### “God Raised Him Up” Steve Finlan for The First Church, Apr. 23, 2023

**1 Peter 1:20–23**

20He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. 21Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

22 Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. 23You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

**Acts 2:14, 22–24, 36–41**

14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. . . 22Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you . . . 23 you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. 24But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. . . 36Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” 38Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him. . .” 41So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

We read about high and cosmic things and about practical things, here, about the pre-existence of Christ, and learning to make love central in our lives, about God vindicating Christ, and offering forgiveness to us.

I like that first line in Peter’s letter: “He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake” (1 Peter 1:20). It was always part of God’s plan that the Son of God would incarnate and live a full human life, as a revelation to all humanity. The cosmic Christ was destined to become that surprising and compelling human being, Jesus of Nazareth. The Divine lived a human life here on earth.

Does Jesus inspire us in our daily lives? Peter thinks so: “Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God” (1:21). So the cosmic Christ is the same one who has shaped your trust and hope in God. The Divine walked among us, and now he enters into your life.

Your knowledge of God is greatly deepened by studying Jesus’ life. That is part of what I mean by calling his whole life a revelation. It changed and continues to change people’s lives. And the clearest way that it can change people is that it can give them a sense of purpose, a strong attachment to truth, and an ability to love. Peter writes “Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart” (1:22). He says you are “born anew . . . through the . . . enduring word of God” (1:23). Peter is giving a summary of Christian living here. He talks of the destined Christ, the Word of God, and of the Christ who enters into believers’ lives and teaches them to love. I am drawing attention to the link between the powerful, heavenly Christ, and the down-to-earth Christ who helps us in our lives.

We get the same dual viewpoint in Acts, of high spiritual truths and down-to-earth spiritual help. Jesus is the man of God and the Messiah, and through him we get the forgiveness of sins and the receipt of the Holy Spirit. Let’s look at that odd remark in verse 24, that “it was impossible for him to be held in [death’s] power.” Why was it impossible? Because Divinity, Godly quality, cannot be held in death’s power. Death is something that happens to plants, animals, and humans in the material world, but Jesus is the actual source of life in the material world.

As it says in Colossians, “for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). The Gospel of John makes the same point more briefly: “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (John 1:3). Hebrews is also brief: “in these last days [God] has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds” (Heb 1:2).

Jesus is the world-creator. We don’t know how many worlds he has created, but it is apparently more than just this one. As the world-creator, he is certainly beyond the power of death, and of other things that happen within the realm he created. It almost seems like an understatement when Peter then says that he is both Lord and Messiah (v. 36). Of course he is, and much more!

Our Creator, the Son of God, is also the source of the forgiveness of sins. Further, through him we are able to receive the Holy Spirit. Again we see that he is the cosmic Christ, and also the near and present Savior who gives us what we most need spiritually. He is the creator of worlds, but, more intimately, he is the forgiver of sins and the giver of the Spirit. The Spirit can become life-directive for you, can help you make important decisions in your life, can guide you to the right or to the left (Isa 30:21), when you are making choices.

So, we find that the cosmic Christ is also the intimate Savior. The Son of God was destined from before the foundation of the world to come and live a life here; by learning about his life you have come to trust in God, and have been taught to love one another deeply from the heart. Through him you have received forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

I would say that a study of his life has led me to trust in God. It’s not just abstract truths, but truths that sink down into my life and change it, that really matter. If you believe Jesus is Lord and Savior, then you have found your true *spiritual* parent, and you are not a lost child, but a forgiven one. Trusting in the risen one, you can be guided by the Spirit, and allow the Spirit to make changes in your life.

May your heart be warmed as you read the Scriptures, and whenever you reflect upon Jesus. The promise is for you, it says, and for your children, and for all who are far away, too. This makes me think of the Ukrainians trying to survive and to think of Jesus in this week that follows Orthodox Easter.