

A Victory of Resurrection

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Photo date and location unknown

"Good" Friday it is called the day the son of God was killed. Even on the very day it happened, the earth was rent with earthquakes, darkness covered the sky, and men knew that a wrong had been done.

Can you imagine the pain that gripped God's heart as He watched His son die, the only begotten son for whom He had been waiting 4,000 years? This son, moreover, had the special mission of saving not only the chosen nation but all the people of the world, so his death would mean the prolongation of mankind's suffering. God certainly did not want to see that happen. Try to feel how He must have felt that day and you, too, may wonder why it is called "Good" Friday.

And yet, at that point, God had to let it happen. Jesus had wept for his people: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" The Jewish people could not understand or accept him, and wanted to kill him. Even Jesus' three closest disciples did not understand the seriousness of his mission and slept while he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. That night, he told his Father, I don't want to die (he knew the suffering this would mean for his followers), but if it is Your will then I accept it.

The Sacrifice

God could not abandon His desire to save the whole of mankind and if that meant that He had to sacrifice His son, then that's the price that would have to be paid. But He knew that by doing this He could restore at least a partial victory over Satan's dominion. Satan brings death. God is the bearer of life. By bringing Jesus back to life and grafting mankind to the resurrected Jesus and giving them rebirth, God intended to save all mankind. "For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree." (Rom. 11:24)

We can see from the Bible that the Jesus who walked on earth for 40 days after his resurrection was not the same Jesus who had lived with his disciples before his crucifixion. He was a being transcendent of time and space, seen only with spiritual vision and not with man's physical eyes. He once suddenly appeared in a closed room where his disciples were gathered (John 20: 19), while in another instance he appeared before two disciples going to Emmaus, and accompanied them for a long distance without their recognizing him before disappearing suddenly after revealing himself. (Luke 24: 13-31)

During this period, Jesus laid the foundation for the spiritual salvation of mankind. He gathered together his disciples who had scattered, disheartened, upon his crucifixion, and gave them the power to perform miracles and signs. Through their believing, serving and following the resurrected Jesus they made it possible for all those who came after them to receive spiritual salvation and cleansing of their sins by believing and following the resurrected Jesus.

Joyous Easter

That is why Easter, even more than Christmas, should be celebrated with great thanksgiving and joy. If Christ had not risen and rallied the faith of his small band of disciples, there would have been no Christianity, no triumph over the forces of darkness which had propelled Jesus to the cross. As Reverend Moon said in his talk, *The New Future of Christianity*: "The victory of God was not in the cross but in the resurrection.... Our salvation comes from the victorious resurrection. This is the victory of Christ, over whom the power of Satan has no influence."

How does resurrection change men?

Resurrection means to come back to life. It is only because we once died that we need to come back to life. To know the true meaning of resurrection, we must understand the biblical concept of life and death.

Perhaps you too may have noticed at times an elderly person shuffling along, mouth in a thin line, eyes tired, face grey. Or youths hanging out on a street corner idly watching passing cars, faces expressionless. A middle class couple sits in a restaurant staring blankly at the walls, not talking to each other. Revelation 3:1 describes these people very well: "You have the name of being alive, and you are dead."

One of the disciples of Jesus said that he could not follow Jesus until he had first buried his father. Do you know what Jesus' reply was? "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." (Luke 9:60) What do these two passages mean?

"The perfect man," says Reverend Moon, "is created to be intoxicated in the love of God. There is nothing that can go beyond this feeling of joy. Every cell in your body will explode with joy. This is the *total experience* of life. We are meant to live with God. Life without God is like a burned-out electric bulb which cannot give out light. *A life without God is death.*"

What Is Death?

The dead people Jesus was referring to -- the ones who would be burying the dead father were cut off from this total experience of God's love. They were living under the dominion of Satan, separated from God, so in a true sense they were dead according to God's standard.

Genesis 2: 17 says that God, after creating Adam and Eve, told them not to eat of the fruit; if they ate it, that day they would surely die. Since Adam lived for 930 years, we can conclude that the death caused by the fall was not a physical death but the kind of death Jesus was talking about, the spiritual death caused by separation from God and coming under the control of Satan.

On the other hand, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26)

This does not mean that those who believe in Jesus will live eternally on earth in their physical bodies.

What it does mean is that their spirit will live forever in the bosom of God's love, even after they die physically.

Nothing in the material world lives forever and God did not intend that our bodies live forever, either. Why, otherwise, would He have created the invisible world to which our spirits go after completing physical life on earth? God had intended this invisible world as the dwelling place for us after we fulfill our purpose of creation -- perfecting ourselves in love so that we can be qualified to receive God's love eternally in the spirit world. Man became ignorant of this wonderful destiny after the fall. So he clings to his physical life like a caterpillar reluctant to leave his home in the earth, unaware that there is another new world after his death where he can enjoy fragrant flowers and sweet honey.

Resurrection, therefore, is not the coming to life in their original form of decomposed bodies. Nor is it an instantaneous transformation that occurs when we say we accept Christ. It is a day by day process. For example, a prison chaplain in Georgia commented, "Sometimes I get fooled about conversions. But the main way you can tell is to watch the prisoner over a period of time. A man's behavior pattern changes a lot of times and his disciplinary reports stop." In a sense we are the prisoners of Satan; God, watching over us, is checking us out to see if we are ready for parole. When we repent of our sins, making ourselves better day by day, we are coming closer to resurrection.

There are further examples in the Bible that show the true meaning of resurrection. We read in John 5:24, "... He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." This again confirms that resurrection means to return to God by believing in Jesus. Again, I Corinthians 15:22 says, "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The fall of Adam caused death for man. Through following Christ, we can return to God's side, the side of life.

Eternal Life

Jesus told us, "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it." (Luke 17:33) By this he meant that those who betray God's will by their actions during their lifetimes, motivated by a desire to preserve their life, these are the very ones who are dead, spiritually. On the other hand, those who sacrifice their lives for God, though they may lose their physical lives, will live in God's love through eternity.

This standard teaches us what we must do in order to be resurrected, in order to return to God. "If you are ready to die ahead of others, you will not die and you can save the world," Reverend Moon tells his followers. "But if you are like the disciples of Jesus who denied him upon his death, you will fall away and the whole world will be left unsaved. Jesus' disciples were in fear of Satan and they were overwhelmed by satanic power. What happened to Jesus? Satanic hands were upon him, but he died a physical death, not a spiritual death. If your spirit is not dead, if you have the same zeal and ardor upon your death, there is a way to be saved and resurrected again. If you are resolved to live for the cause and die for the cause, you are already being resurrected. You are transcending life and death. In that case you are on God's side and God is on your side, because God is also the Being transcendent of life and death."