

### **THE FATHER OF THE RESURRECTION**

*God raised this man Jesus to life, and of that we are all witnesses. Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit. (Acts 2:32-33)*

Do we see the resurrection – or the entire Paschal Mystery - as saying very much about the Fatherhood of God? Jesus had taught about the Fatherhood of God a lot – many would say it is central to his proclamation of the Kingdom – and he claimed a special relationship with God, calling him his father in a unique way. The Jewish leaders were well aware of this and saw it as blasphemy – that is, as a real insult to what they understood to be the real nature of God. They took up this claim of Jesus and hurled it back at him as abuse and mockery as he hung on the cross. “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He has put his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say ‘I am God’s son’.(Mt 27:42-43)”. They mocked the divinity of Jesus – not just the claims of Jesus to be divine – but they also mocked the divine fatherhood of God – and show how little they understand it, even if they think it is God they really defend and whose honour they uphold. (See John 8 for a previous encounter along these lines.)



**For God does save Jesus –except that he does so after he has died on the cross and not before. This is even more awesome! Just as Jesus performed a greater miracle by waiting until Lazarus was dead (Jn 11) before raising him not just from sickness but death itself, so did God so act here in the case of Jesus. Jesus led people to appreciate his own divinity more by the delay in saving Lazarus and God revealed more of the nature of his Fatherly love, power and wisdom by the delay in raising Jesus. How? Why?**

**Jesus always knew he could save himself from death (Jn 10:18) or ask his Father for legions of angels (Mt 26:53). Jesus chose to leave us a heroic example of love, forgiveness, forbearance, constancy and courage in the face of hostility, pain and death. He suffered violence rather than inflict it. He chose to stay true to his principles and to act in consistency with his teaching in the face of all the forces of hatred and evil that could be mustered against him. In this he gave extra depth and credibility to aspects of his teachings and to the strength of his convictions. But did this add extra evidence to his claims to be divine or just establish him as a courageous and morally upright martyr? Does the Father's silence and apparent inactivity in not saving him from death show that, whatever is noble about Jesus, his teaching about his relationship to God was delusional?**

**In fact, the opposite is the case. In not immediately destroying those who were crucifying Jesus in some act of violent Divine vengeance, the Father shows his own abhorrence of violence and his own capacity and will to 'absorb' violence rather than use it. The silence from Heaven speaks more of the Father's patience and forgiveness for sinners, again in complete harmony with Jesus. And did not the pierced heart of Jesus reveal a Father whose heart is also pierced by our sin and rejection of his great love in giving us his only Son?**

**In all this we see a union of the Son – Jesus on the cross – and the Father – the God in whom Jesus trusts, who is also the God the Jewish leaders (ironically) think ought to act to save Jesus if he is really God's son. Jesus and God – the eternal Son and the eternal Father - were co-operating fully and harmoniously in this act. Both were committed to end the power of sin and the cycle of violence that perpetuates it. In the first place this means not using it. They ended it by saving us without resorting to it. They restored life, established justice, offered mercy and defeated evil without sinning in any way or actively using sinful, violent means other than in how they cope with and transform them as recipients or victims.**

**The Father does then raise Jesus from the dead but it is not revenge. Nor is it a big public act, or a demonstration to 'shock and awe' and cow people into trembling submission. It is quiet, originally silent. The appearances of Jesus seek to gently foster faith in those whose trust has been crushed and to offer forgiveness to those who feel guilty because they betrayed or abandoned him to varying degrees. Jesus seeks to build up, not to tear down; to heal, not to wound. It is an act of reconciliation. It is totally appropriate that Jesus greets the apostles with the word "Peace be with you! (Jn 20:20)." Peace is a very rich word but, amongst other blessings it points to, it spoke directly to their troubled minds, guilty consciences and broken hearts. Jesus brings not only his own peace but that of God his Father. In his resurrection, he**

announces and reveals to them the Father's love in a new depth and he touches them with it. "Find my brothers and tell them I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God (Jn 20:17)." He takes them up into that relationship with God as Father in a new depth and intimacy.

He thus shows God to be the Father of Peace and he who establishes our reconciliation with God. No wonder that in Peter's first sermon – the first of the church – he confidently names God as Father! He urged people to be reconciled with God. In this he was exercising a mandate that Jesus made clear comes straight from the Divine Father. "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you. ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain any one's sins, they are retained (John 20:21, 23)."

This reconciliation is not just a victory outside time or for the end of time, but one that can operate now, inside time and space. In the resurrection, God - Father and Son - has established a new order and way of living: a way of righteousness and peace - a way made possible by the Power of the Holy Spirit released to us by the Risen and Ascended Lord Jesus. This peace establishes us too as sons of God and brothers of Jesus. We can pray "Abba! Father!" We can be caught up anew, often to our surprise, into the life of God that Jesus preached. We can now see it, experience it directly, not just from the testimony of others. And this reconciliation is personal but also public, wanting to permeate all of reality. This is the fuller meaning of the peace that the Risen Jesus announces. Such is the peace that our non-violent Father God establishes by generously giving us his Son (Jn 3:15) and then, with great forgiveness, but in all righteousness, raising him from the dead. Filled with the power of the Risen Lord, we are called to be ministers of this reconciliation. To do it well we need to grasp the quality and scope of our Father's love, have it in our hearts, live it out and offer it to others. Do we?

© Andrew Brookes / COSMAC

COSMAC, Gospel Seeds: 07/04. [www.cosmac.net](http://www.cosmac.net) Email: info@cosmac.net

*(This may be reproduced for free distribution if authorship / copyright are noted.)*