

Daniels Windows Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2020

*<sup>4</sup>As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – <sup>5</sup>you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10*

Dear friends,

Imagine today being the day after the first Easter Day. The world was blind to what had happened, and even had you been one of Jesus' disciples, you still wouldn't really understand (you'd have to wait another 50 days for that to begin, with the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost). But, despite the world's and your ignorance, yesterday, everything changed. It was the beginning of re-creation, the start of the outworking of God's promise through Isaiah: *I will create new heavens and a new earth (65:17).*

When Jesus walked out of the tomb, his resurrected, bare feet moving through the dawn dew on the grass, I cannot help but wonder whether his memory took him to another garden, long, long ago, when it was his pleasure to be found *walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8).*

The Resurrection of Jesus guaranteed our salvation by demonstrating that the Cross truly had conquered sin and death. Paul tells us that *God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).* Jesus was made sin! For us! Paul also tells us that *the wages of sin is death ... (Romans 6:23).* In other words, had the Cross not worked, Jesus would have remained dead ... an ex-Messiah, so to speak. But because the Cross worked, the grave could not hold him, and so Paul can complete that verse with the triumphant words, ... *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

But the Resurrection is about more than individual salvation: it also signals that Jesus has won a decisive victory over every scheme of the Evil One, and that Eden will one day be restored, as God unveils a new heaven and a new earth. As C.S. Lewis puts it in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, 'death itself [has started] working backwards.'

This is why Paul proclaims that *if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17).* Just as Jesus, as he walked from the tomb, flexing his now immortal muscles, was *the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20),* so each new believer is both promise and foretaste of an entirely restored Cosmos.

I mentioned last week that sacrifice and priesthood are reimagined through the lens and in the power of Resurrection. In the New Testament, the word 'priest' has only 3 references. One is to the Jewish priesthood; another is to Jesus as high priest *in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6)* – it is just about conceivable that I might one day do a Daniel's Windows on Melchizedek ... but I wouldn't hold your breath. And the third reference is to you and to me. We, and all who put their faith in Jesus, *like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)*

*We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that [we] may declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9)*

Unlike the priests of the old covenant, we do not sacrifice animals. Instead, we minister to God in the living temple of our own bodies, through our praise and worship, through our lives offered up in the service of others, through our pursuit of his kingdom and its righteousness.

So let us, as the Lord's Easter people, respond to Paul's urging:

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2*

As always, this comes with my love and prayers

Paul