



The Resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-34)

1 Cor. 15:1 begins with the word now showing that a new section has begun. Paul wants to remind the Corinthian Christians of his past teaching to them. It was vitally important that they held on fast to the truth or the word he preached to them. Paul is showing that Bible teaching or Bible doctrine is important. If the Corinthians did not hold on their faith will have been in vain.

I. The Centrality of the Gospel Message

In **verse 3** the apostle Paul impresses upon his readers that the gospel is of *first* importance. There is nothing else in all of the world more important than these facts: One, Christ died for **our** sins. Two, He was buried. Three, He resurrected on the third day. Four, He was physically seen by many after his resurrection. These things happened in accordance with the Scriptures (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22:22).

1. Why does Paul say that the gospel message is of first importance?
2. What did Paul receive, how did he receive it, and how did he deliver it?
3. What is the importance of the word “our” in verse 3?

There is nothing in all the world more important than the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Without these truths there could be no salvation, the church could not exist, our lives would have no hope. It is a humbling, personal, and deeply penetrating thought to know that Jesus Christ died for “our” sins. His death was not an afterthought. **Verse 3** makes clear that all of this was prophesied. **Verse 4** again tells us that these things were according to the scriptures. Jesus came to this earth with the full knowledge that He would die. He came because He loves us, and He desires to redeem us.



To impress upon his readers the absolute certainty of the death of Jesus Paul says that He was buried. For a moment it might appear as if God had lost. Jesus was dead. He was buried. But this was not the end because he rose again! That victory over death confirmed that He was the Son of God. That victory over death proves that He can raise others from the dead.

To stress the absolute certainty of his resurrection Paul writes in **verse 5** that Jesus appeared to Peter and then to the twelve. in **verse 6** Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at the same time. In **verse 7** Jesus appeared to James, and to all the apostles and in **verse 8**, he appeared to Paul, though it was unique with Paul. He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus after his death, burial, and resurrection. Paul was not an original apostle. That is why he writes that he was one who was “*abnormally born.*”

4. Why was it important for Paul to list all these resurrection appearances of Christ?

II. The Wonder of God's Grace

5. Why does Paul call himself the least of the apostles in verse 9?

Paul says in **verse 10** *"By the grace of God I am what I am."* Paul would boast only in what the Lord had done in his life. There are two specific elements of God's grace described in these verses. First, there is God's saving grace. This is why Paul who says that he is the least of the apostles, and does not even deserve to be called an apostle, can still receive salvation. God's grace is a saving faith. A graciousness that will extend to anyone, no matter what their background.

The second element of God's grace in these verses is his enabling grace. Paul writes in verse 10 that *"his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is in me."* Paul is saying that any abilities, talents, or opportunities he possessed came to him through the grace of God. This teaching keeps the Christian humble because God is the one who provides all gifts and it helps the Christian to be confident knowing that we do not rely upon our own strength.

6. How did the Corinthian Christians come to know the gospel? (vs. 11)

III. The Resurrection of the Dead

Some in Corinth were denying that Christians will be resurrected. To deny that Christians will be raised with Christ has dire repercussions. **Verse 12** makes it clear that this false teaching was coming from within the congregation when Paul writes, *"... some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead."* To deny the resurrection cuts at the very heart of the Christian faith.

There are at least seven consequences for denying that Christians will be raised from the dead.



- a. If there is no resurrection for Christians, then neither was Christ raised. (vss. 12, 13, 16)
For more instruction about the Christians resurrection see 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Cor. 4:14.
- b. If there is no resurrection, then preaching is useless. (vs. 14)
- c. If there is no resurrection, a Christian's faith is useless. (vs. 14)
- d. If there is no resurrection, then all who proclaim the gospel are liars. (vs. 15)
- e. If there is no resurrection, there is no forgiveness for sins. (vs. 16)
- f. If there is no resurrection, those Christians who have died have perished forever. (vs. 18)
- g. If there is no resurrection, then Christians of all people on earth are most pitiful. (vs. 19)

7. Why would anyone claim to be a Christian and then deny the resurrection?

Paul corrects those who falsely claim there is no resurrection, by saying emphatically, ***“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.”*** Christians will be raised because Jesus has been raised. Christ is the ***“firstfruits”*** of those who have died.



“Firstfruits” is an agricultural illustration. Before the Israelites harvested the crops they were to bring in a sample which represented the harvest, to present to the priests as an offering to the Lord. This is what Paul teaches the resurrection of Christ represents. He is the first of great harvest that will follow. He is the first to rise again, completely victorious over death, but he is not the last.

There were instances of over people rising from the dead, such as Lazarus or the son of the Widow of Nain, but these people died again. Jesus is the first to die and rise, never to taste death again. Death came to this world through a man; and that man is Adam. So the resurrection of mankind is made possible through the resurrection of a man; and that man is Christ.

Verse 23 teaches that Christ is first to be resurrected and all who die in Christ will follow. The Christian will face death, but Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. His victory assures the possibility of the Christian’s victory.

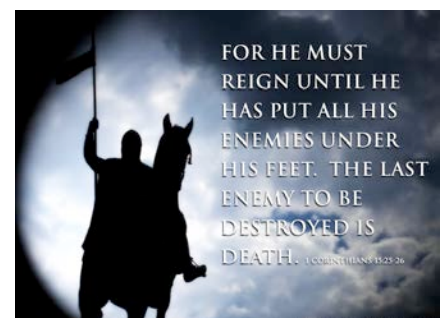
The resurrection of Jesus is important because in the resurrection Christ destroys death. Christ has partially destroyed death now. He has destroyed the fear of death. Christians do not need to fear death because we know that death is not the end. Christians do not need to fear death because we know that what is to come is far greater than what is here now. Christians do not need to fear death because Jesus has shown that he can conquer death.

The final victory over death will arrive when Jesus comes again. When Jesus returns death will be completely and forever eradicated for the Christian. For all of man’s ingenuity and curiosity and inventiveness, man has been completely powerless to conquer death. There has not been a single advancement by man since the beginning of time in our ability to conquer death. While we live on this earth we face an endless cycle of birth, life, and death. All are touched by it, all experience it, all are humbled by it. Yet Jesus showed that death can be conquered and when he comes again he will deal the final defeat of death.

8. What does it mean to your life to know that death will not have the final victory?

9. When will Christians be raised? (vs. 23)

Paul writes that at the Second Coming, the end will come; that is the end of time. When Jesus returns he will deliver the kingdom to God the Father. This will be the completion of all that he came to do and accomplish. Christ came to earth, died for man’s sin, rose again, will come again, and will hand over his kingdom (including all Christians) to the Father. This will mark the end of every rule, authority, and power in this world including that of Satan and his demons. Currently Christ is reigning in heaven at the right hand of God as prophesied by David in Psalm 110:1. At the Second Coming death will be destroyed finally for all Christians.



In verses 27 and 28 we learn that God placed all things under the authority of Christ and all things are in subjection to him including death. Only the Father is not in subjection to the Son. While on the earth Christ voluntarily submitted himself to the authority of the Father. When Christ returns all his enemies will be destroyed and the present age will end. At this time Christ will have completed his work of redemption. He will surrender the authority that had been given to him (Matt. 28:18). To say that God may be all in all is to say that he will rule as the only Sovereign over all the universe.¹

In verses 29-30 Paul gives another reason to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Some people for some reason were being baptised for the dead. There are many theories about what Paul had in mind here, but we are only left to speculate. There are those who believe that this was a proxy baptism, so that a person was baptised for someone who was already dead to secure their salvation. If this is what they were doing we can be certain this is not an acceptable practice for it would violate free-will as well as the promise that it is appointed to man once to die and then to face judgement (Heb. 9:27).

It is far better to assume that the people were being baptised because of someone who had died. Perhaps they knew that the only way they would see a Christian friend or family member who died, was for them to become a Christian. Because of this, they were baptised because they were motivated by someone who had already died. It could also mean that they saw that people had died and knew their end was also death, so they prepared for that death through baptism. Paul was not condoning their actions, whatever motivated them, but is pointing out the futility of baptism if there were no resurrection.

10. How did Paul show that he believed in the resurrection in verses 30-32?

The idea of eating and drinking because death was coming makes perfect sense if there is no resurrection. Why submit oneself to righteous living, persecution, and discomfort if death marks the end of life?

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry!

11. What does it mean to be deceived and how are people deceived?

Paul calls on the Corinthian Christians to wake up. They were listening to false teachers who were leading them astray as they denied there would be a resurrection for Christians. This false teaching was sinful and it was a sin to believe it was true. The false teachers and those who denied the resurrection were so misled that they were said to have no knowledge of God.

12. What is the resurrection the focal point of the Christian faith?

¹Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 258.