

I Corinthians 15 The Resurrection of Christ

I Cor. 15: 1-11 Paul establishes the historical reliability of Jesus' resurrection as the first step in the resurrection of Christians. Paul received this information from others as well as Jesus Himself and was being led by the Holy Spirit in the writing of this epistle. He also is referencing the prophecy of Isaiah 53: 3-12. The resurrection and the empty tomb were verified by Cephas, Aramaic for Peter, and John and the twelve disciples (including Matthias the replacement for Judas). Most of these were still alive to verify these words of Paul, including the Apostles, all of whom had seen the Risen Christ. Paul acknowledges his persecution of the church, yet Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus Road. His main concern after his conversion is the Gospel be preached and advanced.

I Cor. 15: 12-34 The Resurrection of the Dead

Paul now shows the connection between the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of believers at the last day. The Corinthians believed Jesus was raised on the third day but did not believe that His followers would be raised. This is a common belief today with people who are informed about Jesus but not what it means to be a believer in the resurrection. Jesus' death was truly a substitutionary sacrifice for sins and the resurrection of Christ from the dead is proof. If this has not happened, we are still lost in our sins and have no hope of heaven.

Read 2 Cor. 5: 1-8 and Philippians 1: 19-26 Paul believed that those who died in faith went to be with the Lord immediately after their death. At the resurrection on the last day, the believer's eternal existence would continue with a new body, just as Christ was raised from the dead with a resurrection body. God raised his Son Jesus as the first fruits, the first of many who would be raised from the dead. Just as the first of the harvest indicates what will be harvested, the resurrection of Christ gives hope to believers they too will experience a resurrection body.

He then builds the case that as Adam was the first to die in sin, Jesus is the first to be raised and all who believe shall be made alive after their death. When Christ returns all will receive resurrection bodies made perfect in Christ. Until that time believers who have died are in heaven – read 2 Cor. 5:8, Heb 12:23, Rev. 6:9. At the final resurrection, the destruction of death is complete. Finally, all creation will be as at the beginning, perfect and without death. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit and all creation will be in perfect harmony, subject to God's supreme authority, never to be threatened again. John Calvin helps us understand 1 Cor. 15:29 concerning the "baptism of the dead." "that the baptism which those received (believers) who are already regarded as dead, will be of no avail if there is no resurrection." Calvin also references Chrysostom, Ambrose and other early church fathers that it was a custom in Corinth when a believer who died before they had been baptized, a substitute believer would be baptized at the grave of the deceased. This practice was filled with superstition, an old wives tale. Paul addresses this error just as he had the other errors being practiced in Corinth. Without a final resurrection, all is in vain. All actions taken in the name of Christ are vain if there is no resurrection of the dead. Facing persecution with grace is in vain if there is no resurrection. If the resurrection is not real, live only for the day as all else would be in vain.

I Cor. 15: 35-38 The Resurrection Body

Corinthians could not understand how a decayed body could live eternally. He explains that God change the bodies of believers to make them immortal. Paul uses illustrations from the natural world showing

that there will be new resurrection bodies, the perishable will be raised imperishable. As Adam was made from the dust, believers are raised as the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, which came from heaven. At the final resurrection, all will be given a spiritual body, one that is a new creation empowered by the Holy Spirit. Corruptible, human bodies cannot inherit the kingdom, therefore, in the resurrection of the dead, the incorruptible resurrection body of the believer will and can inherit the kingdom, bearing the image of Christ.

Christians who are alive at the time of the final day and resurrection will be transformed so their bodies become spiritual and immortal like those who are being resurrected. (Read I Thess. 4: 13-18) Death is swallowed up in victory, and Satan is finally destroyed. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But death is no more as God gives us the victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, our belief in Christ and His resurrection gives us courage to live for Him and to share this good news with a lost and hurt and dying world. Our labor will not be in vain!

1 Corinthians 16: 1-24 The Collection for the Saints

I Cor. 16: 1-12 The Collection and Travel Plans Paul informs the Corinthians of his plans and their ministry together. Paul instructs them to collect an offering for the church in Jerusalem. On the first day of the week, Sunday, during worship, collect funds for this cause so when he sends them for it, the offering will be ready. They are to deliver it to Jerusalem in order that there be no question of his possible misuse of funds. Paul will be traveling from Ephesus (where this letter was written) through Macedonia. He plans to stay in Ephesus through Pentecost, springtime, to avoid the winter storms and to continue to deal with issues there. Timothy is already on his way to Corinth and calls on them to welcome him as his representative. He is also urging Apollos to visit Corinth.

I Cor. 16: 13-24 Closing Admonitions and Greetings Paul encourages the church to “act like men,” a phrase used in Greek scripture, to act with courage and strength in obedience to the Lord, to be confident in His power. He also encourages them to be co-workers with the elders there and to serve them, respecting their authority. Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus probably were the ones who delivered the Corinthian letter to Paul, and in his response, I Corinthians, to welcome them home with his appreciation and his greeting. They are to greet each other with a holy kiss. This was called for in the Old Testament as a way of showing welcome and love for one another. It is the same way we look someone in the eye and shake their hand. This custom comes from a time when the open hand showed there was no weapon nor animosity towards the ones meeting. This custom has ceased through time, except among families. It most likely ceased because of mistruths of sexual immorality being spread by those opposed to the Gospel and the church.

Most likely Paul dictated this letter and then signed it in his own hand as a way of showing his love and respect for the Corinthian church. Paul ends the letter calling for fidelity to Christ and to pray for His swift return. The phrase “Our Lord, come!” in Aramaic is marana tha or maranatha.