



CHAPTER 6

RESURRECTION

"Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of Heaven."

-N.T. Wright¹

Just as the Holy Spirit is caught creating at the beginning of the Bible, so is He caught creating at the end. To help us see Him creating in the beginning, we only need to take note of the fact that, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2), before God created the world. While the word *hovering* doesn't sound much like *creating*, this truth is found in language studies. As one scholar notes,

The NIV translation, 'hovering', is fairly common, not because it enjoys abundant supporting evidence, but because there is insufficient evidence to suggest other plausible alternatives. As a result, interpreters have frequently looked outside Hebrew to

¹ Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. HarperCollins e-books, 2009, p. 293.

Ruah

related.... languages for.... help. When we investigate.... we discover that Syriac uses the same root for brooding protectively over a nest or incubating the eggs. Ugaritic uses the same root to speak of vultures circling overhead, apparently waiting to devour the scraps of a feast. As we consider a translation that can account for both Hebrew and Ugaritic usage and accommodate both biblical contexts, we might note that the verb in all contexts expresses a state of preparedness. Whether birds are brooding or hovering, they are preparing for what is to take place next.²

This idea of the Spirit brooding over the earth opens our eyes to see the Spirit more explicitly playing a part in the role of creation, seeing as how a bird broods over its eggs to hatch them. In that light, the image we're given is one of the Holy Spirit getting ready to give birth to the entire world. Furthermore, Psalm 104:30 attributes the act of creation to the Holy Spirit when it says "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created." As one scholar notes, the psalmist "understands that the original creation and later creations belong to a single continuous process, one that continues even to our day—and still involves God's *ruah* [Spirit]."³

And so we can see that the Spirit is has a part in creating life and continuing to create life, but what do we mean when we say that the Spirit will still be creating in the end? In order to see this, we need to take a glimpse at Pauline theology. In Romans 8, Paul begins a discourse on life in the Spirit and while doing so he gives us this little nugget: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Ro 8:11). Leon Morris notes here that,

² Walton, John H. "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament." *Presence, Power and Promise*, Kindle Locations 338-343.

³ Hubbard Jr, Robert L. "The Spirit and Creation." *Presence, Power and Promise*. Kindle Location 835.



The Spirit is not usually linked with resurrection, but here he seems to be. It is not clear whether Paul is saying that the Spirit is to be the agent in raising us or the guarantee that we will be raised. Both are true, and it does not seem to matter greatly which way we resolve the textual problem.⁴

That being said, we need to take Paul's theology for what it says: the Holy Spirit plays a role not only in Jesus' resurrection, but *our* resurrection. It's also interesting to note that in Romans 6:4, Paul says that "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father"—so here again we find this interplay between glory and the Holy Spirit.

Now in order to understand the significance of what the Holy Spirit is doing in resurrection, we need to take a close look at the Scriptures; because as it ends up, Christianity 101 today only teaches us half of the truth about resurrection—and even that truth seems a tad misguided. But before we get there, we first need to know how this topic was understood in Jesus' time.



A HOT TOPIC

Every generation of the church has been plagued by a hot topic of some sort. We only need to think of the doctrines different denominations fight over today to see that. It wasn't any different in Jesus' time, as different sects of Judaism were having their own doctrinal debates. For the purposes of this chapter, we're going to hone in on their arguments about resurrection.

⁴ Morris, Leon. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids/Leicester. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/Inter-Varsity Press, 1988, pp. 310-311. The Pillar New Testament Commentary.