

# Resurrection of Our Lord, Old Testament, Year C

IT HAS NEVER BEEN LIKE THIS BEFORE!

Isaiah 65:17-25

The Resurrection of Our Lord/Easter Sunday

Analysis by Steven E. Albertin

17For I am about to create new heavens  
and a new earth;  
the former things shall not be remembered  
or come to mind.

18But be glad and rejoice forever  
in what I am creating;  
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,  
and its people as a delight.

19I will rejoice in Jerusalem,  
and delight in my people;  
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,  
or the cry of distress.

20No more shall there be in it  
an infant that lives but a few days,  
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;  
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,  
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered  
accursed.

21They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22They shall not build and another inhabit;  
they shall not plant and another eat;  
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,  
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23They shall not labor in vain,

or bear children for calamity;  
for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD –  
and their descendants as well.

24 Before they call I will answer,  
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,  
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;  
but the serpent – its food shall be dust!  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
says the LORD.

DIAGNOSIS: The Same Old Same Old

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Same Old Problems  
Judah has returned home from Exile. The nation was filled with hope but reality has come crashing down. Even though this text is bursting with joy and hope, lurking behind the prophet's words is a bleak and disappointing world. The prophet recognizes that even though Judah was thrilled to return, not much has changed. It is the same old world with the same old problems. Not only is Jerusalem still in ruin, but children die too young. The old die disappointed that their lives did not accomplish what they had hoped to do (v. 20). People build their own homes only to have them snatched away by someone else (v. 22). They plant and harvest their own crops but then are unable to eat them, perhaps stolen by thief or an unjust economy (v. 21). Hard work is unrewarded. Children suffer (v. 23). Even their prayers pleading to God for help seem to go unheeded (v. 24). It is a land riddled with conflict as the powerful prey on the weak like the wolf pounces on the lamb and the lion devours the ox (v. 25).

Our world is filled with the same problems. Life has not changed. It is still the same old same old. Just take your pick

from the daily headlines. You will simply see modern versions of the same evils and injustices faced by the returning exiles.

#### Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Same Old Attitudes

Faced with such a bleak and forbidding world, you can sense the broken hearts and suffocating grief lurking behind the prophet's words of promise. The prophet tries to boost the people's attitude because he can see their depression and disappointment. "The sound of weeping" and "the cry of distress" (v. 19) come from people who have little hope in the future or in God. Their misery is like a bad memory they cannot forget (v. 17).

#### Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Same Old Results

With Jerusalem, their lives, and their hearts lying in rubble, their greatest fear lurks behind the blessing of this text. Not only are their lives in vain, but so is their eternal destiny. God has not delighted in them (v. 18) but despised them. Their lives are not prosperous but headed for calamity (v. 23). Their return is no blessing but only another curse (v. 20) dumped on them by the God who does not seem finished with making them pay for their sin. Nothing has changed. It has resulted in the same old damnable fate. Returning from exile is not much different from what they experienced when they went into exile.

#### PROGNOSIS: New and Never Before

#### Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): New Results

In the midst of such grief and despair, the prophet delights in launching a joyous proclamation of hope. God will not abandon his prize creation. God is determined to save his people no matter what it costs, even if it means starting all over again with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (v. 17). With a burst of vivid images, the prophet describes a world with decidedly different results. In that world, life is blessed and

disappointment has disappeared. Unilaterally God reverses the judgment and curse and instead rejoices and delights in Judah (v. 18). In this new and unprecedented action, God chooses not to remember Judah's failures and disobedience of the past (v. 17). Injustices are righted (vv. 21-22). Untimely deaths are eliminated (v. 20). Labor will be fulfilling (v. 23). It almost seems as if the prophet is describing a time when the world will return to the blissful perfection of Eden where the wolf, the lamb, the lion and the ox no longer live in fear but live together in playful cooperation. Even the dreaded serpent is put in its place (v. 25).

The prophet's fantastic vision of the future did not dissipate into some utopian dream never to be remembered again. The Book of Revelation (21:1) recalls these words of the prophet when it describes the new creation that has been established by the Lamb, Jesus. According to the seer, the prophet's vision has been fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With death destroyed and the curse broken, it is no longer the same old same old. God has broken the endless cycle and gotten new results. "They (all that threatens and discourages God's people) shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain" (v. 25).

#### Step 5: Advance Prognosis (Internal Solution): New Attitudes

With the fulfillment of the prophet's vision and Jesus raised from the dead, God's people get to have a whole new attitude. Instead of grief and tears, there is hope and joy (v. 18). Instead of resignation to the same old same old, there is confidence in a new world that is already taking shape in the ministry of the church. Even before doubt and disappointment can chip away at these new attitudes, God answers the yearnings of his people (v. 24).

#### Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): New World

A new world and new creation begin to take shape in the mission and ministry of the church. Through the daily lives of those who trust the vision of the prophet and the promise of the risen Jesus, this new world begins to happen. In this new world God's people fearlessly commit themselves to carrying out their daily lives in service of their neighbors, building houses, planting vineyards and enjoying the work of their hands (v. 22) certain that it will never be in vain (v. 23). They no longer have to live in fear, afraid of the wolves and lions that would destroy them (v. 25). They no longer fear that death can destroy the value of their lives regardless of how long they live (vv. 20, 22). What the prophet promised (v. 25, "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust") becomes tangible in the mercy-laden lives of God's people. The old routine of the same old same old has ended and a new creation grows.

It has never been like this before!