

CHRIST, THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE RESURRECTION

BIBLE TEXT : I Corinthians 15:1-58

LESSON 327 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Corinthians 15:1-58

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;
² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.
³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
⁵ And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:
⁶ After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.
⁷ After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.
⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.
⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon 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.
¹¹ Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Fact of Christ's Resurrection

1. It is according to the Scriptures, I Corinthians 15:1-4;
Psalms 16:9
⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.
¹⁰ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
2. It is verified by witnesses, I Corinthians 15:5-7;
Acts 4:33
³³ And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.
Acts 10:40-41
⁴⁰ Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;
⁴¹ Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.
3. Paul was himself a witness, I Corinthians 15:8-11;
Acts 9:4
⁴ And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
Acts 9:17
¹⁷ And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.
Acts 22:14
¹⁴ And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.
Acts 22:18
¹⁸ And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

II The Importance of Christ's Resurrection

1. It is proof that the dead rise, I Corinthians 15:12-15;
Acts 1:3
³ To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:
2. It is the foundation of our faith, I Corinthians 15:16,17;
Romans 4:25
²⁵ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.
Romans 10:9
⁹ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
3. It is our hope of eternal life, I Corinthians 15:18,19;
1 Thessalonians 4:14
¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, *even* so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

III The Order of the Resurrection

1. Christ is the firstfruits, I Corinthians 15:20-22;

believed.

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?

¹³ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

¹⁴ And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

¹⁸ Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

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

²⁰ But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.

²¹ For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

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

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

²⁶ The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

²⁷ For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all

Exodus 22:29

²⁹ Thou shalt not delay *to offer* the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

Leviticus 23:10

¹⁰ Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

Proverbs 3:9

⁹ Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

2. The ingathering of the saints follows at the time of the Rapture, I Corinthians 15:23;

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

¹⁶ 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:

¹⁷ 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.

4. Christ will abolish death at the final resurrection, I Corinthians 15:24-28;

Revelation 20:14

¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

5. Paul presents arguments to substantiate the fact of the resurrection, I Corinthians 15:29-34.

IV The Manner of the Resurrection

1. The physical and spiritual are compared, I Corinthians 15:35-50;

2 Corinthians 5:1-4

¹ For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

³ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

⁴ For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

2. The physical bodies of living believers will be instantly changed at Christ's coming, I Corinthians 15:51-53;

Philippians 3:20

²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Philippians 3:21

²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

2. Death is swallowed up in victory, I Corinthians 15:54-58;

Revelation 21:4

⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

NOTES:

According to the Scriptures

"How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Paul preached a Gospel of the resurrection of the dead, but some of the Corinthians failed to receive the message. For

things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

²⁸ And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

²⁹ Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

³⁰ And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

³¹ I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

³² If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

³³ Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

³⁴ Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

³⁵ But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

³⁶ *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

³⁷ And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*:

³⁸ But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

³⁹ All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds.

⁴⁰ *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the

this reason Paul restated the Gospel he preached, saying that first of all — that is, of most importance — was the fact that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. He was careful to point out that it was according to the Scriptures that Christ died for our sins. He no doubt had this passage of Scripture in mind, among others: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed . . . he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (Isaiah 53:5-9). Paul pointed out, too, that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was also according to the Scriptures — "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10).

Eyewitnesses

Further proof of Christ's resurrection was in those living witnesses who knew Him before His death and saw Him afterward — Cephas, the twelve, five hundred brethren at once, James, and all the Apostles. These all gave witness to His resurrection; and should all these witnesses be denied? Paul could say, I saw Him! While Paul believed the witness of the others who saw Christ, yet the greatest evidence he had of the resurrection was his own contact with the risen Saviour. Although our natural eyes have not beheld Him, the greatest evidence we have of a living Saviour is the consciousness that our sins have been taken away and that Christ rules within our life. Our faith is not vain because we know that Christ died for our sins, "and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

Our Hope

The hope of every saint of God from the beginning to the end of time is wrapped up in the resurrection of the dead. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Job had the assurance of the resurrection of his body and wanted it emphatically known when he cried out: "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:23-27).

Firstfruits

Under the Law the Israelites were to bring of the first of their harvest as an offering unto the Lord. God promised that if they would do this their barns would be filled with plenty. "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9,10). These firstfruits that were offered were a token of the harvest that was to follow. Thus Christ, when He arose from the dead, became the "firstfruits of them that slept." He was the first to come forth from the dead in a glorified body. He was the firstfruits — the token or promise of the resurrected bodies that shall come forth from the grave at His coming. A Christian's hope of the resurrection is a living hope, for the firstfruits have already been gathered and the harvest is sure to follow.

glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another.

⁴¹ *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory.

⁴² So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

⁴³ It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

⁴⁵ And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.

⁴⁶ Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

⁴⁷ The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven.

⁴⁸ As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.

⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² 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.

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must*

The Order of the Resurrection

Not all the dead shall come forth when Christ raptures the overcomers from this earth, just before the tribulation. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." It appears that there will also be a resurrection of the tribulation saints at the revelation of Christ (Revelation 20:4). "Then cometh the end, . . ." After the thousand years' reign of Christ on this earth the wicked dead are raised. "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; And death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:12-14). This is the end and final triumph of Christ over death, the last of His enemies. In the new Heaven and new earth "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Water Baptism

To further confirm his arguments for the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, Paul points to the Christian mode of water baptism by immersion. This symbolises being buried with Christ in death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" This question points out the folly of immersing people in water and then bringing them up in the likeness of a resurrection if there be no resurrection. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:3-5).

Mortal and Immortal

The question arises, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" To answer this, Paul gives us the beautiful example of a grain of wheat planted in the ground. The grain decays, but out of its substance comes forth a shoot that produces a kernel like the one that was planted. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body". "It is raised in incorruption." What a thrilling hope: this natural body going down to death in weakness, corruption, and dishonour, and then being raised a spiritual body in glory, power, and incorruption, retaining the resemblance of the human body, but also bearing the image of the heavenly! No longer as mortal is it subject to pain, disease, and infirmities, but as immortal it knows no sorrows. Each blade of grass that shoots forth after a winter's frost, and the tulips, lilies, daffodils, and myriads of blossoms that awaken after lying dormant under the frozen earth, are tokens that on the resurrection day every sleeping saint shall rise to life immortal.

The Living Changed

Another mystery unfolded by the Apostle is that all shall not go

put on immortality.

⁵⁴ 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.

⁵⁵ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

down to the grave in corruption, but that some Christians shall be alive at that glorious day when Jesus "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: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" (I Thessalonians 4:16,17). At that moment the living Christian overcomers will be instantly changed from the natural to the spiritual or glorified body. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to us that Christ rose from the dead?
2. What proof have we of the resurrection of Christ?
3. What is the significance of Christ's being called the first-fruits of the resurrection?
4. What is the last enemy of Christ that will be destroyed?
5. How does water baptism typify the resurrection?
6. What lesson do we receive from grain concerning the resurrection?
7. Name some of the witnesses of the resurrection.
8. What will happen to the bodies of those who make the Rapture?
9. Who was "the last Adam"?
10. What is the sting of death?