6); James (1 Cor. 15:7); the apostles at the ascension (Ac. 1:9); Paul (Ac. 9:17; 1 Cor. 15:8); and John at Patmos (Rev. 1:11ff.). A variant of this view is that the disciples did actually witness a vision of Jesus from God (the objective vision theory). To people who hold such a view we ask: "If God has the power to send visions

which are miraculous then why doesn't God have the power to raise the dead? Why believe in a human speculation regarding the miraculous when the biblical teaching on the resurrection is clear and abundant?" Further, the number of the appearances coupled with the fact that the disciples touched Jesus and watched Him eat food renders such a theory impossible.

(5) Such modernists as well as some Pentecostal groups that have strong neo-platonic influences (i.e., the ancient Greek idea that the body, which is made of material substance, is intrinsically evil and inferior) assert that Jesus only rose spiritually. His body remained in the tomb and the disciples only saw His spirit. This view contradicts the explicit teaching of Scripture. The resurrected Messiah said, "Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Lk. 24:39; see the next section for more details).

All of the objections to the biblical doctrine of a real, historical, literal, bodily resurrection of Christ flow from apostate and unbelieving axioms. There are many people who do not believe in Jesus as He is revealed in the Scriptures. These people often have an inner need to justify their rejection of Christ. Thus, they invent all sorts of mythological theories to soothe their guilty consciences, to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Such people do not have faith in the infallible word of God; and, therefore, place their faith in the speculative theories of sinful men (men who have an axe to grind, who do not want to face the reality of sin, death and hell). Tragically all such people will eventually stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Mt. 25:31-46), the very One they denied and rejected.

## The Nature of the Resurrection

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ rose from the dead in the same body in which He died. He was not a mere spirit, ghost, apparition, vision or hallucination. Scripture proves this truth in many ways. First, there is the historical fact of the empty tomb. Not only do all the gospel accounts record that the tomb was empty (Mt. 28:6; Mk. 16:3-6; Lk. 24:3; Jn. 20:5-8), they also carefully note that the tomb was examined by Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and the apostles Peter and John. John's account even notes that Jesus' burial clothes were neatly folded and set aside (Jn. 20:7). God even sent angels to roll away the stone (Mt. 28:2) and announce the resurrection to the witnesses, so as to avoid any ambiguity or possible misinterpretation of the empty tomb (Mt. 28:5; Mk. 16:5-6; Lk. 24:4; Jn. 20:12). Indeed, the whole purpose of the angel rolling away the huge stone was not to let Jesus out (with His new resurrected body He could pass through the walls [Jn. 20:19, 26]), but to let the disciples in to see for themselves the empty tomb. God wanted eyewitnesses.

Second, the physical reality of Jesus' resurrection is noted in the gospel accounts by the fact that our Lord was recognized as a real person by His face and voice (Mt. 28:9; Lk. 24:31; Jn. 20:16, 19, 20; 21:12). The gospel narratives eliminate all possibility that Jesus was a disembodied spirit being when they speak of Christ being held (Mt. 28:9), hugged (Jn. 20:17) and touched (Jn. 20:27). Doubting Thomas is even told to place his hand into the wound in our Lord's side (Jn. 20:27). Further, on a number of occasions Christ broke bread and ate with the disciples (Lk. 24:30, 42, 43; Jn. 21:12-13; Ac. 10:41).

Third, the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus is prophesied in the Old Testament. On the day of Pentecost Peter quoted Psalm 16:9-10 in reference to the resurrection of Christ. "Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Ac. 2:26-27; cf. 13:35). Not only does this passage use the word flesh (vs. 26), it specifically

says that our Lord's physical body will not rot. Peter says that David, "spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses" (Ac. 2:31-32). "Peter shuts out all evasion and mistake by repeating the *ipsissima verba* of the prophecy in question and applying them to Christ, of whom alone it was predicted, and of whom alone it is historically true, that his soul was not left disembodied after death, and that his body, though it died, was not corrupted."<sup>2</sup>

Fourth, the risen Messiah told His disciples in plain language that He was a real flesh and bones person. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Lk. 24:39). "This casual clause explains why the disciples should have touched Jesus, i.e., because in doing so they would have known that Jesus was not a ghost. Thus any misconception that the preceding appearances involved only a 'spiritual presence' is resolved."<sup>3</sup> Christ presses upon the apostles the reality of His physical body, that He was solid flesh and bone. "Jesus demands that they [His hands and feet] be handled and the aorist implies that his command was obeyed."<sup>4</sup> Our Lord's statements, appearances and actions leave no doubt. Jesus literally rose from the dead.

## Jesus Arose With a Glorified Body

Although our Lord rose from the dead in the same body in which He was crucified (which even maintained the scars in the hands and side [Jn. 20:27]), His body had undergone a change. Jesus' resurrection was unique. The Bible contains a number of examples of people who have been raised from the dead (e.g., 1 Kgs. 17:17ff.; 2 Kgs. 4:32ff.; 13:21; Mt. 27:53; Mk. 5:41-42; Ac. 9:40-41). All such people, however, went on to live normal lives and then died and were buried. Christ did not rise to the normal earthly sphere of life but came alive immortal and incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 53). We learn of the nature of the transformation that occurred in Jesus from Paul's discussion of what Christ's resurrection will lead to in the resurrection of believers (1 Cor. 15). Paul speaks of celestial bodies (v. 40) which are incorruptible (v. 42), raised in power (v. 43), a spiritual body (v. 44), the heavenly Man (vv. 47-49), immortal (v. 53) and victorious (v. 54). Through the resurrection, Christ "became a life giving spirit" (vs. 45), "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (vv. 20), "the first born of the dead" (Col. 1:18). Although Jesus rose with the same body (which consisted of real flesh and bones) and a spirit (i.e., a true human nature), He was remarkably different. He (i.e., His human nature) was glorified-imperishable, powerful and perfect. As a reward for His redemptive obedience Jesus "was endowed with new qualities perfectly adjusted to His future heavenly environment."<sup>5</sup> When the Bible describes our Lord as having a "spiritual body" it does not mean that He is somehow immaterial like an angel, but that He has a body perfectly suited to a heavenly eternal environment, "that is able to do all that the Spirit of God wants it to do, with unlimited possibilities."<sup>6</sup> The theanthropic Christ is able to rule the whole creation from the right hand of God and is "a life giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45), the forerunner and "captain of salvation" of the elect (Heb. 2:10; this point will be considered below).

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<sup>2</sup> J. A. Alexander, *Acts of the Apostles* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1963 [1857]), p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), p.617.

<sup>4</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961 [1946]), p. 1199.

<sup>5</sup> L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939, 1941), p. 346.

<sup>6</sup> J. A. Schep, "Resurrection of Jesus Christ," 5:82.

The uniqueness of Jesus' resurrected body is evident in the gospel narratives. There are the instances in which our Lord was not immediately recognized (e.g., Mk. 16:2; Jn. 20:15, 27; Lk. 24:16). This may indicate some change of appearance. It may, however, simply indicate that the disciples were not expecting to see Jesus or that He did not want to be recognized. The resurrected Christ on occasion would appear suddenly and vanish in a supernatural manner (Lk. 24:31, 36). He also could appear surrounded by a bright light (Ac. 9:3). The apostle John described His countenance as "the sun shining in its strength" (Rev. 1:16). Our Lord could also appear suddenly in a room with closed doors (Jn. 20:19). Although Jesus has a glorified real human body and soul (i.e., in His human nature He is not omnipresent) He is not impeded by solid objects like walls or doors. "All these mysteries and miraculous elements, together with the miraculous ascension show that Jesus' body, though consisting of flesh and bones, was now in a glorified condition and capable of acting independently of the laws of time and space. This does not imply that He Himself was beyond time and space for this again would mean the annihilation of His true humanity."<sup>7</sup>

### Important Circumstances Surrounding Christ's Resurrection

There are a number of important things that need to be considered regarding historical events surrounding the resurrection as well as the time of the resurrection.

(1) Jesus' resurrection was accompanied by a "great earthquake" (Mt. 28:2). Earthquakes in Scripture are associated with God's special presence during the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19:18), Jehovah's wrath and judgment against sin (Isa. 29:6; Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18), and the deliverance of Christ's people from death (Mt. 27:51-52) and persecution (Ac. 16:26). Jesus rose as a mighty King ready to make war upon those who killed Him, cast aside His law and continued to persecute His people. Wilhelmus à Brakel writes, "The earth shook again at His resurrection, which was not only a proof of His divinity, but also of the wrath of God against the Jews and their land which would be destroyed and left destitute. The inhabitants would perish miserably and their religion would be taken from them and be transferred to the Gentiles. It also indicated that all temporal ceremonies were now terminated and that an unchangeable religion had taken their place."<sup>8</sup>

(2) Our Lord's resurrection was magnified by the appearance of angels. This fact should not surprise us given the great activity of angels during Jesus' ministry. It was an angel of God that informed Mary of her miraculous conception (Lk. 1:30-33); that in a dream also announced the good news to Joseph (Mt. 1:20-23). An angel told the shepherds of the birth of the Messiah (Lk. 2:10-12). This announcement was accompanied by a multitude of heavenly host praising God (Lk. 2:13-14). Angels ministered to Jesus at times of great temptation (Mt. 4:11; Mk. 1:13) and suffering (Lk. 22:43). Given all this it is fitting that an angel whose countenance was like lightning and clothing white as snow would remove the stone and that angels would be the first to announce the resurrection. Our Lord's earthly ministry begins and ends (Ac. 1:10-11) with the teaching of angels.

(3) Christ rose from the dead on the third day. Jesus had prophesied to the Jews saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn. 2:19). The third day was on our Lord's mind and was part of His message to the disciples. "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and ...be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mk. 8:31;

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 1:627)

9:31; 10:34; note the parallels in Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk. 9:22; 18:33). In the biblical record the history of the third day resurrection is prominent. In Luke's account the resurrected Messiah says, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day" (Lk. 24:46). When describing the essence of the gospel Paul writes, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). When Peter introduced the gospel message to the Gentiles he said, "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly" (Ac. 10:40). Given this emphasis in Scripture one should not be surprised that the earliest of Christian creeds declares, "The third day He rose from the dead" (The Apostles Creed, c., A.D. 325).

Why did Jesus rise on the third day? Does God's choice of three days hold a scriptural significance? A reading of the Old Testament does reveal a three-day motif in Israel's salvation history. In Genesis 22:4 we read, "Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place [of sacrifice] afar off." After three days without water in the wilderness God gives Israel water that gives life (Ex. 15:22ff.). In Exodus 19, Jehovah makes His appearance on the third day (vs. 10, 11, 15, 16) to give the covenant nation the law for personal sanctification and godly dominion (cf. Mt. 28:18-20). Hosea 6:2 reads, "After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight." Although this passage refers historically to God's salvation of the remnant of Israel, it also clearly is typological and prophetic of the resurrection of Christ and of the mystical union of His people in that resurrection. In Matthew 12:40, Jesus Himself points to the typology (i.e. "the sign") of Jonah (Jon. 1:17). "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Given the Old Testament pattern of using three days or the third day in redemptive history and prophecy we can understand Paul's statement that Jesus "rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4; cf. Lk. 24:46).

(4) All the gospel accounts note that our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1). Also, Jesus in His post-resurrection appearances presented Himself to His disciples on the first day of the week (Mt. 28:9; Lk. 24:15-31, 36; Jn. 20:19, 26). Why did Christ choose the first day of the week to rise from the dead and appear to the apostles? Is there something biblically significant regarding the first day? Yes, there certainly is. The first-day resurrection was anticipated throughout the Old Testament. The first day points to recreation and redemption. Under the old economy the children of believers were to be circumcised on the eighth day, Gen. 18:12 (or the first day of the second week of the newborn baby's life). Circumcision was a sign and seal of the new birth or regeneration (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; Col. 2:11). From subsequent revelation we know that union with Christ in His first-day resurrection is the foundation of regeneration (Eph. 2:5; Rom 6:4ff.). Further, the eighth day was the day of dedication of the first-born son. Jesus Christ is the first born or first fruits of all who believe. "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Paul calls our Lord "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29; cf. Heb 12:23). The eighth day was also the day of cleansing from defilement (Lev. 14:10; 15:14, 29). This ritual pointed to the fact that union with Christ in His first-day resurrection breaks the power of sin over believers (Rom. 6:4-5; 1 Jn. 2:29).

The typology of Noah and his family's redemption from the flood also points to Jesus' first-day resurrection. Out of the ark came the new humanity, a redeemed race. How many souls did God save from prediluvian mankind? God saved only eight people. Once again the number eight is associated with salvation and a new beginning. Christ's resurrection is a new beginning—the redemptive recreation of all things. Thus, He is called the "first born of all creation...the

beginning, the first born child from the dead" (Col. 1:15, 18). In Christ's resurrection there is a restoration of the whole created order.

(5) Jesus rose from the dead in the spring of the year only a few days after the Passover. The spring is a time when seeds sprout, plants green and bloom, many animals give birth and the day progressively overtakes the night. It is a time of abundant life and great joy.

(6) The exodus of Israel from Egypt immediately after the Passover was a type of Christ's resurrection. During the Passover it was the sacrificial blood of a spotless lamb placed on the lintel and two doorposts that saved the first born of Israel (Ex. 12:21-23). Because of the death of the first born throughout Egypt, the Egyptians and Pharaoh let the covenant people go (Ex. 12:31-36). They were set free from bondage to receive the law and serve God as kings and priests of His kingdom. In Jesus' resurrection the covenant people are set free from death, slavery to sin and bondage to Satan to serve the living and true God. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:57-58).

## The Resurrection of Christ was an Act of the Triune God

It is important to acknowledge the fact that our Lord's resurrection occurred as a result of His own power no less than that of the Father. This point is important because: (1) there are many cults that deny that Christ rose through His own power. Because they deny the divinity of Jesus, many damnable sects must of logical necessity deny that our Lord caused His own resurrection; (2) the fact that our Lord was not passive in His own resurrection proves beyond a shadow of a doubt His own divinity; (3) The Bible emphasizes that Christ Himself achieved a victory over death and hell. If Jesus did not cause His own resurrection then He could not be said to be an active victor, the very fountain and author of life.

That Jesus was made alive by His own power is evident from the following passages. "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'" (Jn. 2:19). "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will" (Jn. 5:21). Jesus ascribes to Himself the identical power and ability as the Father. "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn. 10:17-18). Our Lord could not have been clearer. He can and will raise Himself up. "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live'" (John 11:25). Christ is not merely a conduit of salvation but the very foundation of salvation and resurrection life. "[I]t was necessary that He would resurrect Himself, for the Surety who took this suffering upon Himself would also have to triumph over it. If someone else had resurrected Him, He would neither have triumphed over death, nor delivered Himself, and consequently would also not be able to deliver others."<sup>9</sup> "Jesus is the resurrection and the life in person... the full, blessed life of God, all his glorious attributes: omniscience, wisdom, omnipotence, love, holiness, etc. As such he is also the cause, source, or fountain of the believers' glorious resurrection and of their everlasting life."<sup>10</sup>

Since the Bible emphasizes that Jesus arose through His own power, why then is the resurrection also frequently ascribed to the power of God (Ac. 2:24, 32; 3:26; 5:30; 1 Cor. 6:14;

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1:629.

<sup>10</sup> William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), part 2, p. 150.

Eph. 1:20) or the Father (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:3)? The answer is found in the biblical fact that whatever the Father does, the Son in like manner does (Jn. 5:19). The Father, Son and Spirit are one and the same God. Each person of the godhead is operative in the works of the other. "But there is a popular reason why it is ascribed to the Father, on account of the obligation which Christ took upon himself, from which he ought to be released by the Father (as Judge), who, as he had delivered up Christ to death for our sins, so he ought to raise him up again for our justification-in order to testify that a full satisfaction had been made by him."<sup>11</sup>

## The Benefits of Christ's Resurrection

The benefits and fruits that result from our Lord's resurrection are best understood from two different perspectives that are intimately related. (1) The resurrection is a vindication, victory and exaltation of the persecuted, humiliated and murdered divine-human Messiah. (2) The victory of the resurrection has broad implications. It is a victory for the church and even the whole created order. What Christ did, He did in behalf of His people. The resurrection is not a private act that simply vindicates Jesus, but a redemptive act that gives resurrection life to all those who believe.

## Jesus' Vindication and Exaltation

The resurrection of our Lord is a vindication of His person and work as well as the beginning of His exaltation. The resurrection is not only God's stamp of approval to all that Christ said and did; it also is the starting point of a whole new phase of Jesus' ministry. The humble suffering servant is now the exalted conquering King. While it is true that our Lord's foundational redemptive work is completed (i.e., His perfect sinless life and sacrificial death), Jesus in His exalted state as prophet, priest and king is very active at the right hand of God in the application of redemption, the intercession for His people and the judging of the enemies of His bride. There are a number of areas regarding our Lord's vindication and exaltation that need to be considered.

(1) Note that Christ was well aware of this vindication and exaltation before the crucifixion. Indeed, He emphasized it to a degree in His teaching ministry. When many disciples had a difficult time with Jesus doctrine and were even complaining about His teaching our Lord mentioned the ascension (Jn. 17:5). Our Lord often directed the disciple's attention to His vindication when He discussed the coming judgment. "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mk 8:38). Jesus told the high priest at His trial, "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk. 14:62). Christ made it very clear that as the exalted king He would return in judgment to destroy the nation that rejected Him and persecuted His church. "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30). Jesus often also discussed His central role as Judge in the final judgment (Mt. 7:22-23; 25:31; Lk. 13:27ff; Jn. 5:25-29). God "has given Him authority to execute judgment

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<sup>11</sup> Frances Turrentin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 2:366.

also, because He is the Son of Man" (Jn. 5:27). He will set as the exalted king "on the throne of His glory" (Mt. 25:30) and judge all nations. God has taken the Messiah who was despised and rejected of man (Isa. 53:3) who was unjustly prosecuted and murdered by evil men (Jn. 18:23) and made Him the king and judge. The defendant has become king, judge and executioner. The tables have been turned.

(2) The vindication and exaltation of Christ is emphasized in apostolic preaching. When Peter preached to the Jews on the day of Pentecost he connected Jesus' resurrection to His exaltation and heavenly rule (Ac. 2:32-33). Then after quoting Psalm 110:1 which speaks of the enthronement of the Messiah (Ac. 2:34-35) he said, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Ac. 2:36). Peter in essence is saying, "The very One you humiliated, rejected and murdered, God has exalted and made Lord over all." The "you killed Him, but God raised Him up" theme is prominent in the book of Acts. Note Peter's second sermon: "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (Ac. 3:14-15). When Peter and the other apostles were commanded by the Jewish counsel not to teach the gospel, they responded by saying, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Ac. 5:30-31). After severely rebuking the Jews as "betrayers and murderers" of Christ, Stephen said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Ac. 7:56)! That our Lord is at God's right hand refers to the fact that Jesus has been given the preeminent place of honor and power in the universe. The Jews emphatically said "no," but God says to the Savior-"yes and amen!" Peter continued this theme when he introduced the gospel to the Gentiles: Jesus, "whom they [the Jews] killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly.... it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead" (Ac. 10:39-40, 42). Years later Paul preached the identical message in Athens, "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Ac. 17:31). For Paul the first act of exaltation, the resurrection, is proof positive that Jesus will judge the world (the historical climax of Christ's exaltation).

(3) The vindication and exaltation of Jesus is an essential aspect of New Testament theology. In Romans 1:4 Paul says that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The word translated "declared" (*horisthentos*) is better translated as "appointed" or "constituted" or "designated." The apostle says that at the resurrection the incarnate Son (the theanthropic Messiah) is appointed the Son of God with power. In other words our Lord enters a new phase of His ministry. He has gone from the suffering servant to a position of supreme power and exaltation. This teaching reflects the statement of Jesus that, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18). Paul says that the exaltation of Christ is the reward for His redemptive obedience. Jesus "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:7-11).

In the incarnation our Lord (figuratively speaking) descended a staircase of degradation and progressive humiliation and suffering which culminated in the cross. In the resurrection (whereby Jesus achieved a definitive victory) one discovers the starting point or beginning of an ever-present exaltation. "He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:20-22). "Such language not only witnesses to a defendant whose cause has been vindicated; it is the language of enthronement, drawing especially from such royal psalms as Psalms 2 and 110. Jesus is the messianic king. (Eph. 1:22 links Ps. 110 with Ps. 8:6) More than that, he is Lord of all, the Son of God in power, now and forever 'at the right hand of God.'"<sup>12</sup>

The vindication-exaltation theme is not limited to Paul. Peter urges Christians to be holy because: God is holy (1 Pet. 1:16); Jesus redeemed the church with His own precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18-20) and God "raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet. 1:21). The author of Hebrews says, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (1:3; cf. 10:12). The book of Hebrews emphasized Christ's role as a high priest at God's right hand who intercedes for the church in the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 21; especially 8:1-2). Jesus' exaltation is paramount in the book of Revelation where our Lord Himself declares, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forever more" (1:18). As the message or prophecy of the ascended Lord unfolds the fact that only Jesus is worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll is noted. No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth is worthy or able to unfold its contents (5:3-4) except "a Lamb as though it had been slain" (5:6). The Man who was rejected, tortured and murdered is now "the white horse rider" (6:2; 19:11) the victor (19:21) and judge (20:11ff.), who will crush all opposition to Him and His people. He will rule until "He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

## Christ's Victory Is the Church's Victory

The word that best sums up the meaning of our Lord's resurrection is victory. This victory, however, was not only a victory for Jesus but also a victory for His people and even the whole created order (Rom. 8:21). "As Christ died as the head and representative of his people, his resurrection secures and illustrates theirs. As He lives, they shall live also. If He remained under the power of death, there is no source of spiritual life to men; for He is the vine, we are the branches; if the vine be dead the branches must be dead also."<sup>13</sup> The resurrection of Christ not only secures a believer's regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification; it also proves that our Lord was victorious over sin, death and Satan.

(1) The resurrection of Jesus proves that the atoning work of Christ was a complete success; that our Lord's vicarious suffering removed all the guilt and penalty of sin for the elect. The resurrection is the Father's seal of approval on the completed work of Christ. It is God's public declaration of a perfect, complete and satisfactory mission of the Son of God on earth. Paul said, "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). In

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<sup>12</sup> John Frederick Janson, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ in New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 2:627.

other words, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then His whole ministry, suffering and death accomplished nothing. Further, Paul connects the resurrection of Christ with a believer's justification in Romans 4:25 (this passage will be discussed below). The efficacy of our Lord's death cannot be separated from His resurrection. The resurrection not only proves that God accepted Christ's sacrifice, it also plays a crucial role in salvation itself. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).

(2) Christ's resurrection proves that He conquered death and merited life in its fullest sense. Jesus said, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Rev. 1:18). "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:21-22). "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).

(3) Jesus' resurrection proves that He has defeated and subdued Satan. "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Before the resurrection Satan had full control over men, society, religion and culture throughout the entire earth, except for the tiny nation of Israel. Before the resurrection our Lord instructed His disciples to limit the gospel message to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 10:6). But immediately after the resurrection Satan is bound. "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years...so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished (Rev. 20:1-3). After the resurrection the disciples are ordered to preach the gospel throughout the entire world (Mk. 16:7; Ac. 1:8), to disciple all nations (Mt. 28:19). Because of Jesus' death and resurrection Satan (in principle) no longer has dominion over the earth. His ability to deceive the nations is limited. The death and resurrection of our Lord has achieved a definitive victory over death and Satan. Therefore, throughout the history between the first and second coming of Christ there is progressive growth in our Lord's kingdom (Mt. 13:31-33). The forces of Messiah the Prince will progressively (through the preaching of the gospel and discipling of nations) beat back the forces of evil in the world. As our Lord promised, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [i.e., the church]" (Mt. 16:18).

## Benefits toward the Elect

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the "author," "captain" or "pioneer" of salvation in the most comprehensive sense of the term (Heb. 2:10; 12:2). This point refers not only to the historical reality that our Lord "pioneered" our salvation through His redemptive work, but also to the fact that He "authored" our salvation. There is a vital union that exists between the elect sinner and Christ during His life, death and resurrection. The Savior is the trunk and we are the branches (Jn. 15:5). He is the fountain of living water (Jn. 4:10), "the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25), the bread of life (Jn. 6:51), and "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). From Him and Him alone we derive spiritual life and nourishment. His resurrection is the reason that Christians have and live in newness of life. Therefore, the benefits that flow from Christ's resurrection are manifold.

(1) The first fruit of our Lord's resurrection toward the elect is regeneration. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-6). "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. 2:13). In Christ we are "born again" (Jn. 3:3), "regenerated" (Tit. 3:5) or "made alive" (Eph. 2:5). Thus we are called a "new creation" (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17), a "new man" (Eph. 4:24). Why are some people born again while others are not? The reason some are regenerated while others remain spiritually dead is that only the elect were united with Jesus in His death and resurrection. Hodge writes, "It is in virtue of their union with Christ that believers are partakers of his life and exaltation. They are to reign with him. The blessings, then, of which the apostle speaks, are represented as already conferred for two reasons, -first, because they are in a measure already enjoyed; and, secondly, because the continuance and consummation of these blessings are rendered certain by the nature of the union between Christ and his people. In him they are already raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God."<sup>14</sup>

The apostle John also teaches that believers are regenerated as a consequence of their union with Christ in His resurrection. The apostle speaks of a first resurrection that occurs long before the final resurrection at the end of human history. "Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be kings and priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). The first resurrection refers to the resurrection of Christ of which all believers partake. Consequently they cannot be harmed by the second death. In John's gospel Jesus also spoke of two resurrections. The first resurrection refers to regeneration and salvation (Jn. 5:24-25). It occurs when a person hears the word of God, Jesus speaks life to a dead soul and the person believes in Christ. The second resurrection refers to the bodily, physical resurrection that occurs at the second coming (Jn. 5:28-29). Those who partake of a spiritual resurrection (the first resurrection) are raised to life. Those who do not partake of the first resurrection are raised to condemnation.

Paul says that our Lord became a life giving Spirit at the resurrection. "The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). At His resurrection Christ received a supernatural, spiritual (glorified) body. Thus, the resurrected Messiah (the second or last Adam) is the representative Man, "the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18), the pioneer or lead climber for the elect in redemptive life; and, He Himself is the source for the new life: both the new life of regeneration and the new life at the bodily resurrection where all believers receive spiritual, glorified bodies. Matthew Poole writes, "The last Adam, by which he meaneth Christ, who in time was after the first Adam, and was born in the last days, and was last common Head; as Adam was the first, with respect of grace and spiritual regeneration, he was made a quickening spirit: he was made so, not when he was conceived and born, for he had a body subject to the same natural infirmities that ours are; but upon his resurrection from the dead, when, though he had the same body, in respect of the substance of it, yet it differed in qualities, and was much more spiritual; with which body he ascended up into spiritual life, so also to quicken our mortal bodies at his second coming, when he shall raise the dead out of their graves."<sup>15</sup> As the rays of the sun give light, warm and life to plants in the spring,

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Hodge, *Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1964 [1856]), p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1963 [1865]), 3:597. Note, that the teaching of Paul in this passage corresponds to the teaching of Jesus in John's gospel (discussed above; Jn. 5:24-

the resurrected Son imparts spiritual light and life to His own people. "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself" (Jn. 5:26). "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15).

(2) The second fruit of Jesus' resurrection is justification. "It [the righteousness of Christ] shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4:24-25).

Although the New Testament virtually always relates justification directly to Christ's death, blood, suffering or atonement (cf. Rom. 3:24; 5:9; 6:7; 8:33, 34; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14; etc.), Paul relates it here to the resurrection for good reason; because the justification of sinners that occurred on the cross was perfected, proved and made efficacious at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:17). Theologian and commentator John Murray gives five reasons why the apostle connects the resurrection of Christ with the justification of sinners. He writes,

(1) We are justified by faith, and this faith must be directed to Jesus (3:22, 26). But only as the living Lord can he be the object of faith. (2) It is in union with Christ that we are justified (cf. 8:1; II Cor. 5:21). Only as active through the resurrection can any virtue proceed from Christ to us and only with a living Christ can union have efficacy. (3) The righteousness of Christ by which we are justified (5:17, 18, 19) has its embodiment in Christ; it can never be thought of in abstraction from him as a reservoir of merit stored up. Only as the living one can Christ be the embodiment of righteousness and be made to us righteousness from God (I Cor. 1:30). (4) The death and resurrection of Christ are inseparable. Hence even the death or blood of Christ as related to our justification (3:24, 25; 5:9; 8:33, 34) could have no efficacy to that end in isolation from the resurrection. (5) It is through the mediation of Christ that we come to stand in the grace of justification (5:2). But the mediation of Christ could not be operative if he were still under the power of death.<sup>16</sup>

Given the importance of the resurrection and its integral role in a believer's justification we should not be surprised to note Paul's obsession with Christ and His resurrection. "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10).

(3) The third fruit of Christ's resurrection is sanctification. The most detailed and systematic discussion of sanctification in the New Testament is found in Romans 6:1-7:6. In this section of Scripture, Paul discusses at length the foundation for personal godliness in the Christian life. The apostle teaches that all the imperatives relating to a believer's progressive sanctification are grounded upon a definitive sanctification achieved by Christ Himself. By virtue of a believer's intimate union with our Lord in His death and resurrection Christians have been delivered from the power of sin. Paul writes, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.... Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from

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25, 28-29), where our Lord sets regeneration-salvation in parallel with the last bodily resurrection unto life. Christ is the source and fountain of life. We live only because He lives. "For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you" (2 Cor. 13:4).

<sup>16</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968 [1959, 1965]), part 1, pp. 156-157.

the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Rom. 6:4-5, 8-10). Jesus' death is the reason that Christians have died to the reigning, enslaving, defiling power of sin. His resurrection is the reason that believers have and live in newness of life. The "Prince of life" (Ac. 3:15) was and is the first and only fully sanctified man. He imparts this sanctification to others first in regeneration (or as the Puritans often called it: initial sanctification) and then progressively through renewal by the Holy Spirit. The Confession of Faith says, "They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection (15:1).

The ethical imperatives in the epistles arise out of and are rooted in the gracious indicatives [i.e., Jesus' past redemptive acts in history] of the gospel. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God....Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:1-5, 5). "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God" (1 Jn. 3:9). "He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:15-17). When the apostle says that we no longer know Jesus after the flesh, he is pointing to the historical fact that our Lord has been resurrected and glorified and thus lives in a new, exalted, victorious state. The word "therefore" proceeds from this historical reality. When Paul says that for those in Christ old things have passed away, the verb tense (aorist) points to the moment in time when the Holy Spirit regenerated them. But then when the apostle says "all things have become new" he changes the verb tense (this time perfect), indicating that old things became and continue to be new. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection Christians are regenerated and progressively sanctified. As there was a radical discontinuity between the state of humiliation ("Christ according to the flesh"), there is a radical discontinuity from the state of being unregenerate (spiritually dead) and being born again (alive in Christ). The old mode of thinking and living (i.e., world and life view, passions, lusts, affections and actions) has been definitively slain with Christ and in regeneration is replaced with a whole new way of thinking and living. Since we have been raised with Jesus we must continue to walk consistently with that new and continuous life. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

(4) The fourth fruit of our Lord's resurrection is glorification. After writing that we [i.e., the apostles] have seen, looked upon and even handled the Word of life (1 Jn. 1:1) John says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn. 3:2). Paul says that Christ Himself will transform our bodies into glorified bodies. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the

working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:20-21). The foundation of this transformation is the resurrection of Christ. "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23). The apostle is not merely discussing the resurrection in general but the resurrection unto life. That is a resurrection that results in immortal glorified bodies. Paul writes,

The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:47-53).

The salvation that our Lord achieved affects the whole man-body and soul. When Jesus rose in a glorious immortal, spiritual body, He established the redemptive foundation and thus guaranteed every believer's regeneration as well as their future resurrection in a similar glorified body. All believers long for the day when they shall receive such a wonderful body. "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation, which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee" (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Although we [i.e., true believers] all share in Christ's resurrected life in this life (note the sections above on regeneration, justification and sanctification), the full realization of this new life must await the second coming when our salvation is brought to completion. "The picture conveyed is that of the heavenly body being put on, like an outer vesture, over the earthly body, with which the apostle is as it were clad, so as not only to cover it but to absorb and transfigure it. In this way ideas both of continuity and of transformation, which are also prominent in the great resurrection chapter of 1 Cor. 15, are effectively communicated."<sup>17</sup>

(5) The fifth fruit of Christ's resurrection is the restoration of the whole created order. As the fall of the first Adam resulted in a curse upon creation and a derailment of the God-glorifying nature of the dominion mandate, the redemptive work of Jesus is directed to the salvation of the elect, the re-institution and enabling of the original dominion mandate and the salvation of the whole created order. The Son of God through His redemptive work makes sure that God's original purpose for mankind and the creation is not lost. To save a multitude and then leave them forever in a fallen corrupt world would be a contradiction of God's original purpose for mankind. Therefore, the scope of Christ's mission is cosmic. He not only makes His people a new creation by His resurrection power, He also makes a "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13).

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<sup>17</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), pp. 168-169.

Jesus spoke of a coming restoration of the world in Matthew 19:28. "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The word translated "regeneration" (NKJV, KJV, ASV, NASB, YLTB), "new world" (RSV) or "renewal of all things" (NIV) is *palinggenesia*. It only occurs one other time in the New Testament in Titus 3:5 in reference to a Christian's new birth. It literally means re-generation, re-birth or re-creation. This passage can be interpreted in two different ways, both of which support the idea that in Jesus' resurrection there is a restoration of the whole created order. The first interpretation takes the word "regeneration" in a definitive sense. That is, the regeneration of the world in principle is an accomplished fact in the Saviors' resurrection and ascension to the throne of glory. The judging of the twelve tribes by the apostles would then refer to the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of church discipline throughout Israel after the great commission (Mt. 28:19ff.). The second view (which is held by the great majority of commentators) is that it refers to the final day-the Day of Judgment. When Christ returns, the saints will receive their glorified bodies and there will be a glorious restitution of all things. It will be a cosmic regeneration, a new creation, a new Genesis.

This concept of restoration or re-creation is common in the New Testament. Peter spoke of the "restoration of all things" (Ac. 3:21) in his preaching and the creation of a "new heavens and a new earth" in his second epistle (3:13). The apostle John tells us of the re-creation as the climax of human history in the book of Revelation. "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...the former things have passed" (21:1, 4). While describing a new paradise, the Apocalypse clearly points back to the original pre-fall Eden. In the new world there is no more death, tears, suffering or pain (21:4). There is a pure river of water of life that flows from God and the Lamb's throne (22:1). The "tree of life" is found in abundance (22:2) and there is "no more curse" (22:3) or "night" (22:5). All those who have not been cleansed by Jesus Christ who continue in sin and immorality are cast into the lake of fire (21:8) and excluded from the new creation (22:15). Best of all there is a continuous light (22:5), love and fellowship with God and Christ (22:3-5). The salvation that our Lord achieved gives the church and the creation even greater blessings than the original Eden.

Paul also discusses a comprehensive, cosmic reconciliation. "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:18-20). Jesus is not only the mediator of the original creation (Col. 1:15) but also the mediator and the first born of the second creation. "No domain is left in which the absolute supremacy of Christ and of his work is not fully effective."<sup>18</sup> "Whatever is needed to save a fallen world, and restore harmony to the universe, is treasured up in Him-is in Him."<sup>19</sup> "By his power and authority, he will correct every aspect of creation. Ultimately he will present this properly arranged universe to God who will be glorified in all."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> R.C. H. Lenski, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961 [1937, 1946]), p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle to the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979 [1884]), p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), p. 226.

In Romans, Paul even personifies the non-rational and inanimate creation to emphasize the future hope of believers in the coming glory. He writes, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (8:18-23). The power of Christ's resurrection will overturn the frustration (*mataiots*), emptiness or futility of the present world order. The creation which is presently subject to decay (*phthora*), to corruption and the evils of disease, death, predation and pain will be freed by our Lord's liberation from the tomb.

## Conclusion

The resurrection of Christ is at the heart of a vibrant faith. The Bible tells us that our Lord has won the war against sin, Satan and death. This glorious victory extends to the whole man (body and soul) as well as to the whole world. This is the great truth by which the church is to live. There is no excuse to retreat from battle, or to shrink back in fear, or to shudder at the trials and tribulations of life. The victory has already been achieved. Believers are not to be afraid of their persecutors. Our courage, hope, endurance and patience are rooted in the fact that Christ has triumphed over all. "The power of Christ's resurrection means that a redeeming force and people are now at work in history, bringing all things into captivity to Christ. The scope of the resurrected Christ's redeeming power is cosmic and eternal."<sup>21</sup> Let us march forth into victory in Christ who has made us "more than conquerors" through the power of his resurrection.

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<sup>21</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians* (Vallecito, CA.: Ross House Books, 1997), p. 139.