

The Resurrection of the World

Romans 8:18-30

Easter is about the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This is the most important thing that has ever happened in human history. It's the culmination of Jesus' life, ministry, crucifixion and death. Without it we are still in our sins and the world would be completely different (1 Cor. 15:17). The early Christians made such a big deal about the resurrection that their audience thought they were talking about two gods, Jesus and Resurrection (Acts 17:18). Easter is not about our souls leaving earth to go to heaven; it's about heaven coming to earth.

The Resurrection of Jesus

When we say "resurrection", we are talking about the physical body of Jesus coming back from the dead. The Jews believed in bodily resurrection at the end of history. Job confessed "I know that my Redeemer lives ... And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God" (Job. 19:25-26; cf. Dan. 12:2). When Jesus told Martha that Lazarus would rise again, she said "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (Jn. 11:24). The Jews believed they would be re-embodied at the last day, but no one expected anyone to rise from the dead in the middle of human history (cf. Jn. 20:9). This is why the apostles are so confused at Jesus' resurrection. Mary Magdalene thinks the body is stolen and Jesus is the gardener (Jn. 20:15). Jesus has to go out of His way to prove it's Him, letting them touch and stare (Jn. 20:20; Lk. 24:39). He made a fire and cooked breakfast with bread and fish (Jn. 21:9-10). What is the point of all this? Why not send Jesus at the end of time? Because God wanted resurrection life to invade human history, and Jesus is the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20).

The Created Order Longs for Resurrection

Paul says the things we are suffering now are not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us (v18). This is not something that only individual people care about, but the creation longs for because God subjected it to futility in hope (vv19-20). When God created the world, there was no death or bondage to decay (e.g. Gen. 1:25). After Adam sinned, the ground is cursed, bearing thorns and thistles, and animals become a threat to mankind (Gen. 3:17, 9:5). When Adam fell, the world fell with him. We don't need to believe entropy didn't exist before the fall, but Paul refers to "bondage to decay." The way things fall apart, famines, natural disasters, and violence are some of the effects of sin, and creation groans for freedom from them. Paul says it will be delivered and is groaning in labor pains until now (vv20-21). So how did the resurrection of Jesus affect this situation? In His death, He bore the curse for sin. If Adam brought death into the world through sin, Jesus took that curse upon Himself on the cross, wearing the crown of thorns, and in His resurrection He brought life to the world. So where is it? It's here, but the new heaven and new earth are not instantaneous. "Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev. 21: 5). People still die, they just live a lot longer (Is. 65:17, 20). There will come a climactic end when all Jesus' enemies are put under His feet, and the last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). That will be the day of our resurrection, the birth of the new creation, and our full adoption (v23).

Our Resurrection Life in Jesus

If we have the same Spirit that raised Jesus, God will raise our mortal bodies also (v11). If all creation is heading toward redemption, what are we doing here in the meantime? We are groaning like an uncomfortable pregnant woman (v23). We are anchored in hope (vv24-25). We don't even always know what to pray for, so the Spirit prays for us, and Jesus also intercedes for us (vv26-27). Living in time of resurrection and looking forward to it means that everything we do matters. It's all preparation. After His resurrection, Jesus embraced, talked, taught, comforted, built a fire, ate food, traveled and who knows what else. Everything we enjoy is a foretaste of the abundant life to come, and all of our grateful obedience to God is part of His kingdom advance, bringing the enemies of Jesus beneath Him. "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. 15:58).

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Romans 8:11, 18-23

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. 18 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. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 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.

1. What is happening to creation in verse 22?
2. When Adam sinned, it wasn't just him and Eve who fell under the curse and effects of sin. Do remember what came out of the ground (Gen. 3:18)?
3. Jesus' resurrection in the middle of history changed everything. If we trust in God through Jesus, that means we have the same Holy Spirit who helps us look forward to getting new bodies (verse 23). What kinds of things do you want to try to do in the resurrection with your new body?
4. Draw a picture of Jesus cooking bread and fish around the fire at the beach while his disciples are coming to shore on a boat.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.
Romans 8:19