

# *Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant*

## #23 - First Fruits: I'll Have A New Body

The gospel of Jesus Christ has as its central theme and message the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead with the resulting hope of resurrection and eternal life for every person who puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. In I Cor. 15, Paul deals with the subject of death and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. [1] Paul clearly shows how a denial of the resurrection of the dead is a denial of the gospel of Jesus Christ. [2] Paul demonstrates how believing in the gospel gives a person hope for the next world as well as in this present world. Christianity has never envisioned an ethereal, wispy eternity where we exist simply as souls forever. The historic Christian view has always been that God will one day raise our bodies from the dead. The Apostles Creed, accepted by all branches of Christianity for over 1500 years, states, "I believe . . . In the resurrection of the body." Heaven is a reality but The Resurrection Of Our Bodies Into The New Heavens And New Earth Is Our Ultimate Hope As Christians. I Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

### *The Problem in Corinth:*

I Cor. 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

It was not the resurrection of our Lord which was denied by some at Corinth, but rather the resurrection of the dead, the resurrection of men.

The denial of the resurrection of the dead is a denial of Scriptural teaching:

John 5:28-29 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which ALL who are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of damnation."

[Daniel 12:1-3; Mark 12:24-27; I Thess. 4:13-18]

Scripture teaches: We are to fix our hope not first and foremost upon the fact that we go to heaven when we die, but rather upon the fact that God will raise us from the dead to be with Christ forever *in our bodies*.

Paul: Rom. 8:23: we are "*waiting eagerly* for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."

### 1. Denying The Resurrection Of The Dead

- The Greek pagans denied the resurrection of the dead. It is the teaching and philosophies of men. Paul's sermon in Athens:

Acts 17:30-32 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:<sup>31</sup> Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. <sup>32</sup> And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

2. The Greeks believed in the immortality of men as spirits, but they rejected God's teaching that He raises the dead so they may stand in judgment before God.

Verses 1-11 point out the historical authentication of the resurrection of Christ.

I Cor. 15:1-11 Paul lays a foundation by reiterating the role of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ in the gospel message.

The resurrection is based upon the most irrefutable evidence possible—the eyewitness testimony of over 500 people on various occasions and over a period of time.

I Cor. 15:12-19 What If Christ Had Not Been Raised From The Dead?

I Cor. 15:12-19 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: <sup>14</sup> And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. <sup>15</sup> Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

<sup>16</sup> For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

<sup>17</sup> And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

<sup>18</sup> Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

<sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

[We are wasting our life believing something that isn't true.]

Question: Why be a Christian if we have only suffering in this life and no future glory to anticipate? The resurrection of Jesus Christ & bodily resurrection of believers is crucial!

Key: There is a connection between God's redemptive plan and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of believers.

His "If ... then ..." argument was simply to show the folly of rejecting the resurrection of the dead, a claim which directly contradicts the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

I Cor. 15:12 ff: Paul shows the Consequence Of Denying Bodily Resurrection.

1. If dead men do not rise, then what?
2. Christ is not risen if dead men don't rise.
3. If you say there is no resurrection of the dead, then you must conclude that Christ did not rise from the dead either.
4. Yet God provided undeniable proof for Christ's resurrection [>500 witnesses, etc.]
5. The apostles preached Christ crucified, buried and raised again from the dead. 15:3-4
6. Their ministry would be in vain if Christ did not actually rise from the grave.  
These men had risked their lives and made monumental sacrifices for a message that was false and had no saving power.
7. The faith of all who believed the gospel message would be in vain; useless & empty
8. If Christ was not raised from the dead, then His death on Calvary was meaningless and you are still condemned sinners. Take away the resurrection and you take away the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is not merely the death; it is the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord which saves.

9. To deny the resurrection of our Lord is to condemn men as sinners, without hope of forgiveness and eternal life.
10. Those saints who have already "fallen asleep" [verse 18] have no hope beyond the grave. They are dead and gone.
11. It is an absolute disaster of all the Christian gospel and all of God's divine plan of redemption if there is no bodily resurrection of men.

I Cor. 15:20-23 But Christ Has Been Raised: Implications of His Resurrection

BUT NOW is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Consider: God's redemptive plan taken to its consummation. The resurrection is CRITICAL!

1. Jesus Christ arose and He CONTINUES TO LIVE. He was raised never to die.
2. Everything in God's plan demands the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of ALL believers in ALL ages. "Because I live, you will live also."

Genesis 1:26 God created man for fellowship with Him. There would be a race of people who were made in the image of God. God ordained that man would rule over and have dominion over various aspects of His creation.

Isa. 43:7a Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory,

Phil. 4:4 To enjoy Him forever: Rejoice in the Lord always!

However, man sinned, died a spiritual death immediately, would ultimately die a physical death, and lost the dominion God had given him.

Prov. 19:21 Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand.

God's plan of reconciliation and redemption is woven into the pages of His Word. He is bringing a people who will be in the image of His Son and rule and reign with Him in His coming kingdom.

Our Bodily Resurrection Is Critical To The Redemptive Plan Of God.

#### A. The Redeemer

"Christ, the One who has been raised from the dead, is the firstfruits of those who are asleep."

- Firstfruits = first of crop to be harvested
- When the firstfruits came in, you KNEW the rest of the crop was on the way.
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the guarantee of the full resurrection harvest.
- Jesus said He would be like a seed buried in the ground that would burst forth into life. As He comes to life, He guarantees the full harvest will come in the future.
- We will have a resurrection like His: We will be raised to life and never die again.

John 11:25-26 I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: <sup>26</sup> And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

## B. The Redeemed

I Cor. 15: 23 "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

1. The Christian hope is the coming of Christ at the end of the age.
2. For Now: Bodies stay in the grave and decay.
3. At His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, there will be a great resurrection of the godly of all the ages.

This First Resurrection Comes In Various Stages

1. Jesus Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection. He paved the way for all believers.
2. The Rapture of the Church is a signless event whereby Jesus Christ receives unto Himself the believers during the Church Age.
  - The "dead in Christ" will be resurrected.

I Thess. 4:16-17 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

<sup>17</sup> Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1. Sometime after the Rapture, the Tribulation, Time of Jacob's Trouble, will begin. It is described in great detail in Rev. 6-19.
2. A dictator and a 10 nation group emerges in the Middle East. A time of peace follows as this dictator enters into a covenant with Israel that will last for 7 years. [Dan. 9:27]
3. The dictator breaks the covenant after 3 ½ years and a period of persecution ensues.
4. Dan. 9:27 & Matt. 24:15: He desecrates the Jewish temple, stops all sacrifices and begins worldwide persecution of the Jews.
5. He claims to be God and demands worship. No one can buy or sell without his mark. [Rev. 13:8, 17]
6. At the end of the 7 year Tribulation, Jesus Christ will return to judge and establish His Kingdom on earth for 1000 years.
7. Jesus Christ destroys the armies who unite to fight the hosts of the Lord. [Rev. 19]
8. The beast and the false prophet are cast in the Lake Of Fire. [Rev. 20]
9. Rev. 20: The Tribulation Martyrs and the OT Saints will be raised and receive glorified bodies. This is the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection.
10. Satan is bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years.
11. The sheep & goat judgment takes place. The "sheep" are eligible to enter Jesus Christ's Millennial Kingdom in their flesh & blood bodies to repopulate the earth. The "goats" are cast into the Lake of Fire.
12. The Earth will be renovated like the Garden of Eden.
13. Israel will be in the Promised Land.
14. Israel's Jewish Temple will be the world's major establishment.
15. Jesus Christ will rule and reign on the earth for 1000 years.

### C. The Redemption

What is one purpose of redemption? It is so God can give to His Son a Kingdom made up of people who will love Him, worship Him, adore Him and serve Him forever and ever.

Christ is capturing His Kingdom of resurrected human beings, the redeemed of all the ages: The church, the Old Testament saints, Tribulation saints. They are all resurrected.

"Then comes the end...the end." *Telos*, the finale - I Cor.15:24-26

<sup>24</sup> Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

<sup>25</sup> For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

<sup>26</sup> The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

The goal, the purpose, the design of history, the objective, the consummation of all things:

- When Christ hands over the Kingdom to the God and Father,
- When He has abolished all rule and all authority and power,
- For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet,
- The last enemy that will be abolished is death, for He has put all things in subjection under His feet. Death and Hell are cast into the Lake of Fire. [Rev. 20:14]

Paul: Those who deny the resurrection of the dead also, by implication, deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. You are not looking for the coming Kingdom Of God.
2. You are not looking for the last and final victory of Jesus Christ over death.
  - His final victory is achieved by the resurrection of the unbelieving dead and the banishing of death to the lake of fire.
3. When the final enemy is defeated, the kingdom of our Lord is secured.
4. Jesus Christ subjects Himself to God by handing the kingdom over to the Father.
5. The resurrection of the dead [men] is a vital part of the gospel and it plays a crucial role in the establishment of the kingdom of God. Who would dare to deny?

I Cor. 15:33-34 Paul reveals the source of their error regarding a bodily resurrection.

- Illicit fellowship had caused them to become soft on sin and left them vulnerable to doctrinal deviation which would validate their sin.
- They had failed to separate themselves from the pagan culture in which they lived. They began to esteem and emulate those who spoke with worldly wisdom.
- The objections to the resurrection of the body are the result of a lack of faith in the God who is the Creator of all "bodies" and who raised our Lord from the dead.

II Tim. 4:1-4 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who Shall Judge The Quick And The Dead At His Appearing And His Kingdom; <sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

<sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

<sup>4</sup> And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

### I Cor. 15:50-53 The Necessity of a New Body

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. <sup>51</sup> Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

<sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

- All believers in Christ will be clothed with bodies fit for eternity in the presence of God. In the light of this truth of the resurrection from the grave, we know that our earthly toil and labor is not in vain but is an eternal investment.

### I Cor. 15:54-57 Christ's Triumph (and Ours) Over Death

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. <sup>55</sup> O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

1. Death has now power to those who are in Christ.
2. True doctrine gives us stability, even in the midst of troubled times and in the face of false teaching. False teaching destabilizes Christians.

Prov. 12:3 A man will not be established by wickedness, But the root of the righteous will not be moved.

3. True doctrine inspires diligent service, while false doctrine leads to passivity.
4. The certainty of the coming kingdom of God in the future assures us that what we do "in the Lord" in this life is not in vain. The reason we can diligently serve God in this life is that we know that in so doing we are "laying up treasure in heaven."

II Cor. 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.