

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 28TH - 29TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

THE GOSPEL (1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11)

Some within the church at Corinth seemed to be saying that the **resurrection of Jesus wasn't important** and all that mattered was what Jesus taught and **how He lived**.

- Many believed that Christians wouldn't experience a physical **resurrection after death** (vs. 12).
- Paul is going to explain why the resurrection-- an **actual, physical, bodily resurrection**-- means **everything** to the Christian!

Paul begins by **reminding this church** of the gospel he taught them, which focused on **Christ crucified and risen** (vs. 1).

- Gospel means, "**good news**," and for its **power to be effective** in someone's life it must be "received."
- It also must be something we "stand in" and "hold fast" to-- **a true Christian will persevere in Christ**, and if one lets go of the gospel, all their previous beliefs won't do them any good (vs. 2).
- It will be as if they, "**believed in vain**."

Of first importance is the fact that **Christ died for our sins**, was buried, and was raised on the 3rd day in accordance with the scriptures (vs. 3-4).

- Without these **two foundational truths of Christ's death and resurrection**, we're left with a Jesus that may have had some good ideas, but can't actually save anyone.
- At the core of the **Christian gospel are real, actual, historical events**-- not good advice, insightful teaching, or helpful sayings.

In establishing that it happened, **Paul points to two pieces of evidence**: the empty tomb (vs. 4), and living eyewitnesses (vs. 5-8).

- Paul says that **several hundred people saw Jesus alive after the resurrection at different times and different places**-- including more than 500 at one time (vs. 6).
- This passage contains some of the **most compelling evidence** for the physical resurrection of Jesus.

This was written in 53 A.D.-- 20 years after Jesus lived. That's **not enough time for the actual events of Jesus' life** to evolve into legends!

- Secondly, **most of the eyewitnesses** to the resurrected Christ were still alive when this was written (vs. 6)-- they could verify Paul's claims.
- Third, **Jesus appearing to 500 people at once completely obliterates** the claim that Jesus' disciples "hallucinated" the resurrected Lord.

If Jesus' resurrection can't be chalked up to legend, unverified claims, or hallucinations-- we're left with the **explanation that every early disciple of Jesus was lying and knew they were lying**.

- The problem with this theory is that there was **no plausible motivation for them to lie**-- there was no money, power, or fame waiting for them.
- In fact, **they received just the opposite for their confession**-- persecution, poverty, and death.

The only **reasonable explanation left** is that Jesus actually rose again on the 3rd day.

- The **resurrection of Jesus isn't a secondary, optional Christian truth**-- it's the foundation of just about everything else in the Christian life!
- Paul's encounter with the **resurrected Jesus changed his entire life**-- he went from being a persecutor of the Church to being a **proclaimer of the good news** (vs. 9).

Another powerful evidence of the resurrection of Jesus is what **Jesus does in the lives of people**.

- Paul was a changed man, who had been forgiven, cleansed, and **filled with love** when he used to be full of hate.
- But this was not his doing, it was **the work of the grace of God in him** (vs. 10).
- Whether Paul or any of the other apostles brought the message, **the result was the same**-- the resurrection was proclaimed, and people believed.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19)

Many in this church **didn't necessarily deny Jesus' resurrection**; they denied **our** resurrection.

- For some of us, our **concept of our eternal home** is some far away, disembodied "**celestial shore**" that our spirit "**flies away**" to.
- But the Scripture speaks of **the eternal state in God's Kingdom being a physical, tangible place** that's actually very similar to this one, just much more glorious and without the curse of sin and death!

The Greek word "**ouranos**" that is translated "heaven" often refers to the atmosphere, the sky, and the stars.

- In Revelation 20 & 21, the Apostle John sees a "**new heaven and a new earth**," for the "**first heaven and the first earth had passed away**" (Revelation 21:1).
- This permanent "heaven" isn't some **other dimension with us floating on clouds** as "**spirit beings**".
- What's being described is this-- **a new, perfect, and completely glorified earth** and a new, perfect, and completely glorified universe (with **glorified bodies!**)

PROBLEM #1 THE APOSTLES WERE LIARS (VS. 14-15)

All the preaching done by the apostles was **pointless** and anyone who believed their words had placed faith in nothingness (vs. 14).

PROBLEM #2 OUR FAITH IS POINTLESS (VS. 17)

The **resurrection of Jesus** was the proof that God accomplished our salvation on the cross; so if Christ didn't rise, **His death didn't do anything**.

PROBLEM #3 WE WILL NEVER AGAIN SEE THE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE ALREADY DIED (VS. 18)

If we don't believe in the physical, bodily resurrection of Christ or of those who are in Christ, what hope for the afterlife are we left with?

PROBLEM #4 WE'RE PEOPLE TO BE PITIED (VS. 19)

If this life is all there is, then **becoming a Christian could be the dumbest decision** one could ever make.

Paul will say in vs. 32-- "If the dead are not raised, "Let us **eat and drink**, for tomorrow we die!"

THE LAST ENEMY DESTROYED (1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28)

Having established the **reality** of the resurrection (vs. 1-11) and the **necessity** for believing in the resurrection (vs. 12-19), Paul now turns to the **sequence** of the resurrection.

- The resurrection of believers **doesn't immediately follow Christ's resurrection**, but it will happen in the future.
- Jesus' resurrection **set into motion a process that will conclude with the arrival of the end** and the coming of the kingdom in its fullness.

CHRIST IS THE "FIRSTFRUITS" (VS. 20).

In the OT, the offering of "**firstfruits**" was brought to **represent and anticipate** the rest of the harvest (Lev. 23:9-14).

- In the same way, **the resurrection of Jesus represents our resurrection (we've been united to Christ, Rom. 6:5)**, and anticipates our resurrection, because **we'll someday be raised with a body like His** (Phil. 3:21).

Just as **humanity was brought under death** by the sin of one man (Adam), so too we will experience resurrection from the dead by one man (Jesus, vs. 21).

- Because **we've inherited the curse of sin and death by being born into Adam**, we will all die. And because of Christ, all will be resurrected in the sense that all of our bodies will be brought back (vs. 22).

Jesus plainly spoke of both **the resurrection of life and the resurrection of condemnation** (John 5:29).

- So, all are resurrected, but not all will **receive the resurrection of eternal life**-- some will receive the resurrection of condemnation, where they will **spend eternity in hell** (Daniel 12:2).
- Resurrection is done in sequence-- Christ first, then us later at His coming (vs. 23).

When Christ returns to the earth to judge, **He will destroy every rule, authority, and power** and reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (vs. 24-25).

- Paul is most likely referring to the **1,000-year reign of Jesus** described in Revelation 20:1-6.
- Various theological viewpoints abound on this, but it seems clear that **there will be resurrected believers who rule and reign with Christ** and share in His glory and authority during this time.

Death will still be present during the **millennial reign of Jesus** (Revelation 20:9; Isaiah 65:20), but afterward, death will be abolished -- it is truly **the last enemy that will be destroyed** (vs. 27).

- When history comes to a close and everything is subjected to the Son, **death and Satan will be defeated and Jesus will subject Himself** to the Father, hand over the kingdom to the Father, and submit Himself to the Father (vs. 24, 28).

So why does Jesus come back to this earth and spend 1,000 years ruling over it with His people?

- To demonstrate **what this earth can be under the rule and reign of God**.
- To bring **humanity back to its original purpose of bringing the earth** under submission to the purposes of God and being under it ourselves.
- To demonstrate that **God is deeply committed to the restoration of all things**.

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS.

- **Physical death**, aging, and sickness have been seen throughout history as humanity's greatest enemies.
- **Death is an inevitability**-- and without Christ what comes after death is one giant mystery.
- **Our bodies will one day break down** and give out; but in Christ we have a **living hope** of an eternal life full of restored bodies and a restored creation!
- **Broken relationships** come from sin -- sin has broken our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with others.
- **God sent Jesus to restore** our relationship with Him.
- **Jesus restores our relationship** with ourselves so that we see ourselves properly-- not as a god and not as garbage, but as a son or daughter!
- **God is deeply committed** to restoring our relationships with others.
- **Without Christ**, we are spiritually dead; enslaved to the world, Satan, and our flesh; and under the wrath of God and the curse of death (Eph. 2:1-3).
- **We are guilty**, and deep down we know we are, even if we pretend not to know (Rom. 1:18).
- **We have failed** to acknowledge and honor God, and we have declared ourselves smarter than Him (Rom. 1:21-22).
- **In His goodness**, God has graciously made a way for guilty sinners to be forgiven and restored (Rom. 5:8).
- **Your sin debt was paid in full** by the loving and gracious sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (Rom. 6:23).
- **God is so good, merciful, gracious, slow to anger and forgiving** that He was willing to send His own son to die in your place the death that you rightfully deserve (1 John 3:16) so you can be restored!