

The Resurrector



Recently I posted an article on the facebook group Club Theo < and a member quoted me, writing:

Hi Will, I like what you said here:

“The resurrection can thus be seen the Father’s act to honour the son’s act of self-sacrifice – and to bring not only Christ, but all those he counts as “his” – into a place of new life and authority.”

What verses/ideas did this flow out of? I’d not heard it put this way before, but it rings true to me. (perhaps a new discussion is now born??)

Well, here’s some thoughts-on-the-fly and a bit of a biblical cherry-pick. I would like, at some point, to do this properly, dip into the greek etc., but for now I’ll do what time allows.

There’s two points to make:

1. That the resurrection is primarily the act of the Father.
2. The act of the Father is, at least to some degree, a *response* to Christ’s act on the cross.

If these two points are true then we have an insight into that wonderful phrase (hinted in an entry in my Connections blog): “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom 4:25).

So here goes:

There are lots and lots of places where Jesus foretells the resurrection in the passive – e.g. “...until the Son of Man is raised” (Mt 17:9). See also Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 26:32; Mk 14:28; Lk 9:22. And also after the resurrection the simple descriptions are also in the passive – “He has been raised from the dead” (Mt 28:7). See also Mk 16:6; Lk 24:6; Jn 2:22; Jn 21:14. The implication is that the Father, or at least “God” is the active participant in the resurrection.

In Acts we have many similar simple descriptions – but we also start seeing some *reason* being ascribed. Consider:

Acts 2:23-24 – 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 because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”

Although the reason for the “impossibility” for the hold of death is not given, there is at least a sense that God’s action to raise Christ was a right thing to do, not an arbitrary thing to do. [For further consideration: implications of the quote from Psalm 16 in Acts 2:25-28, it is quoted again in Acts 13:34-35 where the “reason” for the resurrection is related to a fulfillment of covenantal promise]

The Pauline epistles, especially Romans, also use the passive “raised” and Paul is quick to apply the resurrection to us as *part* of the justification process:

Romans 6:4 – “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Romans 8 is probably my favourite chapter in Scripture and contains the wonderfully trinitarian reference to “the

Spirit", "the Spirit of God" "the Spirit of Christ" and "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom 8:9-11). Galatians 1:1 specifies, explicitly, that it is the Father who is the "raiser."

In the letter to the Hebrews we, once again, see some reason/cause or purpose to the Father's actions:

Hebrews 2:9 – "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

In the end (and I've probably missed a whole heap of passages – so feel free to point them out to me), I think this famous passage sums it up:

Philippians 2:8-9 – "... he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name..."

In this well-known "hymn" the cross and it's death is an act of the Son's self-sacrifice and obedience – and the resurrection is an act of God – who "exalted" him and a response "therefore." [For further consideration – exact nature of the "therefore" in the greek.]

Perhaps I can conclude with something of a blessing:

Heb 13:20-21 – May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleaseing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen

