DCF 170422 Easter Sunday **The Victory of the Resurrection**

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Easter Sunday is about the resurrection. It is about conquering the power and the fear of death. It is about salvation. It completely changes and corrects our perspective on death. The world is so bound in sin and darkness that it cannot see God, and it refuses to look for Him.

The western world has a perspective on time, so that we think and teach that the day begins in the morning and ends at night. This is a sad reflection of our perspective on life – so that we start young, supple, and full of energy and fade as we get older. This is the power of sin and death. ***Rom 5:12 … through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all me, because all sinned.***

But God’s perspective is the opposite. Right at the beginning of creation, the new day began at evening. ***Gen 1:5 So the evening and the morning were the first day.*** Our day begins in darkness, but morning comes, when the sun rises with brilliant light. ***Psalm 30:5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favour is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.*** Our daily walk with God begins with weakness, but grows deeper in strength. We face despair, only to experience His grace in understanding and hope. ***1 Peter 5:10 10But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*** We fall and are drowning in guilt, only to be forgiven and declared holy and blameless. ***Col 1:21 21And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight…***

The resurrection corrects our plans for the day. ***Eph 5:8*** ***For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*** ***9(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*** Just we warned, exposing the works of darkness will bring retaliation – even by church goers.

As believers celebrate Easter, we are enlivened by the huge victory – Jesus conquered death. The one seemingly unbeatable foe, was vanquished. And it was even infinitely bigger than that. Jesus died without any sin. Satan tried, pain, shame, scorn, agony, humiliation, abuse, and everything he could think of, so that Jesus would just sin once. Just the tinniest of sins would have lost the battle for God. The most excusable response, a curse, a swear word, a hateful remark was all that satan needed to disqualify salvation. But Jesus died without sin and we are rescued from hell.

***Heb 4:14 14Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

But we live out this victory as we do battle with the enemy daily. In our life we regularly engage in battle with fear, with uncertainty, with depression, with temptations in the flesh, and with things which go wrong. But the victory at Easter, reminds us that we must walk with Jesus. Jesus tells us: ***John 16:32 I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.***

But even knowing and anticipating his death and the resurrection, Jesus points His followers to the end of the age. In Matt 24 & 25,just before He is betrayed, Jesus teaches us about the Great Tribulation and His return. The resurrection of Jesus points us to a glorious future even after huge trials, persecution and martyrdom for some believers.

Matt 24:4-10 outlines the events of the 6 seals in Rev 6

***4And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.***

***SEAL 1 5For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.***

***SEAL 2 6And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.***

***SEALS 3 & 4 7For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.***

***SEAL 6 And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8All these are the beginning of sorrows.***

***SEAL 5 9“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. 10And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.***

When Jesus comes to give LIFE, He prepares us for the things to come. Parents do that for their children. We prepare our children for what is to come.

Now let us jump to the last chapter in Daniel. ***Dan 12:1 “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.***

When we read of the history of the Jews, it is remarkable that they have survived as a nation. But our God defines life. They were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC. It was rebuilt and destroyed again in 70 AD. The people were scattered for over 1800 years with huge persecution and hatred, which continues even today. But this time of trouble is even worse that all that has ever been. ***Matt 24:21 21For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.***

Michael is the high-ranking archangel who opposes Satan, and whose special task is to protect Israel. We too have angels assigned for our protection. But the final authority for our destiny lies with us. We choose whether to obey God or Satan. The resurrection is a picture of utter catastrophe turning into glory.

This time of trouble is the Great Tribulation which is described in the Revelation as the 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 bowls of wrath. The irrational hatred for the Jews is proof that satan is real.

*Dan 12:1* ***And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.*** God promises His people in Jer 30:22 ***You shall be My people and I will be your God.*** The covenant between God and His friend (2 Chron 20:7) Abraham stands. ***Gen 17:7 7And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”***

God has created people with the authority to choose their own destiny. Every person has theright to choose who they will serve; whether it be God or satan. So not all people will be saved – only those whose names are written in the book.

***Dan 12:2 2And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3Those who are wise shall shine******like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.***

We are given gumnuts and butterflies to understand that life has different dimensions.*.* We saw that in the homework to read 1 Cor 15:40. ***There are celestial bodies.*** We need to memorize this verse and pray desperately for the unsaved. Our prodigals and unsaved friends, are given to us, so that we speak out the gospel. The anguish of hell is forever. Our time on earth is limited. We catch a glimpse of ‘forever’, with some of the batterings of this life. But it is only a glimpse. Australia has celebrated the passing of sportsmen, heroes, many with zero understanding that we shall all pass ***some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.*** The word ‘many’ in v2 refers to the fact that billions will be woken from their sleep.

Jesus teaches two outcomes after death. ***John 5:28 28Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.***The resurrection demands we take eternity seriously.

**Everlasting contempt** describes hell. The world refuses to consider hell. Not only that, but they are offended by the truth that hell is real for unbelievers. They think the unsaved will enjoy pleasure forever. Some even think that a God of love would not punish forever. They refuse to know the God of the Bible. The punishment is eternal. The God we worship delights in judgement. ***Jer 9:24 That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord.***

We are so blessed to be taught about this judgement in the last book of the Bible.

***Rev 20:10 10The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.***

***11Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.***

The reward comes to the wise and those who turn people to righteousness. Wisdom is evidenced by the fear of God. If a person walks with God and listens to the Holy Spirit and reads the Bible, wisdom will grow. As wisdom grows, so does a determination to turn people to Jesus. What comes out of our mouth is proof of what is in our heart. Salvation is proved by our heart erupting into words of confession. ***Rom 10:8 “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***

***Dan 12:4 4“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”*** We live in the age when travel and the internet would have been unimaginable in the days of Daniel. The fastest direct flight from Australia to England is 18 hours and 31 minutes. The distance is 15,209 km. We all know, the phrase ‘Google it’. The availability of knowledge, for anything was unimaginable even 30 years ago. Talking about the day of the Lord, Zechariah describes warfare that would be unbelievable to the readers. ***Zech 14:13 Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet,  
Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths***. We now live in the age Daniel is referring to.

But this is the Easter message: ***And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.*** Easter declares to us that bodily death is not final. The body dies, but the spirit lives on. We are given a very finite time on earth, to find God.

Closing thought: ***1 Peter 2:9 9But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.***

This is the message of the gospel, proclaimed in the resurrection of the Son of God: Our focus is no longer on death, but now on life with God. Our aim is not to spend eternity in a place called heaven, but to spend eternity in the presence of our God and Saviour. If we think that heaven is somewhere we play golf or relax on the beach – we have missed it. At last, we are in the presence of God – forever. And that is infinite delight. This life on earth is filled with much pain, sorrow and trials. But when we go to glory, it will be so infinitely wonderful, that all our batterings will be forgotten. It is like grief, but the opposite of grief. When you lose someone really close to you, all your good and bad deeds do not matter at all. When we get to heaven all pain will disappear.

In the resurrection Jesus anchors our faith in victory. Jesus’ last act to prove that he was human, was a sip of sour wine. It was a slap in the face of satan, who might later proclaim, that Jesus was not a man, like us. ***John 19:28 28After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” 29Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. 30So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.***

The life of Jesus anchors our conviction that our days are not disposed to random luck, but rather to a Godly purpose. We must pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done”. The life and the death of the Son of God, establishes the truth that we have been put on earth for a purpose. ***Eph 2:10 10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*** We do not surrender to wishful thinking of the flesh, but our hope is now rock solid. ***Heb 6:19 19This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast…***

The resurrection of Jesus tells us that though the body will die, the spirit lives on***. Luke 23:46 46And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ” Having said this, He breathed His last.***

In your homework on Lev 23 and 1 Cor 15, you saw that today is the day to celebrate firstfruits. (Reshith). The winter was gone. New life had begun with the resurrection. Let our words and thoughts and actions, proclaim the life of God and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, in all we do, from now on. What are the firstfruits that begin today, in your life?

Final Hymn: And Can it Be

HW:

1 One of my many favourite songs: Joy comes in the morning.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mu0hu4odP-o>

2 Read Lev 23:4-14

After the Passover, came the special Sabbath, which was the Day of the First fruits. It came at the end of their winter, and signalled a time of new life which comes at spring. This was the day of the resurrection.

And 1 Cor 15:20-28

Paul makes this link in v23 – Christ the firstfruits. The resurrection “puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” v24. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” v26.

Read the rest of the chapter, it is a huge encouragement to abound in the work of the Lord - v58.

Be even more determined to bear fruit for God.

And can it be

1 And can it be that I should gain  
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain?  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! how can it be  
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

Refrain:  
Amazing love! how can it be  
That Thou, my God, should die for me!

2 'Tis mystery all! Th'Immortal dies!  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine!  
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more. [Refrain]

3 He left His Father's throne above,  
So free, so infinite His grace;  
Emptied Himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam's helpless race;  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;  
For, O my God, it found out me. [Refrain]

4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth and followed Thee. [Refrain]

5 No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own. [Refrain]

Amen.