



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 15

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Introduction

- In this chapter St. Paul deals with the resurrection of the dead because there were teachers at Corinth claiming there would be no resurrection
- St. Paul answers first by reminding them of the gospel of resurrection which they received (1-11)
- He then proceeds to verify the resurrection with several different lines of argumentation (12-34)
- Then he answered another question concerning how the dead will be raised (35-58)

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- There were some false teachers proclaiming that the resurrection is the resurrection of the soul from sin to a new life (2 Tim 2:18), and a resurrection after death was impossible
- The doctrine of the resurrection was absurd, according to the Grecian ideas (Acts 17:32)
- The epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, written about the beginning of the second century, refers to these freethinkers

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- He states the fundamentals of that gospel as the basis of the argument he is about to make
- That gospel was common ground, for they received it and still professed it
- By this gospel you are in a saved state unless you have forgotten the gospel preached and departed from it
- You have believed in vain, would be the case if there was no resurrection

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- St. Paul first presents facts conceded by all the disciples, and upon these builds his argument
- Note the three facts which St. Paul declares to be the gospel, the death, the burial, and the resurrection
- These facts, St. Paul received by revelation as well as from men (Gal 1:12)
- According to the scriptures: (Isa 53:1-12). The Lord Jesus Christ quotes it in Lk 22:37

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- According to Scriptures in v.4 (Ps 16:10) as predicting the resurrection. See Acts 13:35
- He now gives the proof of these facts
- The women saw Christ before Peter (Cephas), but St. Paul names the witnesses who would carry most weight to the Corinthians.
- For the appearance to Peter, see Lk 24:34
- Then by the twelve. See Mt 28:17; Jn 20:19,25

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- No other account of the appearance to the 500 is recorded
- It is probable that it took place in Galilee where Christ repeatedly directed the disciples to gather
- It is possible that Mt 28:16 refers to it
- St. Paul had no doubt seen some of the five hundred brethren, the greater part of whom were still alive when he wrote
- James: the Lord's brother, not James the apostle

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- This James was prominent, when St. Paul wrote, as the chief bishop at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; 21:18) and the author of the epistle of James
- James, the apostle, had been killed by Herod (Acts 12:2)
- Then by all the apostles. See Lk 24:50
- Last of all he was seen by me. See Acts 9:4
- St. Paul considers himself as one born out of due time, why?

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- As far as human worth is concerned, he is not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God
- He could never forget that he had been a persecutor. See Acts 9:1,2; 22:4; 26:11; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6, 1 Tim 1:13
- But also he does not forget God's grace
- By God's grace he had been enabled to do a more abundant work than any other apostle

The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality (15:1-11)



- That is why he said, His grace toward me was not in vain
- St. Paul yielded completely to the work of the grace in him
- Thus every Christian should do
- Now I and all the apostles preach the same gospel of a risen Lord and this you accepted when you believed
- Their faith was built on the resurrection

The Risen Christ, Our Hope (15:12-19)



- These false teachers seemed to admit that Christ was raised, but denied the resurrection of others
- He now shows that if Christ be raised, the general resurrection must follow as a result
- If persons once dying cannot be raised, as these teachers say, then Christ could not have risen
- For in that case we have preached what is false, and you have believed it, so that your faith is vain
- Also we are false witnesses

The Risen Christ, Our Hope (15:12-19)



- In that case we have declared that God did what He never did do
- Then Jesus is not the Savior, He is a dead man, who could not even save Himself
- Such a one has no power to pardon sins, and then you are yet in your sins
- Thus all the Christians who had died had fallen into eternal sleep
- Then the hope is only in this life

The Risen Christ, Our Hope (15:12-19)



- So, there is no hope of immortality
- If there is no life beyond, no hope of it, then Christians who deny themselves in this life and endure persecutions and sufferings for the sake of eternal life are miserable
- Because they lose life on earth and gain no eternal life
- Such are the consequences of this false belief that the dead will not be risen

The Last Enemy Destroyed (15:20-28)



- But the resurrection of Christ is certain
- St. Paul had seen the risen Lord, so had many other credible witnesses
- But since he is risen, the resurrection of His people must follow
- On the morrow after the first Sabbaths of the Passover a sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest was waved before the Lord (Lev 23:10-16) as a pledge of the harvest to come

The Last Enemy Destroyed (15:20-28)



- So on the morning after the first Sabbath of the Passover, Christ, the first fruits arose and appeared living, the first fruits of the great harvest of souls gathered into eternal life
- Man: the first man, sinned, and death came upon his race, because in him the race had sinned
- By Christ, the Son of Man, came the resurrection
- All the race in Adam became subject to death

The Last Enemy Destroyed (15:20-28)



- So in Christ all the race shall be raised from the dead to appear at the eternal judgment
- The passage does not affirm the final salvation of all, but the final resurrection of all
- There is a resurrection of the just and of the unjust (Acts 24:15; John 5)
- Every man in his own rank or division
- The first order is Christ

The Last Enemy Destroyed (15:20-28)



- The second division is they that are Christ's, who will be raised at his coming
- The time of the third division, the wicked, is not named but hinted at in the beginning of 1 Cor 15:24 (See also John 5:28,29)
- The end follows soon after the resurrection of the saints
- When Christ's work is accomplished, He places all in the Father's hands

The Last Enemy Destroyed (15:20-28)



- Christ is reigning now, and will continue to reign until the Father conquers all Christ's enemies
- All enemies: All the wicked opponents, human, supernatural, sin, and death must be overthrown
- The order there of closing events is the resurrection, the judgment, and casting of Death and Hades into the lake of fire
Rev 20:12-14
- Quoted from Ps 8:6, a statement that Christ is Lord of all and that God has subjected all to Him

The Last Enemy Destroyed (15:20-28)



- God gave Christ the power, and hence He is excepted. The Father is not subject to the Son
- When the world is subdued to Christ, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto the Father
- As His work is done, He will give up the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:24) and submit to the Father because the Father is the source of Divinity
- All in all: the common lordship of the Trinity over all things

Effects of Denying the Resurrection (15:29-34)



- Some have held that there was a custom of baptizing living persons for the benefit of persons who had died without baptism
- Had that custom existed, St. Paul would have rebuked it
- It did arise afterwards, as an abuse from the misinterpretation of this passage, among the followers of Joseph Smith
- Could be baptized for the martyrs

Effects of Denying the Resurrection (15:29-34)



- St. Paul is speaking of the inconsistency of those who deny the resurrection while at the same time practicing a form of "vicarious baptism"
- Notice that St. Paul refers to "they" who were doing this, not "we" (i.e., the apostles)
- St. Paul is simply uses the practice of others to demonstrate the inconsistency of such practice when denying the resurrection of the dead
- He is not affirming it as a legitimate rite

Effects of Denying the Resurrection (15:29-34)



- What motive, if there is no hope beyond, can we apostles have for placing ourselves in constant peril by preaching the resurrection?
- I affirm that I am in daily peril of death
- Boasting: it is an honor to die for the Lord
- This boasting is also in you
- Speaking humanly, I have encountered furious opposition, like the rush of wild beasts in Ephesus

Effects of Denying the Resurrection (15:29-34)



- All his sufferings are to no purpose if the dead do not rise, then let us eat and drink for we will die tomorrow
- Do not be deceived, such an error leads to Epicurean sensuality. Shake it off, that do not sin
- Such errors can only spring from ignorance of God and His power to raise men
- If you believe in this false teaching, you need to be ashamed



A Glorious Body (15:35–49)

- But two difficulties are raised: How are the dead raised up? What kind of a body do they have?
- Foolish: slow of understanding. Why cannot you learn the lesson that nature teaches?
- The grain that you sow has to die and be dissolved before it comes forth in a new life
- So the body must die and be dissolved
- We sow, not the plant that comes forth, but only a bare seed



A Glorious Body (15:35–49)

- To the seed planted God gives a new body, the stalk of wheat or corn, or whatever it may be
- This new body bears no outward resemblance to the seed planted
- All the different animals have bodies unlike, and suited to their conditions
- These celestial and terrestrial bodies too, have forms and glories, unlike, and suited to their condition

A Glorious Body (15: 35–49)



- The sun has its own peculiar form and glory
- So of the moon, and the stars
- The thought is that to every condition is given a form suited to that condition
- Planted in burial in corruption
- It goes to decay
- It is raised in incorruption with a new body suited to the new condition of existence, which is incorruptible; cannot decay



A Glorious Body (15:35–49)

- The dead body is repulsive, becomes offensive, and we bury it out of sight
- Raised in glory: Has a glorious beauty
- Sown in weakness: All its powers exhausted
- Raised in power: Endowed with heavenly energy
- Sown a natural body: A fleshly body with animal life
- Raised a spiritual body: A body whose life principle is the spirit



A Glorious Body (15:35–49)

- Not a fleshly body, but a spiritual existence
- We cannot comprehend the nature of this existence, but we can know that it is not a body of flesh, bones, and blood See 1 Cor 15:50
- The first man Adam was made a living soul. See Gen 2:7. From him came our natural life
- The last Adam, Christ, of whom Adam was a type
- A living spirit. By giving life to the dead, and imparting spiritual existence



A Glorious Body (15:35–49)

- The first Adam came before the second Adam
- The natural body which proceeds from the first Adam is our tabernacle first
- After this life comes the spiritual body, which the second Adam gives
- The first man was made out of the earth Gen 2:7
- All have earthly bodies like that of Adam
- When we are raised to heaven we shall have spiritual bodies like Christ's Phil 3:21



Our Final Victory (15:50-58)

- If of flesh and blood, our bodies would be corruptible, and would not be suited to the eternal kingdom
- I disclose to you a secret of which you have had no knowledge
- Some shall be alive when Christ comes
- The living who meet Christ, as well as the dead who are raised up. All shall be made immortal and incorruptible



Our Final Victory (15:50-58)

- The change will be instantaneous At the last trump. See 1 Thess 4:16
- The trumpet shall sound: This signal for the close of all earthly things. See Mt 24:31
- For this corruptible body must give place to the incorruptible body; the mortal frame to an immortal one
- One must be put off, the other put on. See 2 Cor 5:2



Our Final Victory (15:50-58)

- The saying: See Isa 25:8
- This is the final victory, the victory over death
- V. 55 is quoted from Hos 13:14
- It is here the triumphant shout of the apostle as he sees by faith the final victory over death
- It is sin that gives death his power to sting and destroy. See Rom 6:23
- Without the law sin is not perceived or imputed (Rom 3:20; 4:15; 5:13)



Our Final Victory (15:50-58)

- The law makes sin the more grievous by making God's will the clearer (Rom 7:8-10)
- Thanks be to God for the victory over sin and death through Christ
- So be firm as a rock, devoted to Christian life, for your faith is not vain. Compare 1 Cor 15:14,17
- Our labor is not in vain because Jesus Christ is The Resurrection and the Life (Jn 11:25)
- The hope of immortality has sure foundations



Conclusion

- Why did St. Paul stress the fact that Christ has been risen from the dead?
- What if Christ did not resurrect from the dead?
- How did St. Paul prove that Christ has been risen from the dead?
- How did St. Paul compare Adam to Christ?
- How did St. Paul compare our bodies before death and after the resurrection of the body?