

A Panoramic View of the GOSPEL of JOHN

by Ron Kangas

In this second installment of what is expected to be a four-part series of essays, I will continue my attempt to present a view of the astounding panorama of the divine revelation in the Gospel of John, a profound and mysterious book. The basic thought of this Gospel, as delineated in the previous article, concerns Christ's coming to us in His incarnation and His going to God the Father through death and resurrection in order to bring us into God for the producing of the Father's house—a mutual dwelling place for the Triune God and His redeemed, regenerated tripartite people. This basic thought is embedded in the structure of the book with its two sections. The first section consists of chapters 1 through 12, and the second section, of chapters 14 through 21. (Chapter 13 is the turning point between the two sections.) The first section reveals that Christ the Son came from the Father and with the Father through incarnation to bring God into us; the second section reveals that Christ went to the Father through death and resurrection to bring us into God. The result of this coming and going is a spiritual, divine-human building, the Father's house, as the corporate expression of the Triune God in redeemed humanity. If we have the proper understanding of this central thought, we will have the right perspective from which to see a panoramic view of the Gospel of John.

In the foregoing installment we saw that the theme of life and building is intrinsically related to the basic thought of this book. Christ Himself is life (11:25; 14:6)—the divine, eternal, uncreated, indestructible life of God—and He came that we might have this life abundantly (10:10). The Son gives us life (5:21), and, in resurrection, He lives in us as our life (14:19). The purpose of this life, as portrayed in chapter 2, is to build the house of God, the Father's house (14:2), God's corporate dwelling place, the church, the Body of Christ. This house, the mutual dwelling place of God and redeemed human beings in Christ, is the fulfillment of the desire of God's heart. God's desire and deep longing for this mutual abode can be satisfied only by the church, the house of the living God, built in Christ with the believers in Christ on earth in this age and consummating in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and on the new earth for eternity. As a book devoted to life and building—to life as the content of God and to building as the corporate expression of God—the Gospel of John is focused on God's intention to have a mutual abode with His redeemed people.

It was with this in view that the Lord Jesus died on the cross for our redemption and for the release of the divine life (1:29; 12:24). The Lord's death, therefore, has two main aspects: the redeeming aspect and the life-releasing aspect. In the redeeming aspect of His death, the Lord Jesus died as the Lamb of God and as a serpent in form to fulfill the type of the bronze serpent (3:14). In the life-releasing aspect, He died as a grain of wheat, falling into the ground to die and thereby bringing forth many grains. These two aspects of Christ's death are wonderfully portrayed by the signs of the blood and the water in 19:34: "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water." The spiritual significance of this merits careful consideration. "Blood is for redemption, to deal with sins (1:29; Heb. 9:22) for the purchasing of the church (Acts 20:28). Water is for imparting life, to deal with death (12:24; 3:14-15) for

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the producing of the church (Eph. 5:29-30)” (Recovery Version, John 19:34, note 1). In its redeeming aspect, the Lord’s death took away our sins; this is the significance of His death on the negative side. In its life-releasing aspect, the Lord’s death released the divine life from within Him so that we could receive this life by believing into Him (3:15-16); this is the significance of His death on the positive side. The fact that the blood preceded the water indicates that the redemptive aspect of the Lord’s death is for the life-releasing aspect and that the life-releasing aspect is based upon the redemptive aspect. Both aspects of the death of the Lord Jesus are for God’s building, the Father’s house. The life that He released through His death, which is the life that we have received by believing into Him, is the resurrection life, and in this life we can be built together into the church, the Body of Christ, the house of the living God. It is fitting, therefore, that we now turn to the crucial matter of the resurrection in the Gospel of John, considering its various aspects both in revelation and in spiritual experience.

“In three days I will raise it up”—2:19

Explicitly and implicitly, the theme of resurrection flows through the Gospel of John from chapter 2 through chapter 21. John 2 reveals that the principle of life—changing death into life—and the purpose of life—building the house of God—are both related intrinsically to resurrection, as indicated by *the third day* (v. 1) and *in three days* (v. 19). The third day is the day of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4; Acts 10:40; Luke 24:21), and the expression *in three days* refers to something that takes place in resurrection. Christ’s changing water into wine (John 2:9) is a sign, that is, a symbol with spiritual significance. Here water signifies death (cf. Gen. 1:2, 6; Exo. 14:21; Matt. 3:16), and wine signifies life; thus, changing water into wine, as the beginning of the signs performed by the Lord Jesus (John 2:11), signifies changing death into life eternal. Such a change is possible only through the power of resurrection life, which conquers death, delivers us from the pain of death, and even, in our spiritual experience, changes our death (Eph. 2:1, 5) into life (John 5:25).

This marvelous change is not an end in itself; rather, it is for the purpose of building the house of God, the church. When the Lord Jesus first spoke concerning His church, He declared, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). *The gates of Hades* refers to the satanic power of death, which will attack the genuine church built by Christ but will not prevail against it. For death to be unable to vanquish the church indicates that the church is a corporate being, an organic entity, in resurrection, for although death conquers everything and everyone, it is powerless against resurrection life.

The church in Matthew 16 is the enlarged, resurrected temple in John 2. In response to the request for a sign (v. 18), the Lord Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). He was referring, of course, not to the physical temple in Jerusalem “built in forty-six years” (v. 20) but to “the temple of His body” (v. 21). After “He was raised from the dead, His disciple remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken” (v. 22). Christ, the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9), the One who by incarnation had become God’s tabernacle (John 1:14), regarded the temple in Jerusalem (2:14) as a sign of His physical body, revealing thereby that in actuality the temple, the Father’s house, was not a place but a person indwelt by God the Father (14:10). Although “this temple,” the temple of the Lord’s physical body, would be destroyed through His death on the cross, “in three days”—in resurrection—He would raise it and by doing so would bring into being His Body—the organic, mystical, corporate Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23). Now in Christ’s resurrection the temple of God, the Father’s house, is a marvelous organism that includes Christ the Head and all His believers, regenerated by God in His resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3), as the members. Because Paul had a profound spiritual understanding of the Body of Christ and the temple of God, he could tell us that the

church is the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15) and that corporately the believers are the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16). The existence of this organism is based on the fact that in and through His resurrection, the Lord's physical body—the temple—was reared up on a vastly larger scale and became the mystical Body of Christ, the Father's house with many abodes unveiled in John 14. Therefore, Christ in His resurrection rebuilt God's temple, enlarging it and making it a corporate temple.

The Lord's word in 2:19 was actually a prophecy concerning His death and resurrection, and in this prophecy He revealed that He would rebuild the temple, God's house, in resurrection. This rebuilding of the temple in resurrection was to be an enlargement of God's house, as indicated by the fact that when Christ was resurrected, all the believers, who are the members of His Body, were resurrected with Him (Eph. 2:5). The rebuilding and enlargement of the house of God prophesied in John 2:19 is fulfilled in 14:2, where the Lord speaks of the Father's house with its many abodes. "Through Christ's death and resurrection, the body of Christ has increased to be His corporate Body, which is the church, including all His believers, who have been regenerated through His resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). In Christ's resurrection the church is the Body of Christ, which is the house of God" (Recovery Version, John 14:2, note 1). The signs in John 2 are intrinsically related to resurrection. In the light of these signs, we can now see that, according to the principle of life, the Lord, by resurrection, changes death into life in order to fulfill, in resurrection, the purpose of God—to build up the church as the Body of Christ and the house of God.

"The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God"—5:25

Changing water into wine, signifying changing death into life, was the beginning of signs recorded in the Gospel of John, which is a book of signs. According to the principle of first mention in the Bible, the first sign in John sets forth the principle of all the signs in this Gospel—to change death into life. With this in view, we can readily see that the enlivening of the impotent man was also a case of changing death into life, that is, an instance of resurrection.

On the Sabbath day, contrary to religious prohibitions, the Lord Jesus enlivened an impotent man, saying to him, "Rise, take up your mat and walk" (v. 8). He performed this miracle not on His own but in oneness with the Father. "My Father is working until now," He testifies, "and I also am working" (v. 17), for He and the Father are one (10:30). In keeping with the principle of the God-man living—a human being living the divine life in the human life for the expression of God—the Son never did anything from Himself (5:30). "The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner," for "the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing" (vv. 19-20). Thus, the Son's enlivening of an impotent man on the Sabbath day was also the Father's enlivening of him. That this enlivening was an instance of resurrection is proved by the Lord's word in verse 21: "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wills." This is a demonstration of the organic relationship between the Father and the Son unveiled in verse 26: "Just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son to also have life in Himself." As a result, whoever hears the Lord's word and believes the Father who sent Him has eternal life and has "passed out of death into life" (v. 24).

To pass out of death into life, that is, to experience the changing of death into eternal life, is to experience resurrection. Verse 25 confirms this: "Truly, truly, I say to you, An hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." *The dead* here are the living dead, those who, according to Ephesians 2:1-5 and Colossians 2:13, are dead in their spirit. In the sight of God, fallen human beings are dead in their spirit and need to be resurrected in spirit by hearing



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the voice of the Son of God through the preaching of the gospel and by being enlivened, regenerated in spirit (John 3:6). This is the experience of every genuine child of God (1:12-13).

From the time that the Lord spoke these words until the present, thousands and thousands of people have heard the living voice of the Son of God and have been enlivened with life. We also have heard the living word of the Lord and have been made alive...The Lord came to visit us, and we heard the living word of the gospel that enlivened us and made us alive. We have truly passed out of death and have entered into life. (Lee, *John* 173)

In addition to this spiritual resurrection, the resurrection in the spirit through regeneration, John 5 speaks of two kinds of physical resurrection—the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment (vv. 28-29). In contrast to verse 25, which says that “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God,” verse 28 says that “all in the tombs will hear His voice.” “In the tombs” refers to those are dead physically and buried. Their coming forth in resurrection (v. 29) is the resurrection not of the spirit but of the physical body. “The resurrection of life” denotes the resurrection of the believers, which will take place before the millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6; 1 Cor. 15:23, 52; 1 Thes. 4:16). In this resurrection the believers will be resurrected to enjoy eternal life; thus, it is designated as the resurrection of life. “The resurrection of judgment” denotes the resurrection of the unbeliever, which will occur after the millennium (Rev. 20:5, 12). In this resurrection the unbelievers will be judged by the Lord at the great white throne (vv. 11-15); thus, it is called the resurrection of judgment. It is absolutely of God’s sovereign mercy that we, who were dead, have heard the voice of the Son of God, have passed out of death into life, and anticipate the resurrection of life.

“I lay down My life that I may take it again”—10:17

In John 10 we have a revelation of Christ as the good Shepherd, who came that His sheep may have the eternal, divine life and have it abundantly (v. 10). “I am the good Shepherd,” He says in verse 11, and “the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” Significantly, in verses 10 and 11 two different Greek words are used for the word *life*: in verse 10 *zoe* denotes the divine life, the eternal, uncreated, indestructible life of God; in verse 11 *psuche*, referring to the soul or the soul-life, denotes the Lord’s human life, which He laid down for His sheep:

As a man, the Lord has the *psuche* life, the human life, and as God, He has the *zoe* life, the divine life. He laid down His soul, His *psuche* life, His human life, to accomplish redemption for His sheep (vv. 15, 17-18) that they may share His *zoe* life, His divine life (v. 10b), the eternal life (v. 28), by which they can be formed into one flock under Himself as the one Shepherd. (Recovery Version, note 1)

Verses 17 and 18 allude to the Lord’s resurrection. “I lay down My life [*psuche*] that I may take it again” (v. 17). In verse 18 He goes on to say, “No one takes it [referring to *life—psuche*] away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again.” The expression *take it again* points to His resurrection and indicates that, as God, He could raise Himself up from the dead. (In His status as a man, He was raised up, resurrected by God—Acts 2:32; 3:15). When He laid down His human life for the redemption of His sheep, He shed His efficacious blood and released the divine life (John 19:34). Then in and through His resurrection, He imparted, dispensed, the released divine life into them, constituting them into the one flock, the church, the unique Body of Christ brought forth in resurrection. Now there is “one flock, one Shepherd,” and both the flock and the Shepherd are in resurrection.

Christ as the good Shepherd leads His sheep out of the religious fold into Himself as

the pasture (10:9). Having taken up His life by resurrecting from the dead and having simultaneously produced the one flock of God, the Lord in resurrection and as resurrection (11:25) is the pasture as the feeding place for His sheep. Precious light is cast upon this by the well-known words of Psalm 23:2: “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” This Psalm is a portrait of Christ in resurrection shepherding His sheep through five stages: the stage of feeding on Christ as the green pastures and drinking the Spirit, the stage of restoring our soul and guiding us on the paths of righteousness, the stage of experiencing His pneumatic presence as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, the stage of enjoying a feast in the presence of our adversaries, and finally, the stage of enjoying the divine goodness and lovingkindness in the house of the Lord. Every stage, from the green pastures to the house of the Lord is an experience of Christ’s shepherding in resurrection. The color green signifies the riches of life—the resurrection life which, as in John 2, is for God’s building, His house, the church. Once we were spiritually dead, but we have heard the voice of the Son of God, we have passed out of death into life, and now as the flock we are in the resurrected Christ as the green pastures and under the shepherding care of the resurrected Christ as we enjoy the riches of resurrection life and advance, stage by stage, to God’s goal.

“I am the resurrection and the life”—11:25

We have pointed out that the first sign performed by the Lord Jesus sets forth the principle of life, which is to change death into life. The first of the nine cases of human need recorded in chapters 3 through 11 is a case of regeneration, of being born of the Spirit in our spirit to have eternal life. The last case involves the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead—an actual instance of changing death into life. As every reader of the Gospel of John knows, it is in relation to the raising of Lazarus that the Lord Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection and the life,” revealing that, contrary to Martha’s supposition, resurrection is a person—Christ Himself—and not merely a future event.

The expectation of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus surely was that the Lord, upon receiving the report of Lazarus’s illness, would act immediately and perhaps miraculously prevent him from dying. The Lord, however, wanted to manifest Himself not as the God of prevention but as the God of resurrection, and for this reason, after hearing that Lazarus was sick, “He remained at that time in place where He was for two days” (11:6). He waited until Lazarus had died, and then He decided to go into Judea again, telling His bewildered disciples, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going that I may wake him out of sleep” (v. 11). Upon His arrival in Bethany, Martha went out to meet Him and said to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died” (v. 21). Later Mary expressed the same opinion and uttered the same words (v. 32). Their hope had been the prevention of death; the Lord’s burden was, by the manifestation of Himself as the resurrection and the life, to change death into life.

Eventually, every earnest seeker of the Lord needs to know Him in this way. Understandably, in times of loss and anguish, we desperately long for the Lord to intervene and prevent the encroachment of death, and sometimes He does this. However, the time will come for us all when there will be no miracle, no healing, no intervention, and no prevention. Instead, there will be the seeming indifference of God and the apparent victory of death, leaving us grief-stricken. That is the time to know the Lord as the God of resurrection, as the One who, in His person as the God-man, is resurrection itself and to experience Him as the God who raises the dead. At least in a limited measure, we may know God in the way Paul knew Him and “base our confidence” on “God, who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9).

According to the context of John 11 and 12, the goal of the manifestation of Christ as resurrection and of changing death into life is the producing of the church. In 12:1-11, therefore, we have a sweet, lovely, endearing miniature of the church life in



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resurrection. As usual, Martha was serving; however, her function was neither according to her natural ability nor motivated by anxious care, as in Luke 10:38-42, but was in the resurrection life of Christ (John 12:2). Lazarus also was present, reclining at table with the Lord as a testimony to the reality of resurrection. Furthermore, Mary once again expressed her deep love for the Lord in a costly way (Luke 10:39, 42). She “took a pound of ointment, of very valuable pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment” (John 12:3). This is the genuine church life brought forth in resurrection. What a delightful scene!

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”—12:23

What we have in John 12 is not only a portrait of the church life in resurrection but also a profound revelation of resurrection in relation to the glorification and reproduction of Christ. Christ’s resurrection was His glorification. Concerning this, the Lord Jesus asked the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer and enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26). Here He was referring to His resurrection (v. 46), which brought Him into glory. Like the seed of Paul’s illustration in 1 Corinthians 15, Christ was “raised in glory” (v. 43), and thus His resurrected body is called “the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:21), for it is a body saturated with God’s glory. In Peter’s words, God “glorified His Servant Jesus” by raising Him from the dead (Acts 3:13).

In the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus not only anticipated His glorification through resurrection but also prayed for it. In 12:23 He said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” In 13:31-32 He spoke again of glorification: “Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. If God has been glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and He will glorify Him immediately.” The element of the divine glory was concealed within the shell of His humanity, and according to His remarkable utterance in Luke 12:50, He longed that “His unlimited and infinite divine being with His divine life might be released from His flesh” (Recovery Version, note 2). He realized that the only way for Him, the Son of Man, to be glorified was for Him to die and be resurrected and thereby have the divine element released from within the shell of the humanity He had put on through incarnation. Thus, in John 17:1 He prayed for His glorification: “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You.” He continued His prayer by speaking of the glory which He had with the Father “before the world was” (v. 5). Before His death on the cross for redemption and for the release of the divine life, He asked the Father to glorify Him with this same divine glory:

This is the subject of the Lord’s prayer in this chapter. He was God incarnated in the flesh, and His flesh was a tabernacle in which God could dwell on earth (1:14). His divine element was confined in His humanity, just as God’s shekinah glory had been concealed within the tabernacle. Once, on the mountain of transfiguration, His divine element was released from within His flesh and expressed in glory, being seen by the three disciples (Matt. 17:1-4; John 1:14). But then it was concealed again in His flesh. Before this prayer He predicted that He would be glorified and that the Father would be glorified in Him (12:23; 13:31-32). Now He was about to pass through death so that the concealing shell of His humanity might be broken and His divine element, His divine life, might be released. Also, he would resurrect that He might uplift His humanity into the divine element and that His divine element might be expressed, with the result that His entire being, His divinity and His humanity, would be glorified. (Recovery Version, 17:1, note 1)

The Father answered the Son’s prayer by raising Him from the dead. In Paul’s words, “Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father” (Rom. 6:4). His resurrection was His glorification.

“If it dies, it bears much fruit”—12:24

Christ's resurrection also involved His reproduction and multiplication. Christ has a reproduction of Himself in resurrection, and in this reproduction, this multiplication, He is a grain of wheat. Immediately after He declared that the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified, He said, “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (v. 24). Here the Lord indicated that He, as a grain of wheat, would fall into the ground and die, releasing the divine life from within Him, and be resurrected in order to produce many grains as His reproduction, multiplication, and propagation for the producing of the church as the enlargement of the miniature in Bethany into the Father's house, the Body of Christ. Because the Lord Jesus did not want to abide alone as the unique God-man, He died to release the divine life to produce many grains in His resurrection. The life that was released by crucifixion was imparted in resurrection to produce the increase of Christ (3:30), His multiplication for His corporate expression. In His resurrection He accomplished a great work to have Himself multiplied from one grain—the unique God-man—into many grains—the many God-men. As the context of chapters 12 through 17, and especially 12:23-24, makes clear, by being multiplied in this way He was glorified. His multiplication was His glorification. This unveils the intimate and intrinsic relationship between Christ's resurrection and His reproduction and multiplication.

This implies deification—the believers becoming God in life, nature, and expression but not in the Godhead nor as an object of worship. Of course, we become God not in ourselves but only in our organic union, our life union, with Christ. When He was resurrected, we were in Him and thus were resurrected with Him and were regenerated, born of God, at that time (Eph. 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:3). In His resurrection Christ imparted the divine life into us and in so doing made us the same as He is in life and nature. Are the many grains not the same in life and nature as the original, single grain? To be sure, the original grain that fell into the ground and died and the many grains produced in the resurrection of the original grain are the same in life and nature. Otherwise, the many grains could not be the reproduction and multiplication of the original. As a grain of wheat, Christ was the God-man—God who has become a man. As the many grains, we are the God-men—men who have become God. As the reproduction of the first God-man, we are the same as He is in life, nature, and expression but not in His Godhead. As such, we are not only His reproduction but also His glorification, for His glorious expression.

“Where I am you also may be”—14:3

In His resurrection the Lord Jesus has brought us where He is—in the Father. Through His resurrection Christ brings us into God. This simple statement embodies a profound, divine thought. Although it may come as a surprise to most readers of the Gospel of John, *where* is a crucial word in this book. To the unbelieving religionists the Lord Jesus said, “Where I am, you cannot come” (7:34). Puzzled and darkened in their understanding, they could only ask, “What is the word which He said...where I am, you cannot come?” (v. 36). To the Pharisees He said, “I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going” (8:14), and He continued by telling them, “Where I am going, you cannot come” (v. 21). His word to the disciples, mercifully, was different. “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be” (12:26). Later Peter asked Him where He was going, and the Lord replied, “Where I go you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later” (13:36). *Now* refers to the time when the Lord was present with the disciples in the stage of His incarnation; *later* refers to after His death and resurrection. This prepares us to receive the Lord's word in 14:3: “If I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be.” His word in verses 10 and 11 reveals where He is: “I am in the Father.” Since the Lord is in the Father, for the disciples to be where He is, is for them to be in the Father.



In His resurrection Christ imparted the divine life into us and made us the same as He is in life and nature. As the reproduction of the first God-man, we are the same as He is in life, nature, and expression but not in His Godhead.





Christ went through death and came through resurrection in order to be in us. Whereas the Christ in flesh could be among us, the resurrection Christ—the pneumatic Christ, Christ as the life-giving Spirit—can be in us.



Where is not a place—it is a person. After He spoke to the disciples about their being where He is, He prayed for this: “That they also may be with Me where I am” (17:24). This prayer was fulfilled on the day of His resurrection, for on that day the disciples, in virtue of their being in Christ the Son, were brought into God the Father. This marvelous reality they would not merely believe but *know*: “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you” (14:20). *That day* refers to the day of the Lord’s resurrection (20:19), and on that day they would know that by being in the Son, they would be in the Father. By His death on the cross the Lord Jesus cleared away all obstacles to our being in God, and by His resurrection He brought us into God. Now we are where He is—in the Father.

Hopefully, we can now appreciate the preciousness of the Lord’s word “where I am you also may be.” The Lord’s word here does not mean that He is in heaven and that at His coming we will be raptured to be in heaven with Him. The Lord is in the Father, and it is His desire, as the expression of the Father’s intent, that we would be with Him where He is, that is, in the Father. Through His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus has brought the believers into Himself. Since He is in the Father and we are in Him, we are in the Father by being in Him. Through the Lord as the way to the Father (v. 6), we are now in the Father. In resurrection His word has been fulfilled: where He is, we also are.

At this juncture it is appropriate to point out that here, once again, we see the basic thought of the Gospel of John related to incarnation and resurrection. John’s record shows us how God in Christ comes into us and lives in us, and then, in Christ, how God brings us into Himself and enables us to live in Him. By His coming through incarnation, He brought God into man, and by His going through death and resurrection, He brought man into God. This has nothing to do with heaven—a place—but it has everything to do with God—a person. The notion of going to heaven is inconsistent with the entire context of the Gospel of John, and such a concept must be abandoned as contrary to the divine revelation in the Scriptures. God does not want to bring us into heaven—He wants to bring Himself into us and to bring us into Himself to produce a mutual abode for the Triune God and His redeemed and regenerated people. This mutual abode is God’s building, the Father’s house.

“He abides with you and shall be in you”—14:17

The Lord was resurrected not only that we might be in Him but also that He might be in us. In His incarnation the Lord Jesus was among us but not yet in us. “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (1:14). However, as 6:56 and 17:23 make clear, the Lord’s intention was not to remain among us or with us but to be in us. In 6:56 He said, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.” The phrase *in him* is crucial, for it indicates that the Lord would be resurrected in order to abide in us as our life and life supply. In 17:23 He prayed for this indwelling: “I in them, and You [Father] in Me.” The Lord knew that He could be in us after He passed through death and entered into resurrection. Only in resurrection could the One who was among the disciples come into them and live in them.

Through incarnation the Lord Jesus came to be *with* us. According to His word in chapter 14, He went through death and came through resurrection in order to be *in* us. Whereas the Christ in flesh could be among us, the resurrection Christ—the pneumatic Christ, Christ as the life-giving Spirit—can be in us. The Lord spoke of this in verses 17 and 18. Referring to another Comforter, the Spirit of reality, He said, “You know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you” (v. 17). In the following verse He said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.” Then, in verse 20, which mentions “that day” (the day of resurrection) He said, “I in you.” He can now be in us because, in resurrection, He is the Spirit. A careful examination of verses 17 and 18 substantiates this claim. “The very ‘He’ who is the Spirit of reality in this verse

becomes the very 'I' who is the Lord Himself in v. 18. This means that the Christ who was in the flesh went through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ. First Corinthians 15:45 confirms this" (Recovery Version, v. 17, note 2). Now we live because He lives in us. After His resurrection, the Lord lives in His believers, and they live by Him. With Paul in Galatians 2:20, we can testify, "Christ lives in me." The Christ who was with us is now the Christ who is in us; this marvelous reality is an issue of the resurrection of Christ.

"I ascend to My Father"—20:17

On the day of His resurrection, early in the morning, the Lord Jesus ascended secretly to the Father for His satisfaction. The freshness of His resurrection, as the fulfillment of the type of the firstfruits, which were brought first to God, was for the Father's enjoyment. From this we see that one aspect of Christ's work in His resurrection was to rise up to be the firstfruits presented to God for His satisfaction. The Feast of the Firstfruits signifies the resurrected Christ. Leviticus 23:10 and 11 say, "When you come into the land which I am giving you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah for your acceptance; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." Christ was crucified at the time of the Feast of the Passover (Mark 14:12), and on the day after the Sabbath (John 20:1), the third day (1 Cor. 15:4), He was resurrected. The waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits before God for acceptance signifies that Christ was resurrected that we might be justified before God and accepted by Him. As Romans 4:25 says, He "was raised for our justification." Christ's resurrection, therefore, was the fulfillment of the Feast of the Firstfruits and is the reality of that feast.

In 1 Corinthians 15, a chapter devoted to resurrection, Paul twice speaks of Christ as the firstfruits. Verse 20 says, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." Because "in Christ all will be made alive" (v. 22), Paul goes on to say, "But each in his own order: the firstfruits, Christ; then those who are Christ's at His coming" (v. 23). As the first One raised from the dead, Christ is the firstfruits of resurrection:

This was typified by the firstfruits...in Lev. 23:10-11, which were offered to God on the day after the Sabbath, the day of resurrection (Matt. 28:1). Christ as the firstfruits of resurrection is the Firstborn from among the dead that He might be the Head of the Body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:20-23). Since He, the Head of the Body, has been resurrected, we, the Body, also will be resurrected. (Recovery Version, 1 Cor. 15:20, note 2)

"On the first day of the week"—20:1

It is significant that the Lord Jesus was resurrected not on the last day of the week but on the first day of the week, which denotes a new beginning. He died during one week, and He resurrected at the beginning of another week. This indicates that His resurrection was a new beginning opening the way to a new age. The fact that Christ arose on the first day of the week indicates that the entire universe had a new beginning in His resurrection, for one aspect of His work in resurrection was to germinate the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). In the sight of God, the entire old creation was crucified with Christ and buried with Him. We went into the tomb with something of the old creation (the linen cloths and the handkerchief—John 20:6-7), signifying that the old creation was brought into the tomb by His burial. Although the Lord Jesus was crucified with the old creation and buried with it, He resurrected from within it, leaving it in the tomb and germinating the new creation. Hence, the first day of the week signifies the beginning of a new creation.

There is a crucial difference between the old creation and the new creation. Although



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the old creation came into being by the power of God, it does not contain the element of God's life and nature. The new creation, by contrast, has the divine life and the divine nature. Actually, the new creation is not the physical universe; the new creation consists of the believers, the children of God who have been born of God to have the life and nature of God. Now in Christ we are a new creation with the life and nature of God. We became a new creation through regeneration, and we were regenerated in Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). On the first day of the week, when the Lord Jesus resurrected, we became a new creation regenerated by the Spirit in the resurrection of Christ.

“Go to My brothers”—20:17

As the new creation, we are the Lord's brothers. In His work in His resurrection Christ caused us to be regenerated by God, for God “has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). To be regenerated is to be born of the Spirit in our spirit and thereby to receive another life in addition to our created, natural, human life—the life of God, the eternal, uncreated life that makes us genuine children of God. Regeneration enlivens us with God's life and brings us into a life relationship, an organic union, with Christ and in Christ as the life-giving Spirit. From God's perspective, which transcends time, we were regenerated when Christ was resurrected, because we were in Him and resurrected with Him. In His resurrection He imparted the divine life into us, making us the same as He is in life and nature.

This is the basis for the revelation in Hebrews 2:11-12: “Both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, ‘I will declare Your name to My brothers.’” The Sanctifier, Christ as the firstborn Son of God, and those who are being sanctified, are out of the same source, God the Father, having been born of the Father in Christ's resurrection. Since the Sanctifier and the sanctified both have the divine life and nature, He is not ashamed to call them brothers, and on the day of His resurrection He declared the Father's name to them:

After passing through His redeeming death, Christ entered into the church-producing resurrection. It was in His resurrection that Christ called His disciples His brothers (John 20:17; Matt. 28:10; Heb. 2:11), for in God's eternal view His disciples were regenerated and became God's sons in Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). In His resurrection Christ Himself was begotten to be God's firstborn Son ([Psa.] 2:7; Acts 13:33) and became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), and all God's chosen and redeemed people were regenerated to be the many sons of God, the many brothers of Christ (Heb. 2:10-12; Rom. 8:29). (Recovery Version, Psa. 22:22, note 1)

If we have a clear view of this in mind, we can understand the tremendous significance of the Lord's word to Mary in John 20:17: “Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.” Before His resurrection, He had referred to His disciples as friends (15:14-15) but not as brothers. However, after He had been resurrected and had caused His believers to be regenerated by the Father in resurrection, He began to call them “brothers.” And we are indeed the Lord's brothers. He has the divine life and nature, and so do we. He is divinely human, and we are humanly divine. He is of the Father as the unique source, and we also are of this source. He is the Son of God—the only begotten Son in the Godhead and the firstborn Son in God's economy—and we also are sons of God. Now the Lord with His brothers, the firstborn Son with the many sons, are the corporate expression of God:

He was the Father's only Son, the Father's individual expression. Through His death and resurrection the Father's only begotten became the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). His many brothers are the many sons of God and are the church (Heb. 2:10-12), a corporate expression of God the Father in the Son. This is God's ultimate intention. The

many brothers are the propagation of the Father's life and the multiplication of the Son in the divine life. (Recovery Version, John 20:17, note 2)

The resurrected Christ not only referred to His disciples as His brothers but also spoke of "My Father and your Father" and of "My God and your God" (v. 17). This clearly reveals that by His marvelous work in His resurrection He has made the believers the same as He is in life, nature, and position. We share His life, nature, and position through our union with Him produced by our believing into Him (3:15-16). We have not only believed in the Son of God; we have also believed into Him, and thus, as branches in Christ as the true vine (15:1, 5), we enjoy an organic union with Him. "To believe into Christ is to have our being merged into His that we two may be one organically" (Recovery Version, Phil. 1:29, note 1). In this union, His experience is our experience, and His Father is our Father:

Through His life-imparting death and resurrection, the Lord made His disciples one with Him. Therefore, His Father is the Father of His disciples, and His God is the God of His disciples. In His resurrection they have the Father's life and God's divine nature, just as He has. In making them His brothers, He has imparted the Father's life and God's divine nature into them. By making His Father and His God theirs, He has brought them into His position—the position of the Son—before the Father and God. Thus, in life and nature inwardly and in position outwardly they are the same as the Lord, with whom they have been united. (Recovery Version, John 20:17, note 3)

By the sovereign grace of God the Father, we have been drawn to the Son (6:44), we have come to the Son, and we have believed into the Son. Now, having the Son of God, in whom is life, we have the life—the eternal life, the life of God (1 John 5:11-12). As those who have believed into the Son to be one with Him in an organic union, what should we do? The Gospel of John specifies two main things: abide in Him and follow Him. It is of God that we are in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30), and now we should abide, remain, in Him experientially by being one spirit with Him (6:17). Christ is the true vine (John 15:1), and we are branches in Him (vv. 2, 5), actual organic parts of Him, sharing all that He is and participating in all that He has accomplished. As we abide in Him, His peace becomes our peace (14:27), His love becomes our love (15:9-10), His joy is in us, and our joy is made full (v. 11).

Only when we abide in Him by living in the organic union with Him can we truly follow Him, enjoying His invisible presence (21:19, 22). We follow Him not objectively but subjectively, because He is our life. We follow Him not outwardly but inwardly, because He lives in us as the Spirit of reality (14:17). In following Him as the indwelling, pneumatic Christ, we love Him more than our own life. "He who loves His soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life" (12:25). By losing our soul-life through our abiding in Him, we enjoy eternal life in resurrection. This is to serve Him by following Him: "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be" (v. 26a). He is the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died to bring forth many grains in His resurrection. As the grains produced by Him and who are one with Him, we live as He lived in this world, losing our soul-life and gaining resurrection life. In this way, His God-man life is repeated in us. If we live such a life in Him, serving Him by following Him into a life-releasing death, He assures us that we will be where He is—in resurrection, in God, in glory, and in the Father's house, the Body of Christ, our home and the eternal dwelling place of the Triune God. "To Him be the glory in the church" (Eph. 3:21). **AC**

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