

This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.

SEVENTH DAY  BAPTIST



Lesson 7 April 11th, 2020

Resurrection Hope

Study Scripture – 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45

Background Scripture – 1 Corinthians 15:1-45

Key Verse:

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

1 Corinthians 15:19-20

INTRODUCTION

There is much discussion, questions and speculation among Christians regarding the ‘coming age’ and not least among the various topics being discussed, is this matter of the nature of our physical bodies; if indeed we can speak of physical bodies.

Of immense importance in our Study Scripture is the fact that there the Apostle Paul defines what the Gospel is as he looks at the ultimate enemy of mankind. This is most important for many professing believers will give you the wrong answer if you ask them what the “Gospel” is. So we will look carefully at how the Apostle defines the gospel.

He declares that the good news, the Gospel speaks of Jesus being victor in this area of death just as He was victor in many other areas. In defining the Gospel for us the Apostle shows us how the resurrection of the body is part of the foundation of the Christian life, and as such is an essential part of the good news of the Gospel.

Paul necessarily addressed this question and many others in his first letter to the Corinthian church, a church in crisis on many fronts. His comments on the nature of our future bodies, however, were only part of a much more important discussion, that of the resurrection of the dead at the ‘Second Coming’ of Christ. The resurrection of the dead is a consequent of the ‘Second Coming’ and should be considered in this light. It is the Apostle’s business in this chapter to assert and establish the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which some of the Corinthians had flatly denied, (1 Corinthians 15:12).

It is almost universally held among believers that there will be a Second Coming of Christ and that this event will inaugurate the final phase of God’s eternal program. Thus the Second Coming is the ‘door-way’ to all that pertains to ‘last things’ and is the basis of the Christian’s hope.

There are many explicit and indirect statements to the certainty of this event in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. Also there might be some differences in beliefs among believers, relating to the sequence of specific events but all true believers in Scripture hold that Jesus will eventually return to the earth in bodily form. See Matthew 24: 30 and Acts 1:10-11.

Note, the resurrection of Jesus was the signature event, the cardinal act, God's stamp of acceptance and approval of the redemption wrought by Jesus' death at Calvary. His resurrection is one of the basic planks of Christianity, without which there would be no salvation for sinners.

Jesus guaranteed that because He was resurrected all those who believe in Him will also be resurrected and will share His throne. These are His words.

The Corinthian church was plagued with many serious problems, which Paul addressed, seemingly as if going down a list. As he neared the end of his letter, questions about the resurrection comes to the fore; because among the Corinthians more egregious errors, was a belief that there was to be no bodily resurrection for believers.

In chapters 1 to 11 the Apostle Paul discussed at length the carnal things that pervaded the church at Corinth. These things 'of the flesh' were false, hurtful, and had caused divisions among the congregation. They were discussed and apostolic instructions given on how to eradicate these carnalities from their prominent place in the life of the church.

From chapter 12 the Apostle then began to discuss the things that the Spirit of God worked to bring about in the life of the believer. In contrast to the carnalities, these were the 'spiritualities'.

Paul began to deal with the matter of the indwelling of the Spirit which leads the believer into exhibiting the life of Jesus and exalting and magnifying His glory.

He then went on to discuss the "gift of the Spirit", which was given to every believer, so that every believer had a personal ministry, and would show the power of God in every individual life.

The Apostle then showed how the believer should exercise their "spiritual gift" to help the world and each other and to show the special kind of love that came with the possession of the Spirit.

It is in this context that the Apostle then turned to deal with the question of the resurrection of the body and answer the desperate cry of many including Mary Magdalene, who uttered her plaintive plea for help when she found Jesus' body gone as well as the issues the troubled Corinthian brethren, had raised.



In every age there have been people who have mocked at the “spiritualities”. In the age of the Corinthians they had mocked that the Christian faith was nothing but a dream, with an unfounded hope based on wishful thinking. The Corinthians church was therefore tempted to begin to enjoy themselves now, in this life.

Note that they were not only denying the overwhelming evidence, including the testimony of living eyewitnesses, that Jesus was resurrected, they were really also denying that this resurrection meant that the body of Christians would be resurrected also.

This was a capitulation to the commonly accepted philosophy of Plato in Greek culture that the soul of man is immortal, but that the body of man is not immortal. The body was really only a prison for the spark of divinity in man, and thus the body and the physical world only served to limit the soul. The body was therefore essentially evil. Death was the only means for the soul to escape this prison. At death the soul achieved immortality, since it was now free. At that time the body, which had served its purpose, was no longer needed, and that therefore was the end of the body.

Logically then, anyone who believed in this idea, would enjoy the life of the body now, indulging in the benefits of power, pride, wealth and intellect. The time to enjoy life was now and any ability or gifts one possessed should be used to enjoy life now. Note that it was therefore easy for a person, in focusing on the things of the world, to then lose focus on what might happen after death.

Note that this viewpoint also denies that men depend on a personal God who has created and sustained everything.

There is therefore in this viewpoint no need for a Saviour, for everybody ultimately becomes godlike on their own merits, or when a person got rid of their body, a good thing, So it was really believed **“limitless horizons beckon the once imprisoned soul to become like God himself”**.

So this philosophy told the Church that there was no need for a Mediator between God and man, for man can make it by himself. There was no need for repentance and faith. The work of Christ was denied. Christ had simply done what all men do when they die, but in His case, we saw it happen.

There was also the view of endless reincarnations, which would raise the level of a person's consciousness and expand their spiritual authority. These people would seek to become gods in their own right. This of course would also deny the resurrection of the body.

Much of this is found in the New Age Movement and in the teaching up the cults which deny as one writer puts it **“the dependence of mankind on a personal God who creates and sustains everything. People who do this deny the need for a Saviour, and ultimately intend to be**



godlike on their own merits. Getting rid of one's body therefore is a good thing, because by doing so limitless horizons beckon the once-imprisoned soul to become like God himself”

In total opposition to these ideas of Satanic iniquity is the teaching of the Apostle Paul, that the resurrection of the body is a fundamental and non-negotiable tenet of the Christian faith, and that if there is no resurrection of the body Christians are to be pitied, and their faith has been in vain.

We can sum it up this way. We should not think that this life is the only place we will enjoy bodily pleasures. We do not need to feel cheated if we cannot indulge ourselves in every bodily pleasure that life offers.

The greatest opportunity for the enjoyment of the body lies ahead. At the resurrection we will have new bodies that will be able to perfectly interact with our spirits and with the new creation so that there will be perfect satisfaction and glory.

We will be so radically connected with Jesus Christ that the glorious beauty of the flowers, the hearing of music, the engaging in conversation, the delights of feeling, the new sensation when we touch things, the new beauty in everything around us, the real beauty of the landscape and the stars, the glory of being near to God, will give us exquisite ecstasy.

When we sit and talk with someone in a resurrection bodies, we will experience a bliss and a delightful sense of union beyond anything we can imagine. We will be surrounded with a glow of such glory, that everything will be worthwhile, and the difficulties of our present life will fade into trivialities, and finally into oblivion.

“God has a purpose for the body, as well as the spirit and the soul. These bodies shall be transformed and enhanced and enriched, and all that they are able to do will be experienced to a greater degree than ever in the life to come”.

The importance of the hereafter and the fate of both sinners and saved is of critical importance. Nobody in their right mind should risk losing turning their potential glory into an eternity of horror.

Thus in strong and emphatic language, Paul presented an iron-clad case for the resurrection of Jesus and the future bodily resurrection of believers. It is in the context of this discussion that he reveals the marvelous and radical transformation that awaits our bodies at the ‘Second Coming’.

Therefore it is important to consider the ‘Second Coming’ as a backdrop to our study of the resurrected body, since the instantaneous transformation of our bodies will occur as part of that event.



Corinth was a profligate and vile Greek city, nonetheless the Lord established a church there. The popular culture of the city seemed to have had an overarching influence on the converted Corinthians, manifested in such things as their tolerance of sexual immorality, for after all they might as well enjoy whatever this ‘evil’ body offered, and their inordinate fixation with sign gifts, pride and oratory.

The spiritual condition of the church at Corinth was cause for alarm both to the Apostle and to some members of that congregation, who felt it necessary to apprise Paul of the situation and maybe seek his intervention (1 Cor.1:11). False teachers, cliques and factionalism were some of their problems and it is not hard to see how a corrupt understanding of the facts of Christ’s bodily resurrection and the future resurrection of the saints could lie at the root of some of their other problems.

Clearly the Corinthian brethren had been taught and at one time at least did believe the facts of the resurrection as taught by Paul and other apostles. We are told they did believe the Gospel and there is no Gospel without the bodily resurrection of Christ.

Paul, as was his practice, centered his arguments on the gospel that he and the other Apostles proclaimed. There were to be no deviations or modifications from its teachings. Citing its historical and prophetic moorings, Paul ties the Second Coming with the attendant resurrection of the dead, to the final phase of God’s design leading to the consummation of the age.

Such is the centrality of the resurrection to the Gospel that deviations inevitably lead to a spate of other spiritual problems. Not to be lost in all this is the insidious work of false teachers in the Corinthian church. They were the corrupting influence and purveyors of the errors about the resurrection that inevitably spawned a raft of other problems and heresies.

As you read this Study Scripture note that Paul concludes his discussion on the resurrection with a theological argument and rationale for the future bodily resurrection of believers that will happen at the Second Coming, with Jesus’ own resurrection being the prototype of our own future resurrection. So let us not fear but keep on the Solid Rock without wavering.

THE TEXT

Verse 1:

In this comprehensive study on the triumph of life and the certainty of resurrection Paul states certain facts which are the foundation of Christian faith. These truths, when we commit them to memory and hold onto them will make us stand firm. We note that this doctrine will bring encouragement to us in our Christian lives for it reminds us of the benefits that have been won by the blood sacrifice of our Lord and Savior. The atonement which had been deterred by the slaying of abundant animals in Israel on a continuous basis had been brought by the lamb slain from the foundation of the Earth.

It is important therefore to note that the Apostle Paul is discussing matters of “**first importance**”.



He is not preaching the “Gospel” to them for the first time for they had already heard the “Gospel” and had believed the good news about Jesus Christ. It is to be noted also that this was the first written account of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for this was written before the Epistles were written. Some records had already been kept of course and circulated.

He was literally making known to them the message that they had heard and had already agreed to, but he needed to go over it again. They needed to hear these fundamental truths all over again because there was a great danger in not remembering and practicing personal examination. This danger is spelled out in verse two.

Now some people who have been attending church for a long time will be offended when someone speaks to them of the fundamental truths that they had previously believed and accepted. They trick themselves into believing that they have “already arrived” and that nothing can go wrong with them or have gone wrong with them. But here we see the same old story of poor memory which leads to poor behaviour and disastrous consequences. For if we forget the truths of the gospel we will sin and get into all kinds of immoral and disgraceful activity.

The Corinthian brethren had received salvation through trust in the “good news” and their lives had been transformed. It is so easy to forget.

Of great importance is the fact that Paul provided proof of the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This fact is of fundamental importance to the truths of the gospel which is the good news (**evangelium**) that victory has been won and the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has been completed. 500 saw Him the resurrected Christ, and **so** did also the Apostles, and Paul himself. This is important and will be touched on later as this fact will help to reinforce the idea that this is not a story, but a true historical event.

Note that when they heard the Gospel this good news or **evangelium** affected their present lives for it was in this Gospel that they were standing. One writer therefore explains from an analysis of the language used by the Apostle why this was so:
“The tense of the verb “stand” refers to a past completed action with ongoing results. So they are presently standing on the gospel as their foundation for life. And that’s what the Gospel does for us in the present. In a dangerous, seductive, slippery world, it protects us, stabilizes us, keeps us standing securely”.

Verse 2:

Note that the Apostle is dividing his comments into two sections. First he talks about what the Gospel **does**, and then he tells us what the gospel **is**.

The gospel that they had received previously had transformed them and they were now therefore standing on the gospel as their foundation of life. Now the Apostle tells them that it was because of this gospel that they were *now being* saved. In other words, our salvation is an



ongoing process and that is why the Apostle states in 2 Corinthians 3: 18 that we are being changed *“from glory to glory”*.

Note that the Scriptures uses the word salvation in about three different senses, with one of the senses referring to the future salvation when believers are complete.

So Christ did something glorious for us in the past but His work in us is still continuing so that ultimately we will be complete and glorified, having experienced then this full salvation, the finished work when we stand before the Lord.

Let us not skip over the part which introduces a word of conditionality, namely, *“if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain”*.

The language experts in Greek tell us that the term *“in vain”* means “at random” or “without basis” and so we know that persons can have faith that is *“in vain”* or which is a passing fancy and which is really a superficial response. It is like what happened in the parable that Jesus spoke about when someone sowed a seed of wheat. The Sower sowed and some fell on the wayside and the seed (or the word of God) was immediately destroyed. Some of the seed (the word of God) which was sown was received with gladness but it also came to naught when temptations and pressures came.

We are warned that people can accept the gospel in the same way and for the same reason that they get fire insurance for the idea is that if they accept Jesus they will not go to hell. Or alternatively they might accept Jesus because they want more material things. They think that if they accept Jesus their life will be materially better. These kind of responses of course are considered vain or empty for they do not have a lasting and stabilizing effect on people’s lives. They are not according to the Apostle, real faith or real belief.

Verse 3:

The Apostle now gets into our definition of the gospel, and he begins by saying what the source of the gospel was. Neither Paul nor the other Apostles were the source of the gospel message, but it was God Himself speaking through Jesus that was the source. Paul tells us in Galatians 1: 11-12 that the Lord Himself delivered the gospel message to him and he passed on this message to the Corinthians.

Note that in defining the *“gospel”* Paul did not give us a long treatise on the marvelous birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, or on the silent years at Nazareth, or the many walking up and down the hills of Judea and Galilee, or the many teachings and miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, but comes straight to the point.

So if people ask you what the gospel message is don’t just say that it is that *“Jesus lived and died and rose again”* for it is much more than that. Many humanistic and secular people will accept the fact that Jesus lived and died but note that there is no good news in that by itself.



So Paul tells us what he preached and it is that *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures*"

The good news is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, for His death accomplished something extraordinary for us. He changed us, delivered us, and set us free. The Promise of the Father was fulfilled. Because the death of Jesus had great significance in the mind and eyes of God the Father, that is the good news.

It is in the cross that God the Father, who is perfectly holy and just and pure, who cannot accept evil at all, who demands perfection, has dealt with this sin in the past history of humanity. With the cross He can offer us the forgiveness of sins freely.

Note that all this was therefore done "according to the Scriptures". God took no chances in making man understand what and how dreadful sin was. From the very beginning the Scriptures anticipated the cross and Eve was told that one day she would have a descendant that would crush the head of the serpent. When this descendant crushed the head of the serpent in so doing He would suffer.

The matter of fact is that the entire sacrificial system of the Jewish Temple testified to the coming of the ultimate sin bearer, and rivers of blood from innocent lambs flowed in anticipating the coming of the Lamb of God who would shed His blood and bear not His sins but the sins of the world. The prophets spoke of this over and over again. Paul now tells us that he had passed all of this on to the Corinthians and they had received it and their faith rested, for all of this was "according to the Scriptures".

It is important to notice that this gospel is not insightful teaching or good advice. At the core of the gospel are things that happened – actual, real, historical events. The gospel isn't a matter of religious opinions, platitudes, or fairy tales as some people might tend to remark on; it is about real historical events.

At the centre of the gospel is the death of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. It is instructive to understand what Jesus actually went through to connect that to the purpose of His sacrifice, to understand how the death of our Saviour, though foolish to the world implies Salvation to those who believe on Him. One writer educates us as follows:

- i. **How did Jesus die? The Roman government executed Him by one of the most cruel and excruciating forms of capital punishment ever devised: crucifixion.**
- ii. **"Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering." (Edwards) What exactly was it like to be crucified? In days the New Testament was first written, the practice needed no explanation. But we do well to appreciate just what happened in crucifixion.**
- iii. **The victim's back was first torn open by scourging, and the clotting blood was ripped open again when the clothes were torn off the victim. When he was thrown on the ground to nail his hands to the crossbeam, the wounds were again torn open and**



contaminated with dirt. Then, as he hung on the cross, with each breath, the painful wounds on the back scraped against the rough wood of the upright beam and were further aggravated.

- iv. When the nail was driven through the wrists, it severed the large median nerve. This stimulated nerve produced excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms and resulted in a claw-like grip in the victim's hands.
- v. Beyond the excruciating pain, the major effect of crucifixion was inhibiting normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, tended to fix the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state, and hindered exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration resulted in severe muscle cramps, which hindered breathing even further. To get a good breath, one had to push against the feet, and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet produced searing pain, and flexing the elbows twisted the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath also painfully scraped the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and lead to a sooner death.
- vi. "Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals." (Edwards)
- vii. Death from crucifixion could come from many sources: acute shock from blood loss, being too exhausted to breathe any longer; dehydration, stress-induced heart attack, or congestive heart failure leading to a cardiac rupture. If the victim did not die quickly enough, the legs were broken, and the victim was soon unable to breathe.
- viii. How bad was crucifixion? We get our English word excruciating from the Roman word "out of the cross." "Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!" (Clarke)
- ix. However, we never speak of the physical sufferings of Jesus to make us feel sorry for Jesus, as if He needed our pity. Save your pity for those who reject the complete work of Jesus on the cross at Calvary and save your pity for those preachers who do not have the heart of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23, when he proclaimed the center of the Christian message: we preach Christ crucified.

Why is it important to understand the details of Christ's death? Such things were noted in Scripture, but Christ, our Saviour knew that He must endure them to reconcile us back to the Father. Even then, when He was flesh, it was a painful experience, but more so what had to happen between the Father and Christ on the cross regarding bearing our sin. We as Christians should understand that this life might include great sacrifices, but at the end the Scriptures do tell us the reward we shall receive at the end.

At some point before He died, before the veil was torn in two, before He cried out it is finished, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. God the Father laid upon God the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God in our place.



As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, which was referenced above, this spiritual suffering – the act of being judged for sin in our place – was what Jesus really dreaded about the Cross as any son would knowing that this would result in God looking away from His Son, to fulfill the Scriptures. This was the cup – the cup of God’s righteous wrath – that He asked that could pass from Him but knowing it could not (Luke 22:39-46, Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15). On the cross Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God, who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father’s fury so we would not have to drink that cup. Isaiah 53:3-5 sums up this point for us.

When this act was accomplished there was no reason for Jesus to “hang around” on the Cross. His work was done, and He could go on to what was next.

Verse 4:

Not only had Jesus died on the Cross as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world but as Scriptures had predicted He was buried and that He rose again the third day.

Note the four phrases that define the content of the gospel, with each phrase beginning with the word “*that*”.

Note also the emphasis that the death of Jesus was in fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures with the annual day of Atonement in Leviticus 16: 29-34 and the messianic prophecies of Isaiah 53 standing as reminders that Jesus would be the ultimate sin bearer.

Note the emphasis on the physical reality of Jesus’ death in opposition to some of those who said that Jesus did not really die but was in a “swoon” or death like coma when He was placed in the tomb, and other foolish ideas that Jesus’ death and resurrection were just spiritual phenomena. But the Apostle insisted that Jesus was really dead, His corpse placed in a tomb, and that was sealed shut and guarded.

Christ died as promised, predicted, and anticipated, by the Scriptures, not an accidental death, but though innocent, He died for our sins. The Scriptures said Jesus would rise again from the dead on the third day and so it happened.

This idea of the substitutionary atonement which ran all through the practice of sacrifices in the Old Testament also runs all through the New Testament.

It is the reason behind the death of Jesus.

Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and remove our guilt, this in short is why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so important. This truth is essential to the gospel.

Although Jesus bore the full wrath of God on the Cross, as if He were a guilty sinner, guilty of all our sin, even being made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), He Himself did not become a sinner. This is the gospel message! That Jesus took our punishment for sin on the cross and remained a perfect Savior through the whole ordeal – proved by His resurrection.



For this reason, He remained the Holy One (Acts 2:27, 2:31-32), even in His death. Since it was incomprehensible that God's Holy One could remain bound by death, the resurrection was absolutely inevitable. This is why the resurrection of Jesus was such a prominent theme in the evangelistic preaching of the early church (Acts 2:24, Acts 3:15, Acts 4:10, Acts 13:30-39).

The Cross was a time of victorious death, a negative triumph. Sin was defeated, but nothing positive was put in its place until the Resurrection. The Resurrection showed that Jesus did not succumb to the inevitable result of sin. The Resurrection is proof of His conquest.

Verse 5-7:

It was required in a court of law that for proof there must be several witnesses, but in this case there was not just several but 500 people, most of whom were still alive. This was most powerful, direct, and unquestionable eyewitness evidence.

In addition Paul names several people to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection. The Apostle named several individuals or groups that were eyewitnesses.

First there was Cephas, otherwise called Simon Peter. He had denied his Lord publicly with much cursing but Jesus after His resurrection appeared to him and made him understand that he was still loved.

Then Paul mentions that Jesus appeared to about 500 brethren at once. This appearance is not recorded in the Bible and we don't know when it happened, but obviously Paul is emphasizing that there are many reliable witnesses to whom Jesus appeared, with some of them still alive at the time he was writing.

Then at some stage Jesus appeared to James, His half-brother, the son of Joseph and Mary. This half-brother who became later a pillar of the church did not surrender his life to Christ as his Saviour until after the resurrection, and likely after Jesus had appeared to him. He would clearly have been shocked out of his boots at this appearance and he would have felt guilty at not paying more attention to his half-brother Jesus.

The additional appearance of Jesus to all the disciples is well recorded for He appeared to them on different occasions.

The Apostle therefore is inviting the Corinthians to check out the reality of the resurrection for themselves.

Verse 8:

Paul used the ancient Greek term ektroma meaning, "abortion, stillbirth, miscarriage". It speaks of an untimely birth with "freakish" associations. Some think Paul used this striking word because the Corinthian Christians so consistently depreciated his stature as an Apostle. They considered him a "little" apostle, but Paul will glory in his weakness.



The cumulative testimony of these witnesses is overwhelming. Not only did they see Jesus after His death, but they saw Him in a manner which revolutionized their faith and trust in Him.

The changed character of the Apostles, and their willingness to die for the testimony of the resurrection, eliminate fraud as an explanation of the empty tomb.

As a consequence of the time, the testimony of the women at the tomb was not counted as evidence in the court system at that time, however it is noted in the Scripture under the gospel writers of their role in the events at the time.

Verse 12:

It seems that some in the Corinthians or associated with the church thought that Jesus' resurrection was something more spiritual in meaning or that it did not apply to the believer, even if it happened with Jesus Christ. These are some of the issues Paul had to address, as earlier when the gospel was passed along to them, they believed as Paul did.

Paul had to encourage them to remember that the resurrection is not merely life after death, but it is the continuation of life after death in glorified bodies. Christ is established as the head of the Church and the first-fruits of that body. As such, as He has risen, so too shall the members of that body rise. Christ's resurrection is made perfect or will come into its completion when all the members of the body have risen, this is a continuing work, and the promise given to believers.

Verse 13:

Paul argues that the negation of one implies the negation of the other fact. Therefore it is incumbent on believers to believe that Jesus Christ rose, and so too will all they who believe in Him. If the resurrection of Christ is not true, many are the absurdities that must follow upon it, and which the Apostle next enumerates.

Verse 14:

To say that there is no resurrection of the dead, and yet to affirm that Christ rose from the dead, is a logical impossibility. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then we must also conclude that Christ did not rise from the dead either.

Paul then outlined the absurdities that must follow from their error:

- the preaching of the Apostles was useless, a waste of time.
- the Corinthians faith and all Christian faith was useless and futile.
- the Apostles were false witnesses of God, hypocrites, deceivers.
- the Corinthians and all Christians for that matter were still in their sins.
- Christians who had died had actually perished. Death had triumphed over our loved ones and would triumph over us too.
- If Christ had not been raised, then Christians are pitiful, wretched people, who would have to give up their beautiful dreams and go back to darkness, grimness, and misery. They had set their hopes on something that never occurred.



Basically the sum of it all is that, Jesus is not able to save.

Verse 20:

Our hope is in the living Christ and that is more than adequate because of His resurrection. The Apostle therefore transforms the argument that attacks the reality of Jesus' resurrection and takes away all the possibility of emptiness.

The assertion, "Christ has been raised from the dead" is Paul's argument in these verses.

This is a truth the Apostle has already outlined in verses 1-11 pointing out the historical authentication of Jesus' resurrection.

He refers to the Old Testament and its images of the "first fruits" which were the first offspring or crop to be obtained by the farmer, and this was proof that there was more to come. This ritual given to Israel in Leviticus 23 reminded that on the Feast of Unleavened Bread which followed the Passover, there would be an offering of the first fruits of the barley harvest, and Jews would bring a sheaf of grain to the Priest who would wave it before the Lord.

So Jesus is the "first fruits of those who are asleep" meaning that whatever happened to Him is what awaits those who died trusting in Him. Thus Jesus' resurrection is the prototype and proof that more resurrections would follow.

One writer comments on the necessity for bodily resurrections:

How do we know that Christ's resurrection guarantees a resurrection for others? The answer to this can be seen when one understands the unique relationship, which exists between Adam and our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom Paul later refers as the "first Adam" and the "last Adam" (15:45). By his sin Adam brought about death for himself and the whole human race. Christ, by His righteous life, substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection, brings about life for mankind. Adam brought death upon all men; Christ will make men alive.

As some falsely taught (2 Timothy 2:18), this resurrection of men from the dead has not already occurred but is yet to come. Christ's resurrection will actually bring about a sequence of resurrections, with the last and final resurrection abolishing death altogether (verse 26). Everything must occur in its proper order, as ordained by God (verse 23). Christ has already risen from the dead, and His resurrection is but the first fruits of the other resurrections yet to occur. The next resurrection mentioned is that of those who have trusted in our Lord for salvation, which occurs when He returns to this earth to defeat all His enemies and to establish His rule over all the earth (verse 23). Then, finally, the last resurrection will take place, the resurrection of the unbelieving dead.



Verse 21:

Note that this resurrection of Jesus marks the first time that a human being was resurrected from the dead, for this event is to be differentiated from those who had previously been resuscitated. They had come back to the same life they left.

But Jesus was resurrected to a totally different kind of life. The Apostle Paul therefore tells us that Jesus' resurrection indicates the type of resurrection we will have, bringing us to a quality and a dimension of life and existence which is much more marvelous and higher than we can ever imagine.

Now note carefully that for real Christians Christ is the centre of everything, and Christians are eternally dependent upon Jesus. He is the first fruits of the resurrection and our resurrection is in Him.

Note that any teaching which makes the resurrection lesser than it is, is a direct and satanic attack on the central position of Christ in Christianity.

Because He lives, we will live. That is all.

Note also we will be resurrected and at His coming, when every eye shall see Him, He will proceed to destroy the Antichrist and his cronies. It will only be after His millennial reign of peace and righteousness, and He has completed His work and subdued His enemies, casting the Devil, Death and Hades into the Lake of Fire, that He will then deliver the Kingdom back to His Father.

Paul does not argue only that his behaviour was proof of the resurrection. But he did now argue that His belief in the resurrection as taught by Scripture also had a powerful motivating force which made him do things to help others, and to be concerned with the salvation of others.

On a personal note, he asked why he would continually put himself in harm's way, risking his life daily for the sake of the gospel. It would have been foolhardy for him, unless of course there is such a thing as the resurrection of the dead.

Paul here puts his finger on the Corinthians problem. They had been deceived and this is why they had degenerated to the point where they could deny even a fundamental doctrine such as the resurrection of the dead. Enamoured with their own conceit, they fell victim to a slew of errors grounded in the flesh (chapters 1-6; 8-11). Not surprising then at least to Paul, their doctrine had suffered in the process.

Paul challenged the Corinthians to "sober up" and face up to their folly. They needed to get their doctrine straight and then consistently demonstrate their beliefs in godly behaviour. They needed to realize that their false teachers had no knowledge of God and those they had led



astray, needed to admit their lack of knowledge, repent, and return to the doctrine of the Apostles.

Paul was encouraged to endure tremendous suffering and physical affliction because he believed that God raises the dead. This belief should have the same impact on us.

As one writer puts it, we should consider that:

"The resurrection is the ample recompense for all human suffering, no matter how bad it may be."

Note also what Paul says on the basis of this belief. We should reject this idea of living it up, enjoying ourselves today, spending all the free time we have on fun and pleasure, getting all we can now, and not bothering with doing things for God.

He calls on the Corinthians and on us to be realistic, to move away from deception, to stop running with people who are corrupt and full of iniquity, who, though they might profess to know God, do not have any real knowledge of God.

We must stop sinning, and follow the path of righteousness and wisdom, knowing that we have the privilege of experiencing being in the presence and basking in the matchless glory of God.

Note that the Christian doctrine was that resurrection was not simply life after death but continuation of life after death in glorified bodies, which were transformed and glorified from our present bodies.

Verse 22:

Note that both Adam and Jesus are presented in Scripture as unique representatives of the race and prototypes of the natural and spiritual bodies respectively. We now have "natural" bodies but in the guaranteed resurrection believers will have "spiritual" bodies. This connection which we have with Adam and with Christ is a crucial one. One writer comments:

"Both the 'first Adam' (the Adam of Genesis) and the "last Adam" were men (this is the meaning of the word Adam) were prototypes. The actions of both men impact all men. How can the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ affect all men? The answer: The same way Adam's sin and death affected all men. The "first Adam" became a living soul; the "last Adam" became a life-giving spirit. The "first Adam" was a natural man; the "last Adam" became a spiritual man. The "first Adam," through his sin and death, brought sin into the world and caused all men to be under the sentence of death. Jesus Christ, the "last Adam," through His righteousness, death, burial and resurrection, has brought about resurrection for all men".



Verse 23:

In comparing earlier situations to Jesus, for example, the widow's son in the days of Elijah (1 Kings 17:12-24) and Lazarus (John 11:38-44), among others? each of these were resuscitated from death, but none of them were **resurrected**. Each of them were raised in the same body they died in and were raised from the dead to eventually die again. Resurrection isn't just living again, it is living again in a new body based on our old body but perfectly suited for life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one **resurrected**.

Verse 42-43:

The resurrection of the dead is likened to the process where a sown seed germinates and grows into a plant (vs. 36-38); such as an ugly looking bulb is planted and flowers into a beautiful tulip. Importantly, the transformation process produces a decidedly superior form than the seed that was planted.

The seed decays (*corruption*) as part of the process but a continuity and identity is maintained, despite the radically different life-form that emerges; different seeds produce their own kind.

The Corinthians were careful not to ask if God could raise the dead and restore their bodies but looked at resurrection as a purely natural phenomenon and so Paul's illustration in demonstrating 'life from the dead' in purely natural terms is most apt. Given that the resurrection and all its accompaniments are the direct work of God, any questions or doubt about a bodily resurrection is in fact to doubt the power of God, something the Corinthians would be reluctant to do.

Paul moves from the 'possible' to confidently assert the certainty of the bodily resurrection.

The contrast between the natural body and the resurrected could not be more striking; in fact the resurrected appears to be the exact opposite of all that the natural body is. Regardless of how grand a funeral might be, there is nothing very noble about the process of dying or about death itself. For the Israelites, contact with a dead body made one unclean, death was defiling. The new body however will be glorious, all the effects of the curse removed, it will be like Jesus' glorified body.

There are four contrasts between the present body and the resurrection body. First, one is corruptible, constantly losing its ability to function, perishing, decaying, gradually slowing down, while the other is incorruptible, enduring, surviving, never decaying.

While lifelong decay accelerates exponentially at death, the new body will not be subjected to disease, illness, decay or death (*corruption*). All the present ills, aging, deterioration and limitations that afflict our bodies are banished in the new body.



The present body is one of dishonour, that is groaning, subject to embarrassing troubles and breakdowns, even in life smelly, so that one has to bathe often and use deodorants, while in death it has to be buried quickly or disposed of in haste. On the other hand the resurrection body will always be cleaned and fragrant, always fresh and functioning perfectly.

The present body is weak. One tiny virus can strike out the strongest bodybuilder and the healthiest person and end life. Man even has to run away from animals and cannot face even a bear without weapons. Men might boast but human life is very fragile. On the other hand, with the resurrection, *it is raised in power* meaning it will no longer be liable to the frailties of mortal bodies.

Verse 44:

The comparison is then made between the natural body as against the spiritual body. Paul extends the agricultural metaphor of the seed (vs. 36-37) with the word 'sown', also implying something will come from whatever is 'sown'.

By natural is meant all that is associated with our present bodies, particularly in the physical realm: the senses, natural processes, growth, aging, eating, sleep, motion etc.

Note that this body was first created and then the breath of life was put into it. It was therefore designed to function under the control of the will and the emotions, suited for this kind of life on an earth, potentially subject to sin.

The Scriptures give limited information on the nature of the spiritual body. But note that this new body will be joined into a spirit that had been made right and perfect before and this new body will be able to respond to this perfected spirit; souls made perfect. *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*, Hebrews 12:23.

So while we do not know the exact nature, we know spiritual does not mean we will be spirits, (John 20:26-27; 1 John 3:2). The 'new body' will be qualitatively different and in every way be of superior material but clearly not subjected to the natural laws and processes associated with our present bodies (natural).

*There is a natural...*This is an assertion that Paul will develop in the coming verses and is tied to man's relationship to the "first Adam" and the "last Adam," Jesus Christ.

Verse 45:

Both Adam and Jesus are presented in Scripture as unique representative of the race and prototypes of the natural and spiritual bodies respectively. One writer comments in part:

The origin, nature, and destiny of both the natural body and the spiritual body can only be understood in terms of their relationship to the "first Adam" and the "last Adam," Jesus



Christ. Verses 42-44 contrast the nature of our earthly, physical bodies with that of our heavenly, spiritual bodies. Verses 45-49 link our earthly bodies with the “first Adam,” and our heavenly resurrection bodies with Jesus Christ, the “last Adam.” This connection which we have with Adam and with Christ is a crucial one.

Both the “first Adam” (the Adam of Genesis) and the “last Adam” were men (this is the meaning of the word Adam) who were prototypes. The actions of both men impact all men. How can the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ affect all men? The answer: The same way Adam’s sin and death affected all men. The “first Adam” became a living soul; the “last Adam” became a life-giving spirit. The “first Adam” was a natural man; the “last Adam” became a spiritual man. The “first Adam,” through his sin and death, brought sin into the world and caused all men to be under the sentence of death. Jesus Christ, the “last Adam,” through His righteousness, death, burial and resurrection, has brought about resurrection for all men.

It is manifestly clear that there is a natural body; and with equal certainty Paul declares there is a *spiritual* body. Though the physical evidence is not nearly the same for both, based on revelation and his apostolic authority, he makes the declaration.

In the broad sweep of the history of humanity regarding God’s dealing with men, Adam and Jesus are uniquely the representatives of the race in a fashion that cannot and will not be duplicated. Thus they are the ‘*first Adam*’ and ‘*last Adam*’; meaning there can be no other who can impact the destiny of man in the same way, one bequeathing death to the race and the other bestowing life to men.

A quickening spirit....This is consistent with what is taught of Jesus: For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; John 5:26; In him was life, John 1:4. So unlike Adam who was only a living soul, Jesus is one who actually gives life to, he makes alive.

According to Paul, it follows logically then, that as our first state was like that of Adam (*natural* Gen. 2:17) so our resurrected (last) state will be *spiritual*, like that of the ‘last Adam’ Jesus. As is the observed pattern, seed-time precedes harvest, the superior succeeds the inferior.

The best example of what a resurrection body will be like, is to look at what Jesus’ post resurrection body was like.



CONCLUSION

Let us not focus on the fact that we have an answer to Satan who has accused us constantly. We have an answer for the world that seeks to undermine our faith. We also have an answer for those false religious leaders and churches that water down the facts.

Jesus accomplished His work, His death, His burial, His resurrection, and saved His people according to what the Old Testament Scriptures predicted. Cephas, James, the 500 brethren, all the Apostles, and the Apostle Paul testifies as witnesses.

All of us who have been rejected and persecuted and who have not promoted ourselves but rather have promoted the Lord Jesus and His Father and the Holy Spirit, can testify that the grace of God is effective. We can testify that the Gospel is life-changing. We can testify that the facts cannot be taken away.

We have a foundation, a place to handle life. We have a security to which we can go at any time when we face pressures, temptations, or any problem. We can stand steady no matter what kind of force comes against us. We can do it is because of the Gospel which we have received and by which we stand.

So when you believe that God loves you and has accepted you as His child, and is working in you with the power of His resurrected life, you know you can stand against anything that comes.

Remember that Jesus was bodily resurrected. That is certain. You are guaranteed a bodily resurrection. That is certain. Many saw Him alive and they have testified to that.

Let us all remember that something fantastic has already happened to those who know Jesus Christ. We are guaranteed that the day will come when we shall all be changed, becoming radiant, spectacular.

All Christians should be *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Titus 2:13.

On a personal level this will be the culmination of our redemption, as dead or alive instantaneously we are in our glorified state and later in our glorified bodies, to be ever with the Lord in a fullness beyond our imagination.

All Christians should be eager in anticipation of our new body, for as we live this hope is a source of purification in this present life.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. 1 John 3:2-3.



Paul as was his custom, reverted to the gospel as the starting point and standard for all Christian teaching and practice, to reinforce the vital role which the resurrection of our Lord plays in our salvation and Christian life. This is an example for us we endeavor to live out and teach the word of God to others.

Suffering for Christ, and taking up our cross in this life, makes perfect sense if there is a new body and crown awaiting us after the resurrection. Paul's belief in the resurrection inspired and enabled him to live as he did (Philippians 1:12-26; 3:7-14).

May we be no less willing to live sacrificially for Jesus.

