

STUDY IN THE BOOK OF 1st CORINTHIANS

POSITIVE LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD

LESSON 10

THE RESURRECTION AND CONCLUSION

1 Corinthians 15-16

Along with 1 Cor. 13 and Romans 8, this passage on the resurrection (chapter 15) has to be considered one of the three greatest chapters in the New Testament. Here is the earliest written account of the resurrection of our Lord.

THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND:

In order to better understand chapter 15, it is helpful to know something of the Greek view of the afterlife. They believed in the immortality of the soul but not in the resurrection of the body, inasmuch as they thought the body was the source of man's weakness and sin. Since death meant a release from the body, it was welcomed, but resurrection meant another encasement in a body and was therefore rejected. This was why they were so skeptical when Paul preached the resurrection at Athens (Acts 17:31, 32).

I. THE CENTRALITY OF THE RESURRECTION 15:1-34

A. The Resurrection of Christ Is an Integral Part of the Gospel 1-11

1. The precedence of the resurrection 1-4

The gospel is not merely the teaching that God loves us or that we should give our lives to God. It is good news of specific content. It is the truth that Christ died, was buried (which stops any talk of a "swooning" -- he really died), and came physically, literally back to life. This is the truth on which all human beings are asked to stake their eternal destiny by faith. It is this objective (outside of us) reality that is the power of God for our salvation, and is the gospel which we are to take to all men.

2. The proofs of the resurrection 5-11

a. Paul records six appearances of Christ.

- 1) Cephas 5
- 2) The "twelve" 5
- 3) Five hundred brethren 6
- 4) James 7
- 5) All the apostles 7
- 6) Paul 8

b. Additional appearances are recorded by the gospel writers.

- 1) Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18)
- 2) The other women (Matthew 28:9,10)
- 3) The two disciples (Luke 24:13-32)
- 4) Seven apostles (John 21)

c. We are not sure the list of appearances is complete.

No one writer mentions all of them. One reason is because it seems that part of Mark is missing. The ancient age never advertises the most personal of relationships; how about appearances to His mother, to Lazarus, to John?

POSITIVE LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD, LESSON 10

d. Luke tells us that all of the appearances came in 40 days.

Note the use of the biblical number, 40. We are not told its significance here. However, He is recorded to have appeared in only 6 of those 40 days. Seven appearances occur in Judea and three in Galilee. Five appearances are on one Sunday.

e. Note that all ten were only to believers with two exceptions.

Possibly to James his brother, a "half-believer", and to Saul, who was an unbeliever. The reasons for this may be:

1) It would have been of no benefit for His enemies because they would believe only what they chose.

2) It would have hardened their hearts since in life He refused to give them a sign. The appearance could only be profitable to those who had the capacity to understand the spiritual truth of it. An obvious refusal to accept evidence does not bring anymore evidence. Rather, God will take away what you already have.

B. The Resurrection of Christ Involves Faith in Other Resurrections

12-19

1. The logical connection of Christ's resurrection and ours 12

2. The logical catastrophes if Christ's resurrection is denied 13-19

a. Christianity would not be true.

If Christ did not come back to life in His body, then all gospel preachers have been mistaken, Christianity is a delusion, and all Christians are living in an illusion. Christ can give you the truth because He fulfilled the truth that He proclaimed.

b. We would not be forgiven.

If Christ is alive then He has already paid all the penalty for your sin. The resurrection is the proof that God accepted that paid penalty.

c. Dead loved ones would have perished and we would have no hope.

Because Christ is alive, He can give you eternal life so that you will never perish (I John 5:13).

d. Life would be pitiful and meaningless.

Jesus can make earthly life more meaningful in the midst of its seeming injustice. The hope of the Christian is that Jesus is coming again.

C. The Resurrection of Christ Involves the Resurrection of all 20-24

1. The comparison with Adam 20-22

2. The course of the resurrections 23-24

There is no general resurrection for both believers and nonbelievers. Rather, there will be sequences of resurrections.

a. Christ first, then a big gap because God is not bound by time.

b. Believers are second (Rev. 20). All from Pentecost to the Rapture will be bodily raised from the dead.

c. Old Testament believers (Daniel 12:2). After the seven-year Tribulation, Old Testament believers will be raised.

d. Tribulation martyrs (Revelation 20:5,6).

e. All unbelieving dead 15:24 (Revelation 20:11-15).

"The end" in 15:24 means end of the kingdom as the rest of the verse makes clear. After the 1000-year (Millennium) reign of Christ on earth, all remaining unbelievers will be raised. Every man will stand before God in a resurrected body. This is what is called "The great white throne judgment."

D. The Resurrection of Christ Involves the Triumph of Christ 25-28

Following the millennial reign of the Messiah, the Messianic kingdom is merged into the eternal kingdom, and the Son incarnate rules with the triune God as the Son eternal. Paul's great answer to the philosophers is to turn the tables on them. They said there will be no resurrection; Paul says there will be no death!

E. The Resurrection of Christ Involves the Triumph of the Church 29-34

1. The church continues despite death 29

The best way to explain the "baptism for the dead" is that it refers to the practice of young converts who took the place in the church of older believers who had died. They pick up the standard left by the departed believers, and baptism is a symbol of this. Whatever it means, it cannot support the Mormon practice of baptizing by proxy for dead people. The Bible is clear that when you die, there is no second chance to be bought for you (Luke 16:19-31; Heb. 2:3; Rev. 22:11).

2. The church continues despite the threat of death 31-32

If there is no resurrection, and Christianity is a dream, what is the profit of serving Christ in the midst of hardship? The sensual way would be the only logical way, if there is no resurrection to guarantee the truth of all our hope.

3. The church continues despite those who deny 33-34

II. A CONSIDERATION OF THE OBJECTIONS TO RESURRECTION

15:35-57

A. How Are the Dead Raised?

This objection is answered in verse 36. The body's enemy, death, is the very means to resurrection.

B. With What Bodies Do They Come?

Paul answers this by the analogy of a grain of wheat. This implies several beautiful truths:

1. Continuity 36

In the resurrection body there is to be a continuity with the old body, but resurrection does not necessitate an exact duplication or correspondence of the molecular structure, because God will give each a body fitted to the new nature. It must be better and more glorious.

2. Identity 38

There will be an identity, an individuality. Yes, we will know each other in heaven.

3. Perfection 42-49

a. Imperishable 42

It will be a perfect body. It will never decay. When a man dies, his spirit goes immediately to the Lord and his consciousness never sleeps. In other words, you will know where you are. Fallen

POSITIVE LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD, LESSON 10

angels can enter a human body but the spirit of a dead man cannot. You will in a sense never die. Your spirit will live in ecstasy or in agony forever and ever. You cannot come back to the first life.

b. Glorious 43

c. Powerful 43

We will not be subject to disease, deterioration, weakness, tiredness, and infirmities.

d. Spirit adapted 44

We may not be subject to the laws of gravity or that succession of moments we call time, but the spirit will control the body.

e. Superior 39-41

Our bodies will be as superior to our present bodies as the human body is to the animals (39), as the heavens are to the earth (40), and as the sun is to the moon (41).

4. Change 50-54

We must be changed in order to enter into the presence of the Lord because flesh and blood cannot. Vs.44 -- the emphasis is on the body (Greek emphasizes the noun and not the adjectives). The stone was not rolled away to let the Lord out, but to let the disciples in. Likewise, no sod needs to be turned for a believer's body to be raised. The grave clothes need not be disturbed. In other words, cemeteries will look the same following the rapture.

Vs.52 -- This is the generation that shall never die. Our bodies will be changed before our thoughts can even expect it. Notice here that Paul never mentions heaven. Our real joy comes from being with the Lord Jesus Christ. The streets paved with gold points out the truth that the things which we think of as so precious will be so commonplace in heaven that even the streets could be paved with them. Our joy in heaven will be in Jesus and not in things.

"Corruption must put on incorruption" is a reference to the bodies of dead believers. "Mortal must put on immortality" is a reference to the bodies of living believers at the time of the rapture.

What about cremation? Some have objected to the practice of cremation on the grounds that its origin is in paganism, it does not recognize the sacredness of the body, and it denies the resurrection of the body. Others have argued that since our bodies decay, and since God will give a new body to the believer, it does not matter how the body is disposed back to dust. Scripture nowhere clearly forbids the practice, but it is important that it not be done out of any disrespect or mere disregard of the importance of our bodies.

III. THE CAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION 15:54-57

The resurrection reverses the effects of death. Death is man's great enemy. It entered the world through sin and only through the death of Jesus in our stead can we escape death. "He death by dying slew". Notice in verse 26 that even after the millennium, death is still the enemy. Too much of modern thought (suicide, euthanasia, etc.) treats death as if it were a friend.

The resurrection forever affirms that God is vitally interested not only in our souls but in our entire beings -- body, soul, and spirit.

Verse 58 -- Paul calls for less speculation and more work. The encouragement is to know that at the rapture there will be rewards. Our labor is not in vain, in spite of death cutting short our work here on earth.

IV. PRACTICAL AND PERSONAL MATTERS 16

A. Concerning the Collection 16:1-4

Paul kept the resurrection of the body and the collection on a spiritual equal. At this time there was a famine in Jerusalem.

1. A history of giving in the church

a. The 1st Century church support following the apostolic age:

- 1) Giving of the first fruits
- 2) General gifts
- 3) Tithes
- 4) Endowments

b. Middle Ages

Toward the middle ages, the gifts became so few that weird ways came into being, the church became supported by the state, and individuals gave less and less. The wealthy were able to buy their own pastorate. Indulgences paid for sins before they were committed. Relics were sold. Each church member was taxed, etc. Thus began the Reformation.

c. Modern

The church in America began only with sacrificial giving but began to change to giving on a legal basis, and from that to many kinds of revenue. One method was "glebes" -- taking land and setting it aside for the church. All revenue from glebes went to the church. Other means were pew renting, lotteries, etc. Remember that in the early days, in some states, church and state were not separated. Some churches even hired carnival men to run bazaars for the church. Even today there are raffles in many denominations.

2. God's Way To Finance

a. God knows that money represents you.

Money is your value, your time, talents, and strength, in a negotiable form. God is not interested in fund raising because He already owns all things and He owns you and all He has given you. He doesn't need your money for He could take it from somewhere else. God is interested in child raising -- that is, in you!

b. All belongs to God (I Cor.10:31; Matt.10:10; Col.3:17; I Cor.6:19-20).

c. God has ordained the support of the church (Matt.10:10; 1 Cor.9:6; 1 Tim.5:17; 2 Cor.11:8).

d. God ordained the method (1 Cor.16 and 2 Cor.9). Giving should be:

- 1) Periodic -- that is, the Lord's Day, the 1st of the week.
- 2) Personal -- "let each one of you" -- teach a child early that some of his income goes to the Lord.
- 3) Provisional.
- 4) Proportionate -- as God has prospered you.
- 5) Purposeful -- no appeals, no embarrassment, no giving grudgingly.
- 6) God will supply your needs (Philippians 4:19).

B. Concerning Paul's Plans to Visit 16:5-9

C. Commendations and Closing Comments 16:10-24

Anathema means to be the object of a curse. *Maranatha* can mean, "Our Lord, come"; "Our Lord is come"; or "Our Lord comes." The last is probably what Paul meant. We had best be ready.

CONCLUSION

The letter closes with exhortations and a warning. Paul ends with a lovely statement that lets his readers know his tough message has been given in love and that he loves them all -- the wayward as well as the faithful.

Note: There are not study questions for this lesson.