

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

First Corinthians – Chapter 15

Chapter 15

THE GOSPEL!

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.” (vv1-2)

Paul starts this chapter with focusing the attention of his readers to the gospel. He is refocusing the attention of his readers because an error had entered the church where they had generally believed that there is no resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of the dead is crucial to the Christian faith and form the basis of the gospel. If you don't believe in the resurrection of the dead, then your believe in anything “gospel” is vain.

“For I have shared with you what I have received and what is of utmost importance: The Messiah died for our sins, fulfilling the prophecies of the Scriptures. He was buried in a tomb and was raised from the dead after three days, as foretold in the Scriptures. Then he appeared to Peter the Rock and to the twelve apostles.” (vv3-5 TPT)

The gospel is explained in 3 clear steps:

1. Jesus (the Messiah) died for our sins (Genesis 3:15)
2. He was buried and was raised from the dead after 3 days (Ps. 16:9-10; Luke 24:25-27, 44-46)
3. He appeared to many as confirmation of His resurrection. Christ supernaturally appeared (manifested) to his followers. More than 515 followers of Jesus saw him after his resurrection.

The following 3 verses in this chapter listed categories of people that Jesus appeared to after his resurrection.

“After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, the majority of whom are still alive, but some have fallen asleep [in death]. Then He was seen by James, then by all the apostles, and last of all, as to one untimely (prematurely, traumatically) born, He appeared to me also.” (vv6-8 AMP)

Why did Jesus appear to these people after resurrection?

To show His followers that He resurrected from the dead and leave them without doubt. This will be vital for the continuation of the gospel.

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:1-3)

Question: Is Paul the last Apostle?

“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.” (vv9-11)

Paul was indicating that he was not worthy to be called an Apostle and that he was born, as it were, prematurely without any worthiness. Why? Because he persecuted the church of God.

With this humility and sense of gratitude, he has put his all into the propagation of the gospel and laboured more abundantly than his contemporaries in this kingdom work.

RESURRECTION!

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (v12)

It appears that the Church in Corinth is embracing an error in doctrine by saying that there is no resurrection from the dead. Paul’s writing is to correct this error.

What are the consequences of “no resurrection” doctrine?

1. Christ is not risen (v13)
2. Our preaching is empty, and your faith is also empty (v14)
3. We are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up (v15)
4. Your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! (v17)
5. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (v18)
6. If the only benefit of our hope in Christ is limited to this life on earth, we deserve to be pitied more than all others! (v19 TPT)

The Truth About Resurrection

“But the truth is, Christ is risen from the dead, as the first fruit of a great resurrection harvest of those who have died. For since death came through a man, Adam, it is fitting that the resurrection of the dead has also come through a man, Christ. Even as all who are in Adam die, so also all who are in Christ will be made alive. But each one in his proper order: Christ, the first fruit, then those who belong to Christ in his presence” (vv20-23 TPT)

Paul affirms the truth and that is: Christ is risen from the dead. The angel of God announced it:

“But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”” (Matthew 28:5-7)

3 Key Points:

1. Jesus is the first fruit of the great resurrection harvest of those who died.
2. Death came through one man – Adam and therefore, resurrection from the dead also comes from one man – Jesus.
3. In Adam, all die and in Christ, all is made alive.

The Last Enemy

“Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (vv24-26)

The last enemy of mankind is death. Death will be destroyed at the latter end. This is the pattern:

1. Christ the first fruit from the dead (v23)
2. Then everyone who died in Christ that will be resurrected (v23)
3. Then the end starts... When all that are dead in Christ are raised, He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father.
4. At this same point, Jesus will have put to end all rule of principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness of this world.
5. The last enemy Jesus will deal with is death.

“The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelations 20:13-15)

Confused Corinthians

“If there is no resurrection, what do these people think they’re doing when they are baptized for the dead? If the dead aren’t raised, why be baptized for them?” (v29 TPT)

Why Water Baptism if there is no resurrection from the dead? Paul is asking the question as to why they will engage in water baptism which symbolises the death and resurrection of Jesus when there are no resurrection from the dead?

This church is really confused.

Paul’s Personal Case for Resurrection:

“And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”” (vv30-32)

Because of his firm assurance of the resurrection from the dead and particularly, the resurrection of Jesus, Paul states that:

- He stands in jeopardy every hour.
- He dies daily.
- He fought with beasts at Ephesus for this same cause.

Therefore, if the dead do not rise, then let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die and that is the end.

Theology Based on Sin.

“Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.” (vv33-34)

Could it be that the reason for this erroneous doctrine is the desire for sin? Paul admonishes the church that they should not be deceived. Evil companions will corrupt good morals and character. The Passion Translation puts it more directly:

“Come back to your right senses and awaken to what is right. Repent from your sinful ways. For some have no knowledge of God’s wonderful love. You should be ashamed that you make me write this way to you!” (v34 TPT)

How Would the Resurrected Body Look Like?

“I can almost hear someone saying, “How can the dead come back to life? And what kind of body will they have when they are resurrected?”” (v35 TPT)

Paul used the illustration of a seed dying and taking a new form in its germinated life. For example, you plant a corn and when it grows, it comes in plant form and a cub etc.

“But when it dies, God gives it a new form, a body to fulfil his purpose, and he sees to it that each seed gets a new body of its own and becomes the plant he designed it to be.” (v38 TPT).

The conclusion Paul is giving us here is that our resurrected body will suit our new purpose and environment of our new world.

“All flesh is not identical. Animals have one flesh and human beings another. Birds have their distinct flesh and fish another. In the same way there are earthly bodies and heavenly bodies. There is a splendour of the celestial body and a different one for the earthly. There is the radiance of the sun and differing radiance for the moon and for the stars. Even the stars differ in their shining. And that’s how it will be with the resurrection of the dead.” (vv39-42 TPT)

Difference Between the Seed (Our Natural State) and the Harvest (Our Celestial State):

“The body is “sown” in decay but will be raised in immortality. It is “sown” in humiliation but will be raised in glorification. It is “sown” in weakness but will be raised in power. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.” (vv43-44)

We can depict these differences in a tabular format:

| Natural | Celestial |
|--|--|
| Sown in Decay | Raised in Immortality |
| Sown in Humiliation | Raised in Glorification |
| Sown in Weakness | Raised in Power |
| Physical Body | Spiritual Body |
| First Adam – Living Soul | Last Adam – Life Giving Spirit (v45) |
| Natural First | Spiritual Last(v46) |
| First man was from the dust of the earth | Second Man is the Lord Jehovah (v47) |
| The first one, made from dust | The One sent from heaven has a race of heavenly people who are just like him (v48) |

“Once we carried the likeness of the man of dust, but now let us carry the likeness of the Man of heaven.” (v49)

The Mystery of Resurrection

“Now I say this, believers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit nor be part of the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable (mortal) inherit the imperishable (immortal). Listen very carefully, I tell you a mystery [a secret truth decreed by God and previously hidden, but now revealed]; we will not all sleep [in death], but we will all be [completely] changed [wondrously transformed], in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at [the sound of] the last trumpet call. For a trumpet will sound, and the dead [who believed in Christ] will be raised imperishable, and we will be [completely] changed [wondrously transformed]. For this perishable [part of us] must put on the imperishable [nature], and this mortal [part of us that is capable of dying] must put on immortality [which is freedom from death]. And when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the Scripture will be fulfilled that says, “Death is swallowed up in victory (vanquished forever).” (vv50-54 AMP)

This is a clear picture of the Rapture. The Catching away of the saints of God. It is a mystery and not fully understood except we take it literal as it has been stated.

The Relationship Between Sin & Death

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin [by which it brings death] is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory [as conquerors] through our Lord Jesus Christ." (vv56-57 AMP)

It is sin that gives death its sting and the law that gives sin its power. But we thank God for giving us the victory as conquerors through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One. We have the victory over sin and therefore death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Final Admonition:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (v58)