

THE RESURRECTION AND POLITICS

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If I were to ask you to find one single OT verse that summarises the central theme of NT which one would you pick? Is there such a verse?

Suggest: Dan. 7:18 "But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever."

Suggest: Dan. 7: 22 "Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom."

Suggest: Dan.7: 27 "Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."

Eph. 1: 9-10 God "has made known to us (the saints) the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him, with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth."

Phil. 2:9-10 "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

I Cor. 6:2 "Don't you know that we (the saints) shall judge [manage] the world?"

In Rev. 5 the "strong angel" in John's vision rings out the question "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" Nobody is found, in heaven above, or on the earth, or under the earth. The seer, John begins to "weep greatly" because nobody worthy, nobody able is found to open it. John wants to look into this book that holds God's plan for all creation. John wants to see the grand design and purpose. At last into the breach steps the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root (descendant) of David, who has overcome. He steps forth, receives the book from God's Right Hand, the one Who sits on the throne, and opens it. And as Jesus opens the book, all heaven bursts out in wonderful exclamation. Why do they so exult? Yes, they see and now understand the contents of the Book. The theme of the book with God's grand plan for all of creation is now an open secret. Ah! The redeemed of the earth realise they are included in God's design...v. 10 "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests unto God; and they shall reign upon the earth."

Climax of Rev. and of the entire Biblical revelation in Rev. 11:15 "And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.'"

N.T. Wright says " 'the gospel' in the New Testament, is the good news that God (the world's creator) is at last becoming king, and that Jesus, whom this God raised from the dead, is the world's true Lord."

Wright's definition of 'the gospel' is one we in the RF heartily endorse. This is the very heart and soul of the gospel message Jesus of Nazareth preached... the kingdom of God is coming on earth! Jesus' whole *raison d'être* was that he had been sent to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. Did he not tell the disciples, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good intention to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32)? Again, "And just as my Father has granted me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.." (Lk. 22:29). "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is the historic, apostolic faith of the church. How do we know the Kingdom of God is not just 'pie in the sky'? What is the assurance? The guarantee? What makes this Christian Hope different to all the other religions, speculations, myths, aspirations? Answer: the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Acts 17: 31 God the Father "has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead."

The gospel declares that God through His Messiah and the people who are in Messiah Jesus is going to put this fractured world together again. God is going to take the power from those who have usurped it and abused it. He is going to give the authority and the governments of this world to the one who deserves it... His Son Jesus. Tyranny will cease. Oppression, persecution, torture will be finished. Pollution, degradation of the planet will stop. This world is to be overhauled. Renovated. Such judgment and the establishing of goodness and righteousness and peace over the earth are themes for great rejoicing in the Bible. The resurrection declares Jesus to be the rightful and good Heir of the world, and we to be co-rulers with him on planet earth.

GORDON is a well-known Churches of Christ preacher. He wrote: "I have finished reading Greg's book *They Never Told Me This in Church!*. My report is as follows: First of all, let me say that Greg's whole research is very thorough and comes from a very wide study and knowledge, and is therefore commendable. I agree with him that there is no Trinity Formula in the New Testament....However, I don't interpret the Kingdom and the purpose of Jesus' coming and God's abode in heaven as he does....The idea of an everlasting Kingdom set up on earth doesn't fit in with the fact that Planet Earth is not eternal, and will end up in a "Black Hole" somewhere...For me, eternal life is not on earth as based on Jerusalem or in a literal heaven in the sky. It is life in another dimension of being with God...Greg has the horrors of being what he calls 'a disembodied spirit'. But God himself doesn't have a similar problem, yet he has been a 'disembodied spirit' for all of eternity. Why hang onto the body anyhow? God has more for us that that!..."

It is hard for me to say this of one of our esteemed stalwarts within the Churches of Christ. A great preacher, an excellent theological college lecturer and author. But I have to say that this man's departure from the Hebrew prophets and the New Testament Jesus and apostles is total and complete. He might as well promote Buddhism and nirvana. He would fit in well with the Hindu mystics! He is in cahoots with the New Age spiritualists! For the historic Christian faith proclaims that precisely because God acted in our time-space-material world when he raised Jesus bodily from the grave this physical body, like his, is going to be redeemed. The apostolic faith of the New Testament announces that God is God, that His Son is the Lord of this world, evil has been conquered, God's new order in Messiah Jesus has begun, and the material and physical world which He originally created is affirmed.

Rom. 8:19-23 'For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God... the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God....and not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.'

MARTYN-LLOYD JONES ...There are many today who regard themselves as Christians who do not believe in the resurrection and glorification of the body. They believe that when the Christian dies he goes to be with Christ; and they seem to think of that as some vague, nebulous, indefinite spiritual state and condition. But that is not the teaching of Scripture. The Scripture teaches the resurrection of the body as an essential part of our salvation...We shall dwell in these glorified bodies on the glorified earth. This is one of the great Christian doctrines that has been almost entirely forgotten and ignored. Unfortunately, the Christian church -- I speak generally -- does not believe this, and therefore does not teach it. It has lost its hope." (M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapters 8:17-39, The Final Perseverance of the Saints*, pp. 71-71).

RANDY ALCORN "The prophets are never concerned about some far-off realm of disembodied spirits. They are concerned about the land, the inheritance, the city of Jerusalem, and the earth they walked on." (Randy Alcorn in *Heaven*).

When God brought His Son up from the grave He set before mankind the Prototype, the Paradigm, the first example of His New Creation Man. The risen Jesus is God's guarantee that this planet earth is not going to end up in a 'Black Hole' somewhere. The re-embodied Jesus is God's assurance that the human body matters to God and that we will even yet bear His glory and image as we were originally created to be.

OBJECTION "Ah, but Greg, surely the good man has a point. Does not the Bible after all say

that "we await for a new heavens and a new earth" and this world is going to be burned up and destroyed?" Doesn't Rev. 21:1 say that the old Earth will pass away?

PALINGENESIA... Not according to Jesus! He said that "in the regeneration" the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne... Note Christ's choice of word here. He did not say "after the destruction of all things". Nor "after the abandonment of all things". Rather, "at the *renewal* of all things" and the Greek word is *palingenesia*... literally, the 'new genesis'. The renewal. This is not a hair-splitting point of mere semantics. This draws a line in the sand between two fundamentally different theologies. And that very passage in Rev. 21 goes on to say that there is to be a new earth! Just as people who have died and passed away will be raised up again, so this earth will not pass away but be raised again to be the new Earth!

This is exactly what Christ's death and resurrection secured for us. A renewed humanity on a renewed earth in which "all things" will be restored in their pristine perfection.

Peter preached that after his resurrection Christ "must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago in the prophets" (Acts 3:21).

OBJECTION "Ah, but doesn't Paul say that "flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom?" (This is of course, a favourite objection raised by the JW's). Well, if ever there was a very widely held misunderstanding of what Paul meant, it is this popular belief that 'flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom' means that physicality will be abolished. "Flesh and blood" is a term pointing to that which is corruptible, transient, subject to death. As Wright so aptly points out, "The contrast ... is not between what we call physical and what we call non-physical, but between *corruptible physicality* on the one hand and *non-corruptible physicality* on the other... For Paul, the bodily resurrection does not leave us saying 'so that's all right; we shall go at last, to join Jesus in a non-bodily, Platonic heaven', but 'so, then, since the person you are and the world God has made will be gloriously reaffirmed in God's eventual future, you must be steadfast...." (N.T. Wright in *Surprised by Hope*, p.168).

DAWKINS

Yesterday I mentioned that one of the great threats to "the faith" of Jesus has increasingly come from an antagonistic and virulent atheism. One of its present-day champions and heroes is Dr Richard Dawkins, recently voted by *Prospect* magazine one of the world's top three intellectuals (alongside Umberto Eco and Noam Chomsky). He is the author of many so-called classic works on science and philosophy. Dawkins stresses the irrationality of belief in God and the grievous harm this belief has inflicted on mankind. His best-seller *The God Delusion* is his latest attempt to show "how religion fuels war, foments bigotry and abuses children. And all for a God whose existence lacks evidence of any kind". And the publishers hail his latest tome as "a brilliantly argued, fascinating polemic that will be required reading for anyone interested in this most emotional and important subject."

Well, I have read Dawkins' *The God Delusion* and confess I find it quite inane, really. Oh sure. It's full of wit and humorous anecdote. Quite readable, really. And I must say that I am thankful to Dawkins for at least one thing. He has marshalled his very best reasons against God into one place and succeeded in bringing the subject about God into the public domain.

One reviewer, Andrew Wilson says that this foray into the public arena should be celebrated by Christians... "The internal bubble of private piety, which owes something to the Reformation, something to the Enlightenment, something to the Victorian period, and nothing at all to the Bible, is as resoundingly burst by the book of Acts as by Dawkins. And if the reviews are right, and the world's leading atheist has actually published the definitive statement of the world's best atheistic arguments, then the modern believer can be reasonably confident that, having struggled with Dawkins and overcome, they are unlikely to find their faith overturned by anything else, even if they get their hip put out of joint in the process. As Elijah demonstrated, it is easier to confute sceptics if you have all your targets in one place." (*Deluded by Dawkins? A Christian Response to The God Delusion*, p.15).

Now, I am not proposing to tackle Dawkins for the numerous problems I find with his atheistic thesis. There are quite a number of them. I propose to go to the most serious flaw. It is a glaring omission that Dawkins nowhere in his book mentions "the most definitive argument that Christians have used since AD 30, the resurrection of Jesus. It is not even discussed. From the point of view of Christian preaching, both in the Bible and throughout church history, the

resurrection is the elephant in the room, the one giant that has to be felled if Christianity is to be buried. Despite seventeen centuries from Celsus to Crossan, no plausible alternative explanation has ever been articulated...and it is damaging to Dawkin's argument, perhaps fatally so, that he never examines it." (p. 18-19).

It is not good enough for Dawkins to say "Science demonstrates that dead people do not rise. Therefore Jesus did not." Surely Dawkins is aware that there are different types of 'knowing'. Science studies the repeatable. History studies the unrepeatable. "Caesar only crossed the Rubicon once, and if he'd crossed it again it would have meant something different the second time. There was and could be, only one first landing on the moon. The fall of the second Jerusalem temple took place in AD 70 and never happened again. Historians don't of course, see this as a problem, and are usually not shy about declaring that these events certainly took place, even though we can't repeat them in the laboratory." (Wright, *Surprised by Hope* p. 75-76). And if Dawkins is working within a solid scientific method, when the facts don't fit the paradigm you are working with, the option that is best when all the others have failed, is to change the paradigm.

ILLUS. ELEPHANT. When he ignores the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, Dawkins is like the home owner who chases all the mice out of the lounge room, and then announces that the house is free of vermin, all the while ignoring the huge elephant grinning on the sofa!

That grinning elephant on the sofa is the bodily resurrection of Jesus that proves him to be the Son of God 'with power'. It is the resurrection of Jesus that guarantees God's kingdom on earth.

THE POLITICS OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

There is an increasing consensus of NT scholarship convinced that the Gospel proclamation in its First Century setting was politically charged. In the Roman Empire the generally accepted world-view was that Caesar was building a kingdom. His *Pax Romana* (the peace of Rome) it was asserted, was possible because the gods had granted him lordship over Rome's citizens. Furthermore, the primary demonstration of the power of Rome was the cross and the sword. Crucifixion proclaimed to all, that if you do not bow the knee to Caesar and proclaim him as your lord, you will be impaled and strung up in shame and death will be your judgment.

These scholars tell us we need to read the NT text with an eye to these imperial undertones. We need to spot the political 'buzz words'. Some of these imperial code-words are:-

lord... Caesar was known as 'the lord of the world' and to be submitted to.

saviour... Caesar was called the saviour who brought salvation and peace to the whole empire. All rebellion and brigandry, chaos and lawlessness would cease.

peace and safety... A slogan stamped on coins. (Paul mocks this slogan in I Thess. 5:3).

son of god... Upon his death the old emperor was deified. Since the newly coronated emperor had been adopted by the old, he called himself 'the son of god'. This expression 'son of god' was also stamped at the top of Rome's coins.

gospel... the emperor's accession, reign, birthday, victory were announced in every Roman town and city as 'good news'. The Roman gospel was the good news that the emperor had established peace for the kingdom.

coming... (*parousia*) which is the word often used of Jesus' second coming, was used of Roman emperors coming triumphantly to the city after victory in battle.

assembly... (*ekklesia*) from which we get our word 'church' was the Roman assembly where Caesar was celebrated.

John Dominic Crossan in *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome Then and Now* states the case brilliantly:- 'There was a human being in the first century who was called "Divine," "Son of God," "God," "God from God," whose titles were "Lord," "Redeemer," "Liberator," and "Saviour of the

world." Who was this person? Most people who know the Western tradition would probably answer, unless alerted by the question's too-obviousness, Jesus of Nazareth. And most Christians probably think that those titles were originally created and uniquely applied to Christ. But before Jesus ever existed, all those terms belonged to Caesar Augustus.' (p.28).

Crossan again sums up the political revolution that results from interpreting the Christian proclamation in the light of the imperial context:-

One thing I noticed in researching for this book is that way back in the beginning of the last century, 1907, two different scholars, a British scholar named William Mitchell Ramsay and a German scholar named Gustav Adolph Deissmann, got on a train and a boat and a horse and went around the Pauline sites and saw the inscriptions that say that Caesar Augustus was divine, was the son of god, was god, was lord, was redeemer, was saviour of the world. They saw all that and they said, as it were; Oh, my God! That is what it's all about! They saw that when Jesus was called by those same titles it was not simply the result of picking up the cultural debris of his contemporary world. It was saying in effect: these are the titles of Caesar, but we refuse them to Caesar and assign them instead to Jesus. They were not simply applying to Jesus ordinary words in everyday language. So in 1907 these scholars saw the implications. But instead of the twentieth century building a theology on this realization - which of course would have been one-hundred percent political and one-hundred percent religious, something capable of pointing to that deep basis where religion and politics coincide - we went off into existential demythologization, existentialized individualism when what we needed was the kind of powerful political/religious understanding of Christianity authentic to the first century. I'm not even talking about an application of it. I'm just talking about seeing what was there, seeing why Jesus was crucified, seeing that the Romans got it right. That's part of what is happening right now... a growing insistence on the political and religious implications of Christianity. I'm extremely excited. This is not just talking politics but talking about what Jesus called the kingdom of God, what Paul called the Lordship of Christ, which is simply a way of saying who is in charge of the world. And counterpointed with this I find a Gnosticism that coalesces magnificently with American individualism -- inside not outside, religion not politics, spirituality not religion -- everything that makes the whole thing Gnostic and safe.

Rom. 1:1-4 informs us that "the gospel of God which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerns His Son, who was born (Grk. is came) of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared (Grk. is marked off, determined) with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead...."

This is a highly politically explosive statement to the Roman world. For Caesar was declared to be the son of god.

Not only so. In the Roman world, the emperor's prestige and glory was determined by the pedigree of his lineage. Roman emperors worked hard to trace their ancestry back to the founding father's of Rome, Romulus and Remus. This 700 year plus pedigree was the best any Caesar could do. But when Paul says that Jesus Christ was the descendant of David, an ancestry dating back 1,000 years, Paul was proclaiming that according to their own criteria, Jesus Messiah was superior to any emperor Rome could name.

But there is still more to it. Whereas caesar died never to personally live again, Jesus who had been crucified is now "declared with power to be the [one and only genuine] son of God" by his resurrection from the dead. As Tom Wright says, when the early Christians called Jesus 'Messiah' and 'Son of God' and 'lord' they intended it to carry royal designation. It is the re-embodied Jesus Messiah who has inherited a world-wide kingly rule. Jesus' resurrection is thus the great end-times turning point in God's purpose for the world of humanity. And as every Roman citizen knew; the one who ascends into heaven is enthroned as the divine Emperor. To say Jesus has ascended to God's Right Hand in heaven was politically subversive.

When Jesus rose from the dead a New Age was inaugurated. The present evil age, with its oppression, torture, cruelty, corruption, death is potentially doomed to pass. The new age coming is already breaking in. Resurrection, specifically Jesus' bodily resurrection, is the proof and the guarantee. "God's plan for the world is thus ... the reality of which Caesar's dream of world domination is the parody...[for] by the very power which raised Christ from the dead, God completes the task of bringing the whole of creation to life and order, defeating death itself, the

tyrant's final weapon." (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Part II, p. 232).

We must not therefore miss the political implications of the resurrection of Jesus. "The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus proclaim and install him as the world's true lord and saviour; in other words, according to Paul's gospel it is because of the resurrection that Jesus is lord and Caesar is not. The future resurrection and glorification of Jesus' followers will vindicate them as the true people of the one true God, despite their present suffering and humiliation, and herald the victory of the gospel over the powers of the world through the final act of new creation." (Ibid p.233)

Millard Erickson: "To a Jew of the time Jesus' resurrection would have meant that the end of the world had begun. Paul expected that the resurrection of all men, and particularly of believers, would quickly follow that of Jesus. Therefore he spoke of Jesus as 'the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep'" (I Cor. 15:20) and the 'firstborn from the dead' (Col. 1:18)."

Resurrection challenges the political powers of this present world as no other theology or spirituality can do. "The resurrection was the evidence that God himself confirmed Jesus' pre-Easter activity. To the Jews, Jesus' claim to authority, putting himself in God's place, was blasphemous. If he was raised from the dead, however, it must have been the God of Israel, the God who had presumably been blasphemed, who raised him. Hence, contemporary Jews would have regarded the resurrection as God's confirmation that Jesus really was what he claimed to be." (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, p. 692-3).

But not only the Jewish nation was thus challenged. Resurrection challenges the pretensions of all pagan empire. Gentile Rome included.

The powers of this bad world are now confronted by a new reality. Jesus has been vindicated by God. Caesar has been rejected by the one true God of history.

JOSEPH OF ARAMATHEA....Pilate: "Why would you want to put the mangled body of Jesus of Nazareth in your nice, clean tomb in which no man has ever been placed before?"

Joseph: "Hey, Pilate. It's only for the weekend!"

The point being that the present tyrants don't realize they only rule for the week-end. The present evil age is passing. Resurrection morn is coming. Jesus is the first-fruits of those who sleep. Jesus raised bodily again is the first of a whole crop of new-lifers!

JOSEPHUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

Tom Wright: "Anybody who knew anything about messiahs knew that a messiah who had been crucified by the pagans was a failed messiah, a sham....and "Nobody, not even his closest friends and associates, would ever have dreamed of saying that he really was the Messiah despite it all, unless something else had happened, after his violent and shameful death, to make them think such a thing." (*Resurrection*, p. 244).

Every first-century Christian knew that resurrection carried inescapable kingdom of God theology. Every first-century Christian knew that to proclaim Jesus as God's resurrected Messiah carried blatant political meaning. "The present order of society places Caesar at the top, his agents in the middle, and ordinary people at the bottom; the Creator's new ordering will have himself at the top, the Messiah -- and his people -- in the middle, and the world as a whole underneath, not however, exploited and oppressed but rescued and restored, given the freedom which comes with the wise rule of the Creator, his Messiah, and his image-bearing subjects." (Ibid, p.337).

No wonder Paul writes that the whole of creation groans and yearns with eager expectation for this to be revealed. We cannot wait for God to do this as He has already done it to Jesus.

This is why we must not just limit the gospel to modern evangelicalism's egotistical, highly individualised emphasis that Jesus is my lord and he rules in my heart, in a limited personal sense. We must understand that the confession 'Jesus is Lord' means Jesus is alive as the true sovereign of the world. And every other kingdom is his. Of course this is not to deny that genuine Christianity brings with it a new heart, a new affection, a new experience of the love and power and glory of God. After all, His Spirit, His word, His promise, dwells in our hearts and

minds and we already have a foretaste of the powers of the age to come. And the more we think on these things the keener we get.

As well, we realize that we are indeed citizens of that coming Kingdom. We are an advance guard of Messiah's project to bring the whole world under the sovereign rule of the one true God. Right here and right now we demonstrate the spirit of Jesus in the way we think and the way we behave. When we confess Jesus is alive and is this world's kingdom-lord we must not fail to see that we are a little collection of rebel cells within Caesar's realm. We are good citizens in Australia, yes. In the U.S. of A. yes. And across 'the Deetch' in Kiwi land, yes. But ultimately we march to a different beat.

And even if the tyrant uses his ultimate weapon, death and martyrdom, we proclaim to the world that the resurrected Jesus is God's guarantee that this world will be put right in the end. Jesus is the first-born from the dead. He will inherit His Father's kingdom. And in him we his true followers have the promise of this Creator's new world. Jesus' promise is "To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations" (Rev. 2:26).

As Richard Mouw writes: "Over and over again the Scriptures make this plain: the political power which has been so corrupted and twisted in the hands and hearts of sinful rulers must be returned to its rightful source."

OSCAR WILDE'S moving scene in his play *Salome*, when Herod hears reports that Jesus has been raising dead people. "I do not wish him to do that. I allow no man to raise the dead. This man must be found and told that I forbid him to raise the dead." "There is the bluster of the tyrant who senses his power is being threatened," writes Tom Wright, "and I hear the same tone of voice not just in the politicians who want to carve up the world to their disadvantage but in the intellectual traditions that have gone along for the ride. But Wilde's next, haunting line is the real crunch, for us, as for Herod, 'Where is this man?' demands Herod. 'He is in every place, my lord, but it is hard to find him.'" (p. 86).

Who is it who do not want Jesus alive and raised from the dead? The social and intellectual bullies. The political bureaucrats. Those who want their own little kingdoms. The Caesars of this age are all threatened and horrified by Jesus who has been vindicated by the true God of creation as the long-promised king of the Jews!

The world can cope with a so-called spiritual Jesus (a gnostic Jesus) who lives on in people's memories and affections as a wonderful ideal. No caesar ever lost a moment's sleep worrying about that kind of a spiritualised Jesus.

But a Jesus who comes out of the tomb, a Jesus who inaugurates God's new creation right in the middle of the old one, ah, that is a different story! What is at stake here is a clash of worldviews. Plato, Cicero, Caesar, Herod, Darwin, Dawkins, Bishop Sponge, Islam, Buddhism, have no room for the resurrection of Jesus. Ultimately, it comes down to a worldview which allows for the God of creation and ultimate righteousness, and a worldview which does not.

BROUGHT UP FROM THE GRAVE.

Heb. 13:20 "Now the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the Sheep even Jesus our Lord..." Notice this. Let's not rush over it. It does not say that the God of peace 'raised again' Jesus from the dead. Many other passages do say God raised Jesus from the dead. But not this one. Here it a graphic turn of expression, "God "brought up" from the dead Jesus our Lord.

The force of the expression can be ascertained by comparing Acts 16:35, 37, 39. There the apostles had been unlawfully beaten by the Roman authorities, unlawfully imprisoned. When the magistrates subsequently discovered that Paul was a Roman citizen they knew they were in big trouble. So they quickly invited Paul to leave the city. But Paul refused demanding an *official* release. "They have beaten us in public without trial" protests Paul, "men who are Romans ... and now they are sending us away in secret? No indeed! But let them come themselves and *bring us out*". We are told the Roman authorities came and "*brought them out of prison*".

When Jesus was dead in the grave, he had been officially placed there by the Roman and Jewish authorities. He was their prisoner. They even set the soldiers there to guard the tomb. Jesus was dead and held by official Roman and Jewish decree.

But God reversed their judgment. God vindicated His Son. For God "*brought up*" from the dead Jesus and proclaimed him Lord Messiah. God sent forth His angel and removed the stone from the tomb. The Judge of all proclaimed in this act that this man was innocent and the prison doors of death must release him. "The God of peace brought up from the dead...Jesus our Lord".

Ps. 2 Why do the nations conspire,
and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and his anointed [Messiah] saying,
'Let us burst their bonds asunder,
and cast their cords from us.'

He who sits in the heavens laughs;
and the LORD has them in derision.

Then He will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
'I have set my king on Zion,
on my holy hill.'

(Now the response of the Lord's anointed)...

I will tell the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, 'You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron,
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the LORD with fear,
with trembling kiss his feet,
or He will be angry, and you will perish in the way;
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Happy are all who take refuge in him.

Conclusion: The key idea to rightly understanding the OT and the NT is to know that 'the Son of Man receives the kingdom'. The beast nations will be smashed by the stone descending from heaven. God hands over the kingdom to His Son until all the hostile powers are subdued by His duly appointed agent. God will sum up all things in Christ. And Messiah Jesus and his people will reign on the earth. And once this grand design is fulfilled "then the Son himself also will be subjected to the One [God] Who subjected all things to him, [so] that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

Daniel's vision will be fulfilled. "The saints of the Highest one will receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come".

Tom Wright: "The resurrection is neither an isolated and out-of-character divine 'miracle', nor simply the promise of eternal life beyond the grave. It is, rather, the decisive start of the world-wide rule of the Jewish Messiah, in which sins are already forgiven and the promise of the

eventual new world of justice and incorruptible life are assured." (*Surprised by Hope*, p.260).

George Eldon Ladd: "The New Testament does not merely picture the resurrection of Jesus as the resurrection of a corpse but as the emergence within time and space of a new order of life". (*A Theology of the New Testament*).

So, in conclusion:

The gospel invitation rings out loud and clear: God's new world is coming. The future kingdom is already here, but not quite! The old age still rumbles on unaware that it has been decisively invaded. God's future glory has already been hinted at, promised, unveiled in the risen Jesus Messiah. The party is about to begin! You are invited. "Whosoever will may come!" So, why not wake up now? Come alive to the real world, the world where Jesus is Lord! In the Spirit of God you can even now begin to taste it, enjoy it, see it by faith in God's unbreakable promise through Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour!