

The Great Rebirth for Humanity

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[0 : 00] On the first day of the week at early dawn they went to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared and they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. When they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were perplexed about this behold two men stood by them in dazzling apparel and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground the men said to them why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here he is risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee that the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise. And they remembered his words and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.

But these words seemed to them like an idle tale and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb stooping and looking in he saw the linen cloths by themselves and he went home marveling at what had happened. Luke goes on in chapter 24 of his gospel to say this as they were talking about these things Jesus himself stood among them and he said to them peace be to you for they were startled and frightened and thought they saw spirit.

But he said to them why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your heart? See my hands and my feet that it is I myself touch me and see for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

And when he said this he showed them his hands and his feet and while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling he said to them have you anything here to eat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate before them.

[2 : 17] Then he said to them these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.

And then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Perhaps you turn with me in your Bibles now to the book of Acts and to Acts chapter 2.

And we're going to read part of that chapter now which is the apostle Peter's preaching about the resurrection of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Acts chapter 2 verse 22.

Peter says, Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know.

This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

[3 : 25] God raised him up loosing the pangs, the birth pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore, my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced.

My flesh also will dwell in hope for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life.

You will make me full of gladness with your presence. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption.

[4 : 41] This Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing that David did not ascend into the heavens but he himself says the Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified Do open your Bibles with me again at Acts chapter 2 and the passage that we read because I want to speak this Easter Sunday morning about the birth of the King of Kings

Yes, you heard me right. I'm not confused with Christmas time because the New Testament celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the birth at last of true humanity through the resurrection John in his vision in Revelation calls Jesus the firstborn from the dead the ruler of the kings of the earth Paul says to the Colossians he is the beginning he is the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent he is appointed by the resurrection says Paul in Romans chapter 1 the son of God in power human flesh at last born into eternal life showing this world at last true humanity for the first time since the transgression of Adam and Eve the resurrection of Jesus heralds the dawn of the new age it is the great rebirth of true humanity indeed it's the rebirth of the whole creation itself which is reborn from its bondage to death and decay through the triumph the resurrection of Jesus Christ so I want to look this Easter morning at three things that are alluded to in Peter's sermon here on the day of Pentecost that the resurrection of Jesus Christ brings to rebirth forever and they're all great themes that the whole new testament bears witness to repeatedly because we need to understand the full significance of the resurrection three great new births that we need to consider this Easter first of all Peter tells us that on Easter day the Christ is reborn from the dead the resurrection of Jesus the birth of God's true and indestructible firstborn son no longer a prisoner of the power of sin and death look at verse 24 here of Acts chapter 2

God raised up Jesus loosing the birth pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it Peter speaking about the resurrection of Jesus as the end of a painful labor that word pangs there is literally birth pangs it's translated labor pains in first Thessalonians 5 verse 4 birth pains in Revelation 12 verse 2 it's a word that Jesus uses in Matthew 25 to describe the last days to describe their turmoil as the beginning he says of the birth pains notice the beginning of the birth pains we'll come back to that later but let's be clear Peter is describing Jesus emerging from the tomb of death as a birth out of the womb of death and into life because the womb of death cannot hold him he's reborn out of death and into glorious eternal life it is a birth from the dead

Jesus' resurrection was the rebirth into glorious new creation life of God's firstborn son a glorious truly human son notice verse 22 the one who was crucified was a man the man Jesus of Nazareth and this same man this very Jesus verse 32 God raised up and exalted and made him says verse 36 both Lord and Christ that is a human being made in the image of God now truly rules the world as the king and as the heir of all creation as God's glorious son who was the first son of God well it was Adam Adam the son of God is what Luke calls him in his genealogy in chapter 3 he was made in God's image he was made to rule for God in glory but of course Adam rebelled and God lost his son because Adam brought the curse of death into the whole world the whole creation it was another disaster and yet the Bible story is clear isn't it

God did not abandon his world he made a promise that it would be rescued and renewed by a new Adam by a true man by the seed of the woman who would at last somehow reverse that curse destroy the serpent the enemy who deceived them and therefore destroy death and so again reign forever over God's world in praise and glory as a true son of God as the true image of God on this earth and Peter's saying that promise is now fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ he is exalted as both Lord and Christ the promised Messiah the king of the world God's true son in human flesh if you look at verses 34 to 36 there you'll see Peter's quoting from two psalms Psalm 110 and Psalm 2 both psalms about God's promised true son he quotes Psalm 110 explicitly here in verse 34 but implicitly he quotes Psalm 2 in verse 36 where he mentions both Lord and Christ that is the enthroned son of God who will rule the world and judge the world that Psalm 2 speaks about there's no shadow of doubt here about Peter's claim

[11 : 37] Jesus' resurrection is the birth from the dead of God's true and indestructible firstborn son the new Adam the new man who will rule this universe forever and ever and Paul affirms exactly the same thing actually later on in Acts chapter 13 in his very first sermon that's recorded he says there we bring to you good news that what God promised to the fathers this he has fulfilled to their children by raising Jesus as it is written about in the second psalm you are my son today I have begotten you and that's the gospel that's the good news of the apostles of Peter and Paul that at last God has a true son in his true image not subject any longer to the curse of death because he could not be held by death unlike all of Adam's offspring before you can read the tragic litany in Genesis chapter 5

Adam begets Seth and he died and he beget his son and he died and his son and he died and he died and he died and he died and they all died but this descendant verse 24 death could not hold him this is my beloved son and here at last is the true Adam the son of God with power over death God raised him up loosing the birth pangs of death death could not hold this man and that is the good news that's the gospel to tell this heralds the great rebirth this heralds mankind reborn in the Christ and his rebirth from the dead I wonder if you recall how Paul summarizes his gospel at the beginning of Romans chapter 1 this is the gospel he says promised beforehand in the scriptures concerning

God's son descended from David according to the flesh but appointed to be the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead this is the man Jesus appointed Lord of the world and Christ by his resurrection he was he was begotten as God's glorious son with power over sin and death ruler of all the worlds a new Adam at last one living in praise and honor and glory to God forever and Paul's whole gospel in that letter to the Romans it shows us that through this is the great renewal the great rebirth of the new age the age of Adam you see gives way to the age of the Christ the age of the flesh gives way to the age of the spirit Adam's age was the age of death death reigned through one man Adam but Christ's age is the age of new life of eternal life Christ being raised from the dead will never die again says Paul death has no longer any dominion over him because he's the son of God with power over death from his birth from the dead on Easter days the birth pangs of death were loosed forever death that could not hold him the Christ is reborn as a real man the firstborn of the new age the age of the spirit the age of eternal life and to see how important this bodily resurrection is people get very confused sometimes with this talk of of the spirit and the flesh in the Bible as though that was a contrast between something that was that was solid and bodily the flesh was something that's sort of wispy and and ghost-like and ethereal the spirit and so they can imagine the the afterlife some kind of shadowy experiences disembodied spirits that's what you get in Hollywood films isn't it films like ghost and so on no no no that is the absolute reverse of the truth of the real christian gospel it's the flesh life it's mortality as we know it that's the shadow life it's a mere pre-life it's the spirit life that's the reality the solid the substantial reality of life in all its true human fullness life as God purposed it to be that's what Jesus says is

C.S. Lewis put it so wonderfully didn't he in that phrase the shadow lands this world is the shadow lands it's the new world that is the world of full and glorious reality that's exactly what Paul tells the Corinthian church with the resurrection of the dead he says what sown that is in their earthly bodies is perishable but what is raised is imperishable it's sown in dishonor it's raised in glory it's sown in weakness it's raised in power it's sown a natural body it's raised a spiritual body you see from the earthly natural body to the spiritual heavenly body is a transformation from the perishable to the imperishable from the dishonor to the glory from the weakness to the real power from the pale shadow you could say to the solid reality from a pale black and white sketch to the glorious technicolor 3d movie and that's what we see in in Luke's account of

Jesus resurrection body that we read wait a minute you might say hang on how is that so because the risen Jesus seemed to pass through walls and pass through doors and he appears and he disappears that does sound like he's a ghost that does sound like he's less solid than before not so no Luke and John and all the other gospel writers are very clear Jesus is a solid body he can be touched they put their fingers in his wounds he can eat fish and chips well at least fish if he was in Glasgow he had fish and chips but he ate he's solid you see well how can he pass through walls and doors and things like that not because his body is less real and less solid than before but because he's more real and more solid how can you and I walk through air not because you're less dense than air but you're more dense than air how can you walk through water well it's because you're more solid than water and you see the risen Jesus the true man's body is more real it's more solid it's more lasting and substantial than even the most solid things on this earth like wooden doors or like rock-hewn tomb walls he is reborn as the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead into a new and solid and lasting and wonderfully solid humanity humanity and that's real humanity man who will never die again because he's not just from the earth a man of dust says Paul he is the second man he is from heaven and he's made now not just of mere dust but of the divine he's born of the spirit he's born from above and the everlasting life blood of God himself the life-giving spirit flows in him and flows from him and as is the man of heaven says Paul so also are those who are of heaven just as we have borne the image of the man of dust adam we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven you see how wonderful the bodily resurrection of Jesus really is it's not just that the resurrection assures us that the great rescue from sin on the cross was accomplished that Jesus has been vindicated by God and is declared just before the whole world it is that but it's more it shows us you see what God's true goal for human life was from the very beginning it shows us what true humanity really is like deathless life solid life real life life in all its fullness with Jesus and like Jesus the risen Jesus all because Christ is reborn from the dead and God at last has a true and indestructible firstborn human son no longer held bondage to the power of sin and death the risen conquering son of God reveals

[21 : 10] God's goal for human life in his rebirth through the resurrection from the dead but more than that you see it reveals God's goal for the whole world because in Jesus resurrection the creation is reborn from the dead the resurrection of Jesus heralds the birth of God's true and indestructible world a world no longer held prisoner to the power of sin and death death look at verse 16 there of uh of acts chapter 2 Peter begins his his pentecost sermon there by quoting uh from the prophet Joel and says this is what Joel was speaking about when he spoke about God pouring out his spirit on all flesh in the last days in the days of of wonder in the heavens and the earth as verse 19 says and that would culminate look at verse 20 in the great day of the Lord word and that's the prophet's language for the coming day of judgment the judgment of God the revelation of God's righteousness that is to judge and to punish all wrong and to set all things right to bring about the ultimate root renewal the recreation of this world and that was a day of new birth death and you birth through great judgment just like in the days of noah when the the old world was destroyed and a new world was born out of that womb of death of the old and that's the language that many of the prophets use speaking of these things they speak about rebirth listen to Isaiah on that day he will swallow up death forever the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces your dead shall live their bodies will rise you who dwell in the dust awake sing for joy for your dew is the dew of light and the earth will listen give birth to the dead dead isn't that striking that's Isaiah chapter 26 if you listen to later on in Isaiah 65 and 66 it's all about the new heavens and the new earth where death no longer reigns no more says Isaiah shall there be an infant who lives but a few days or an old man who does not fill out his days don't you long for that world especially if you have had to bury an infant who's lived just a few days or watched a parent or a spouse perhaps declining dying prematurely through cancer or some other thing don't you think the grieving families who are rocked by the the carnage of war in these present days long for those days days we all long for those days well says the prophet Isaiah that day is coming the birth of a world where there is no more alien intrusion of death where there is no more evil they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain says the lord because at last dust will be the serpent's food and that ancient serpent called the devil or satan will be crushed forever as god promised and therefore a whole new creation will be reborn listen to the language that Isaiah uses shall i bring all this to the point of birth and not bring forth says the lord shall i cause shall i who caused to bring forth shut the womb no everything that god promised will certainly come to pass he will give birth to a new heavens and a new earth which will remain forever and ever read those chapters in Isaiah later yourself you'll see

and that is what all this is about says peter on the day of pentecost because verse 32 this jesus god raised up and of that we are all witnesses and so all of this has at last begun the rebirth into resurrection glory and life for the christ is the beginning of the rebirth into resurrection glory for the whole creation you see why the bodily historical resurrection of jesus is so utterly central to everything for the whole world it's the guarantee it's the only guarantee that ultimately all the wrong and all the sin and all the injustice and all the evil in this world will be put right and that one day there will be real and permanent justice what a great comfort that is to those who have been terribly wronged those who have suffered in their lives terribly because of sin and evil because of easter we can trust that god will right all wrongs in this world he will make all things right and new what a comfort to all of us who live in this world under the curse and bondage to the decay and to the death that our bodies begin to feel all too readily jesus resurrection spells the beginning of the rebirth for the whole creation the beginning of a birth process that's what jesus himself says you can look it up later in matthew chapter 24 verse 8 where he's telling his followers about all the upheaval that there will be in the last times of this world the last days that were begun by his coming and will be until his final coming and jesus says all of these things are but the beginning of the birth pangs same word as here there'll be distress there'll be trouble there'll be terrible times in all of these days says paul but there'll be times through which the gospel of the kingdom of heaven must be proclaimed to all nations and jesus says only then the end will come only then will the new creation at last burst forth from this womb of death into the glorious rebirth and renewal of everlasting life and peace paul puts it this way in romans chapter 8 the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of god that is in new and everlasting bodily life notice he said not just the son of god but the sons of god for the creation was subject to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself would be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of god for we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth earth until now not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit we grown inwardly as we wait eagerly what for our adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies you see what he's saying is that only when all god's children are revealed are reborn in their resurrection as true sons of god never to die again only when we receive our full adoption our full sonship like jesus in our resurrection only then will the whole world be renewed and transformed why does the whole world have to wait for that well because god doesn't want an empty new creation

that's the tragic folly isn't it of some extreme environmentalists today they want to see mankind wiped out in order to save nature no god made the whole of nature as the theater for his glory to display his glory in human beings in those he is bringing to rebirth and to renewal in the image of his glorious son jesus christ who already is bodily raised from the dead the christ is raised and reborn and through him the whole creation will at last be reborn and renewed the christ is reborn from the dead through his resurrection the creation is being brought to rebirth and complete renewal forever through christ's resurrection but more than that the new testament tells us also that through the resurrection of jesus the church is reborn from the dead because the resurrection of jesus heralds the birth of god's true and indestructible family his people who are no longer held prisoner to the power of sin and death christ is the firstborn from the dead and he doesn't rise to inhabit an empty world a world devoid of other human beings no that's why it's so wrong to think of heaven as a place of sort of quiet solitude like desert island discs you know where you sit in your deck chair with your favorite music and your favorite book and nobody bothers you might be nice for a little while but that's not the picture the first adam wasn't created to be alone was he god made male and female so that it would multiply and fill this world and paul says that in romans 8 that jesus was raised to life in order that he might be the firstborn of many brothers says the same thing in first corinthians 15 listen as by a man that is the first adam came death by a man jesus has come the resurrection from the dead for as in adam all die so in christ shall all be made alive but this is important each in his own order christ the first fruits and then at his coming those who belong to him you see jesus is the firstborn among many brothers others who will also be reborn as true children of the resurrection age sons and daughters of the living god like the risen jesus he's the first fruits he's the first to enter the life of the age of the spirit as a glorious human being he's the one who inaugurates that new age for his whole church and that's what peter means here in acts chapter 2 verse 33 where he says that the exalted christ received from the father the promise of the holy spirit the spirit of life he received that himself then he pours out that spirit on his church but his church may also be reborn into eternal life it's jesus resurrection that means spiritual new birth from the dead for all in christ's church now it's jesus resurrection that gives us sure and certain hope of our bodily rebirth by resurrection when he comes again to reign just turn with me uh as we come to a close to to what peter says later on in first peter in his letter chapter 1 makes it very very clear and plain peter's writing to discourage believers persecuted

believers scattered throughout asia minor that's modern day turkey and they have many struggles and trials he's writing to encourage them in their life listen to what he says to them to encourage them to strengthen them verse 3 blessed be the god and father of our lord jesus christ according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of jesus christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled unfading kept in heaven for you who by god's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time you see what he's saying and you see why the resurrection is so central jesus resurrection wasn't just a new birth for him into the glory of eternal life it's a new birth for us into a certain hope of an inheritance that he says can never fade away it can't ever be lost it's been kept by god and peter says we have that pledge now because we are born again through jesus resurrection already although we'll only have our new bodies he says like jesus when jesus himself returns verse 7 he calls it the revelation of jesus christ we have new birth now by his resurrection we will have new bodies then at his return a sure and certain hope for jesus the resurrection was the end of his birth pangs and he arose his bodily his body was renewed and redeemed because he was in his resurrection fully adopted begotten as the son of god in power the firstborn of the resurrection but his resurrection begins our birth process our birth pangs that's why paul says we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons for the redemption of our bodies for our resurrection but just as jesus birth pangs of death were broken and death could not hold him so also surely and certainly it will be for us at the revelation of jesus ours is a certain hope it's a living hope if the spirit of him who raised jesus from the dead dwells in you says paul to the church in rome he who raised jesus from the dead then will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you as it was for jesus so shall it be for every one of his that's the certain hope that we have because jesus was raised from the dead bodily bodily that's why peter can say to these struggling christians these discouraged christians in verse 6 he can say you can rejoice amid all these different trials that you're suffering because we know that the resurrection of jesus christ has changed this world forever and it will change our personal world forever as well because we know that whatever suffering that we can go through now or will go through in the future no matter how hard it is how bitter it is how agonizing how prolonged those pangs of suffering and of death might be for you and for some people you know these painful pangs stalk them from the very earliest times in life don't they maybe with illness or disability or physical burdens or psychological burdens or sexual struggles

or emotional burdens or family pain or suffering the aftermath of abuse and there'll be burdens and pains right to the bitter end won't there but no matter how grievous these pangs may be the agonies of death we know that they're also the birth pangs and by them and through them often they're very bitter painful contractions aren't they but peter says here by god's grace we are obtaining the outcome of our faith the salvation of our souls because he has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of jesus christ from the dead that's the easter message it's all about a great rebirth into a glorious everlasting living hope the life that we see in jesus christ the firstborn god's truly faithful son but through him the firstborn the firstborn of many brothers it's about the rebirth into glory of his church of god's true family of everyone who loves and serves him and for them the rebirth of a whole creation a new world where where he will dwell forever with his people the resurrection of jesus christ is the great rebirth it's a great renewal of all things loosing the birth pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by death it's interesting isn't it how in many ways christmas has become so much a bigger thing than easter even in the church people focus so much on the earthly birth of jesus that's not wrong but the truth is that the apostles make more make much much much more of the second birth of jesus of his birth from the dead of his resurrection to life as the glorious firstborn from the dead god because he leads the way for everyone everyone who through him becomes sons of god sons of the resurrection actually the best christmas carols know that too don't they hail the heaven-born prince of peace hail the son of righteousness light and life to all he brings risen with healing in his wings born to raise the sons of earth born to give us second birth the message of christmas means nothing until it's fulfilled in the glorious message of easter easter is the promise of a great rebirth of the great rebirth the great renewal that is coming and the whole world will be reborn through the resurrection of jesus christ that's why today we sing hallelujah amen let's pray almighty god who through thine only begotten son jesus christ has overcome death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life we humbly beseech thee that by thy special grace enabling us let us put into our minds good desires so that by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect through jesus christ our lord who lives and reigns with thee and the holy spirit one god world without end

[41 : 23] amen