

THE GOSPEL OF THE RESURRECTION (I)

(What Good News!)

1 Corinthians 15:3,4

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..."

"Gospel" in Greek (*evangelion*) means "good news." Luke 2:10b says, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." The gospel of Jesus Christ is universal. It is for all people. Where is such good news of great joy in the world where bad news is overflowing? What is it? Let's read 1 Corinthians 15:3,4. "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..." In these verses, two facts--first, Christ died for our sins; second, he was raised on the third day are the contents of the gospel and the good news that will be for all people.

How can a person's death be good news of great joy for all the people? How can one person's death, which came to pass 2,000 years ago, be good news for you and for me? But the Bible says that it is good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Then why is the death of Christ good news? Look at verse 3b. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." According to God's promise, Jesus came to this world and died to solve man's sin problem.

What? Most people think sin is enjoyable! Why is Christ's death for man's sin such good news? Sin is not so enjoyable as they say. Sin is like a contagious disease. Romans 5:12 says, "...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin..." When one man, Adam, sinned, sin spread to all men.

Sin is not as enjoyable as they think. Sin is also fatal. Sin is like cancer. It spreads to the whole body until one dies in great pain. It is incurable. Sin is also like leprosy. It disfigures a man's body until he dies.

Not only this, but there are even more tragic consequences of sin. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This verse plainly tells us that all have sinned and all have a fatal destiny because of sin.

Sin (*hamartia*) means to separate or to cut. Sin cuts the relationship between God and man. Sin cuts between man and man. In Michelangelo's painting, "The Creation," God stretches out his open hand, but man cannot reach God's hand because of the gap. When God created the world, he established a paradise for man. But when man sinned, he lost paradise. When he lost paradise he lost everything, and had to live in a cursed world as a restless wanderer. Someone said, "The 20th century is the age of anxiety." But in reality, the age of anxiety has extended from Cain, who was overpowered by the power of sin and rebelled against God's word. As a result, he killed his lovely younger brother, went far away from God, and wandered around endlessly in fear and guilt with no rest. Sin brought curse upon man. Sin made man proud until he rebelled against God. Sin made man evil until he became a murderer.

As time passed, innumerable people have realized that man needs a paradise and have tried to establish a paradise in terms of a Utopia in many ways--philosophically, politically, and ideologically. But all of them have failed. They fall

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short of the glory of God.

Because of sin, man also lost the image of God. When God made man, he made him out of the dust of the ground and also made him in his own image. Therefore, man has two natures--an animal nature and God's nature. After God made man out of the dust of the ground, he put his breath in man. So man is a living being, a soul. Because of this, man is both body and soul.

When God made man in his image, he blessed him to grow from the animal level to the level of God. But man stopped growing. Not only that, he also gradually lost the image of God. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Here, the word "glory" has the connotation of the standard weight used in a scale or balance. When God saw man, created in God's image, one who should look like a heavenly prince, he looked like a tax collector. When God saw man, one who should look like a heavenly prince, he looked like a man with leprosy. When God saw man, one who should look like a heavenly prince, he looked like a Gerasene demoniac. When God saw man, one who should look like a heavenly prince, he looked like a monkey whose desires are for nothing but bananas. Sin disfigured man's image until he was too ugly to look at. Sin worsens man's desire until what he wants is too dirty and too petty to think of (Romans 1:22,23).

Sin also made man very sick with sin. There were so many ugly people that someone wrote a book called "Ugly Americans." There are so many angry people. There are so many restless people. There are so many ruthless people. These kinds of people reveal all symptoms of sinsickness.

That is not all. Romans 6:23a says, "the wages of sin is death." A wage is payment for whatever a man does, whether good or bad. All work without God comes

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only to death. Because of sin, man lost eternal life and has to die, after much toil and sweat. Most people think death is the end of everything. Their catchphrase is, "Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." They are fatalistic. They live their lives at random. They love themselves. But at the bottom of their hearts, they think that their lives are a joke, or a clown's play. But death is not the end of everything, as they think.

Hebrews 9:27 says, "...man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." To all men, death is a universal truth. Likewise, to all men, judgment is also a universal truth. Many people believe that God is love; they hate to believe the fact that God judges. But the judgment of God is inevitable. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." Christ judges people according to their life purposes and motives. Romans 2:6-9 says: "God 'will give to each person according to what he has done.' To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil."

After judgment, those who did evil will be put into eternal punishment. Revelation 21:8 says, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." The second death is spiritual death; this death is eternal punishment. It is interesting to note that the cowardly are number one on the list of those who go to hell.

Sin makes man miserable while he is in the body. Sin plunges a man into eternal punishment. This is bad news to all men.

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But Romans 6:23b says, "...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is the gift of God. The gift of God is eternal life. According to his promise God sent his one and only Son to the world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God sent his one and only Son Jesus as the Paschal Lamb to shed his precious blood and die for the sin of the world as a ransom sacrifice. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he exclaimed, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Christ died and shed his precious blood to pay off the demand of sin--lifeblood. Christ died on the cross so that he might bear all our curse (Gal 3:13). Christ was condemned by hanging on the cross like a criminal in our places, so that he might save us from the condemnation we had to receive. Through his death, we are redeemed from all the consequences of sin, especially from eternal punishment.

But if Jesus had died on the cross and not been raised again from the dead, it would be only another tragic story in the history of mankind. But God raised him from the dead. Acts 2:23,24 says, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

Why is the resurrection of Christ good news?

First, through the resurrection of Christ, God proves himself to be the Almighty God,

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who raised Christ from the dead. If God had not raised Jesus, he could not have proved himself to be a living God. But God raised Jesus from the dead and demonstrated that he is living.

Second, through the resurrection of Jesus, God gave us eternal victory. In the past, the power of sin, Satan, ruled man. All men stumbled before the power of death. No one could even challenge the power of sin, Satan. Before him all became fatalistic, and died. But through the resurrection of Jesus, the head of Satan is crushed. Only the vestige of his power is left in his flailing tail. In the past, man's life was an endless repetition of defeat and failure because of the power of sin. But now, since Satan's head is crushed, man can be victorious in the Risen Christ.

Third, through the resurrection of Jesus, God gave us a living hope, the kingdom of God. In the past, man had no hope because the things of the world all perish or fade away someday. In the past, man lived with false hopes as if they were a living hope. But through the resurrection of Christ, God restored his paradise for man. 1 Peter 1:3,4 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you...."

Through Jesus' resurrection, we were born again. It means that once we had hope in the world. But now we have hope in the kingdom of God. Once, living in this world we wanted to grab something in our hands that would perish, spoil or fade away. But now our inheritance is not something that spoils. The kingdom of God is our inheritance. The kingdom of God is our eternal home. There we reign forever with our Christ, the Lamb of God once slain for our sin (2 Tim 2:11,12). Therefore, we are happy to suffer with Christ while in the body.

"...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...." Jesus' death for our sin and his resurrection is good news of great joy that will be for all men.