

46-15-08-Resurrection: the Human-Friendly Hope
 Easter, Resurrection, Incarnation, Cross, atonement, hope
 1 Cor 15:20
 Christ's bodily resurrection is the promise of our own.

INTRODUCTION: (Begin... "*Christ is risen!*" "**He is risen indeed!**")
 –**1 Cor 15:20**, *Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. This verse is not about the hope of an afterlife but the hope of reigning with Christ in new bodies. **HOM.idea.***
 – The Bible starts out as a very *human-friendly* story:
 • God created a beautiful world and, *from its soil*, formed us in His image to be *little creators*—capable of creatively working in it.
 • We were to "*cultivate the garden*"—adding human beauty to the creation.
 • He told us to "*name the animals*" [Parents give children pets, letting them name them.] *Naming animals* indicated our *friendly bond* with them.
 –This world was ***human-friendly***, not just because we were to rule it, but because we're made of the same stardust as the rest of the *cosmos*.
 –*However, something happened that was not human-friendly: death.*

- I. Death Is Humanity's Enemy**— **Rom 6:23a**, For the wages of sin is death...
- A. **God warned us about death**— **Gen 2:17**, "...you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."
 1. **Spirit + body = *human-friendly***; without *bodies*, we're *ghosts*; without *spirits*, we're *corpses*; neither state is *human-friendly*.
 2. **God married** our *spirits* to *flesh* for a grand destiny of creative leadership in the universe, but *death* brought about a *divorce*.
- B. **Sin is the real spiritual enemy**, breaking our *tie* with our Maker. **A life lived in *spiritual independence* from God is **not fully human!****
 1. We were to feed on "every word that came from the mouth of God," but we swallowed fruit that gave us *moral independence* from God.
 2. **God's reaction to this was *human-friendly***— **Gen 3:22**, ... the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." (Being "dead in trespasses and sins" is not the *purpose-filled* condition that God desired for human destiny.
 3. So, with *salvation in view*, God placed the entire cosmos under *new laws* of gradual decay and death (This *wasn't* His original plan, but a *necessary step* to restore us to our true humanity.)

[**1939 movie**, *On Borrowed Time*: Lionel Barrymore was keeping Death stuck up in a tree, because it was his time to go. A doctor begged that Death be let down, so suffering terminal patients could die. At last, the old man agreed, but only when his grandson was in need of Death to release him from pain.]

TRANS: God used death, creation's enemy, *to limit our fallen lifetimes and help us long for restoration*— Rom 8:20-21. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. As a good engineer, God created humanity with a preconceived remedial plan for system-failure, until the system could be *restored*. Even before creating us, because He omnisciently foresaw our future failure, God *planned for the Cross*.

II. Jesus Is Humanity's Redeemer— Rom 5:8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

A. The Cross is *a deep mystery that various theories try to explain as:*

1. A reversal of the Fall— Rom 5:19, For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Christ's life and death brought a dynamic defeat to death and a restoration of life.)
2. A strategic ransom— Mark 10:45. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Jesus died in our place in order to bust Hell's prison doors wide open.)
3. A moral example— 1 Pe 2:21. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (Jesus died so we'd follow Him in self-denial & cross-bearing.)
4. A debt payment— 1 Jo 2:2 (GW), He is the payment for our sins, and not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. (Only a sinless death could placate God by paying the debt created by our sins.)
5. A substitution— 2 Co 5:21. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (Christ took the wrath of God for our sin so we could receive His saving mercy.)

B. Each of these theories describes part of the mystery of the Cross, but none can *fully* explain it, for the same reason that nothing can fully explain the mystery of the Incarnation: God becoming human.

1. God has always been seeking lost humans, just as He did when hunting for Adam in the Garden, calling out, "Where are you?"
2. Finally, He took on human flesh to become the Good Shepherd,

seeking lost sheep all the way to the Cross— Isa 53:6. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

TRANS: While *atonement theories* are helpful, God doesn't expect us to fully fathom the mystery of the Cross. But He *calls us to trust in the work Christ did there to rescue us from spiritual death*. And He wants us to realize that Christ's bodily resurrection is the promise of ours.

III. Resurrection Is Humanity's Hope— 1 Cor 15:20, *Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*.

- A. [At work, while meditating on this sermon, I saw a book: *Smith's Recognizable Patterns of Human Malformation*: pages and pages of heart-rending photos of birth deformities.] Life is good, but often it can be human-unfriendly: diseases, disasters, dysfunctions, disabilities, decay, and death....
- B. We, and all creation, long for deliverance from these conditions— Rom 8:19, 22-23. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.... We know that 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*. (That's what creation is eagerly anticipating: the completion of our human salvation on Resurrection Day—Emancipation Day for the entire universe!)

CONCLUSION:

—“*But isn't it arrogant to think that creation can't be liberated until we get new bodies?*” **No!** [J.B. Phillips' book: *Your God is Too Small*. We need one called *Your Humanity is Too Small*.”] Creation's destiny is tied to that of its governing body, and that *body* is the resurrected Body of Christ.

—“*But isn't reincarnation human-friendly?*” **What!** Never again to see and embrace departed loved ones? Our personal identity lost over and over? Paying off *karma* for misdeeds we know nothing about? Again and again coming back to a human-unfriendly world? **I think not!**

—We were created to govern all worlds, cosmic and celestial. Sin upset that divine plan with spiritual and physical death. So, God became one of us to redeem us spiritually. **His resurrection is the promise of our own!** His glorified body is the prototype of a new humanity. In Him the future has already begun!... God's Son became *the Human King of the universe*, Lord over the whole creation, because: “**Christ is risen!**” [x3]