

45-08-06.wpd —The Gospel Hope of All Creation

Easter, resurrection, creation, humanity, body, God's image, temple

Romans 8:22-25

Human resurrection in Christ is the hope of the whole created universe.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)

–The bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ was not just a local event on Planet Earth. It was a cosmic event that reverberated throughout all of physical and spiritual creation. Yes, Easter celebration is especially full of hope for us: "*Hope beckons to a death-bound human race from the open doorway of Christ's empty tomb.*" **BUT our hope is not ours alone.**

–**HOM.idea.** Rom 8:19, The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. What is creation *anticipating*? What is it *waiting for*? What is this "eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed"? The answer is in what we, too, are waiting for: Rom 8:23b-24a, we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.

–Why is our human hope, this "*redemption of our bodies*" in resurrection, so connected to the rest of creation? Well, one reason is that....

I. Creation is Waiting for God's Human Temple

- A. What did Jesus say about His body?– John 2:19,21, Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." ... But the temple he had spoken of was his body.
 1. Poets often exalt nature as a temple, a *sanctuary of retreat from the chaotic world of humanity*. But nature has just the opposite idea: it longs for a human temple in which its Creator dwells.
 2. **A temple** is made from earthly materials as a place to meet with and worship the God who is beyond this world. The Tabernacle in the OT was the first structure that served this purpose.
 3. Notice how Christ's Incarnation is described in John 1:14, The Word became flesh and **made his dwelling** among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ["**made his dwelling**" is literally "*tabernacled*" or "*pitched his tent*"]
 4. BUT, although Christ, the Word, was God and Creator of all things, when He first showed up, creation didn't recognize Him– John 1:10, He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ("the world," the cosmos, could not recognize its Maker in His earthly temple until that temple was

manifested in the Resurrection, when He broke death's chains.

Creation had to hear this Gospel– Col 1:23b, ...This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven...).

- B. Our bodies are also temples of God – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. But creation can't recognize us yet as these temples. It is waiting for our physical resurrection in Christ, when the children of God will finally be "revealed."

TRANS: Creation knows its connection to us better than we know ours with it. We look at nature and say, "*God's country!*" But creation looks at us in anticipation of the full restoration of "*God's temple.*" Right now our temples wear out and die. Creation longs for a permanent human temple of God. That's why "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." **Our resurrection in Christ is the hope of all creation**, because it restores God's temple to the created order.

II. Creation is Waiting for God's Human Image

- A. God created us in His image as more than an artistic Self-portrait. He was establishing a new order of being in the universe, one that was a unity of both the spiritual and physical realms, a *body-spirit being* that would *look* and *act* like the Creator:
 1. Man was a visible bodily image of God. He was God's handmade representative to lead creation under *direct, divine guidance*.
 2. When humans fed on a "knowledge of right and wrong" that gave us moral independence from God, our cosmic leadership role was sabotaged. God's physical *image* was still visible, but our human spirit became disconnected from the Source of spiritual life.
- B. The 2nd Member of the Trinity became one of us in Jesus Christ, to restore that human image of God to the created order– Col 1:15, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (This is Good News not just for us, but for the entire created universe.)
 1. Satan tried to stop God's plan for His image back in Eden. Now he tries to keep lost humans from restoration in Christ– 2 Cor 4:4, The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2. Progress in the Christian life is measured in how much we are being renewed in His image– Col 3:9-10, Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

TRANS: A lying fallen angel got Adam & Eve distracted from seeing how they, in their physical bodies, represented their Creator. The first result of sin an attempt to hide those bodies. But truth has not changed. The older I get, the more I appreciate the human body, whether I see it in the hospital or in figurative art. It still displays God's glory, clothed in fig leaves or as naked as the day we were born. Why? Because it still bears His image, is still His holy temple. And it is in this bodily image and from this fleshly temple that God will bring all creation together under one eternal government. This that is why....

III. Creation is Waiting for God's Human King

- A. Our view of redemption becomes narrow when we get caught up in a Gnostic view that the body and the physical world are basically worthless and unnecessary. BUT...
1. In Christ's Resurrection, the dignity and destiny of human body-spirit beings are forever established!
 2. Through **His Incarnation,** He used the death of His physical body to reconcile to God not only us, but all things in creation.
 3. By bodily **Resurrection,** He established human supremacy over all the universe. This is what transformed the Divine Son of God forever into the Human King of kings and Lord of lords.
- B. This is the Gospel hope: a gospel preached to all creation, and all creation awaits its fulfillment at Christ's return.

CONCLUSION:

–**Human resurrection in Christ is the hope of the whole created universe.** Easter is the Sunday of Sundays, because every Sunday celebrates Christ's Resurrection. In that celebration of His Resurrection from the dead, we anticipate our own. That's the next event on the schedule of salvation history, and all creation eagerly waits for it..

– "HE IS RISEN!" (response) "HE IS RISEN!" (response)
 "HE IS RISEN!" (response) And because He is risen, "we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved."

Romans 8:22-25 (NIV)

22We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

23Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

24For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

25But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.