



## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-23 (PART 2 IN THE STUDY OF 15:1-58)

MARCH 14, 2021

Chapter 15 is the final chapter in this Paulian study. We'll discuss all 58 verses in the chapter. I anticipate ending the study on the last Sunday in March. I'll post the new verses for each day.

### 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. If there is no resurrection of the dead

*12. 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? 13. But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised. 14. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith also is in vain. 15. Yes, we are found false witnesses of God, because we testified about God that he raised up Christ, whom he didn't raise up, if it is so that the dead are not raised. 16. For if the dead aren't raised, neither has Christ been raised. 17. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain you are still in your sins. 18. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.*

#### 12a. "Now if Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead

Paul established that Christ's resurrection is "first of all that which I also received," and that numerous people witnessed the risen Christ, most were still alive at the time of this writing.

These Corinthian Christians have not denied Christ's resurrection, so Paul starts with Christ's resurrection to show them the possibility of personal resurrection.

#### 12b. "how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

These Corinthian Christians have found it difficult to believe in the possibility (or even the desirability) of their own resurrection from the dead. The dualistic environment in which they live emphasizes the soul as good and the body as bad, and that has a great deal to do with their doubts.

Paul's question is quite logical. If these Corinthian Christians believe in Christ's bodily resurrection, then they cannot say that there is no resurrection of the dead.

#### 13. "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised

In verse 12, Paul established that, if Christ was resurrected, there is such a thing as resurrection from the dead. In this verse, he approaches from the other end. If there is no resurrection, then Christ was not resurrected.

As we move forward, Paul will begin to explain the implications of that option.

#### 14. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith also is in vain

I believe this is a point that today's church needs desperately to hear. If Christ was not raised from the dead, the Christian faith is based on a lie. If Christ was not raised from the dead, all the preaching and evangelistic work of the church through the centuries has been for nothing.

**15. “Yes, we are found false witnesses of God, because we testified about God that he raised up Christ, whom he didn’t raise up, if it is so that the dead are not raised**

If Christ was not raised from the dead, then Paul and the other Christians who claim to have seen the risen Christ have been lying. They were not only lying about having seen the risen Christ, but have testified falsely to the nature of God’s action in the world.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS ISSUE?

Paul has applied logical assumptions regarding the matter of Christ’s resurrection. IF/THEN...

**16. “For if the dead aren’t raised, neither has Christ been raised”**

If there is no resurrection, then Christ could not have been resurrected. Seems clear to me.

**17a. “If Christ has not been raised**

If the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised. That is the first problem with a belief that there is no resurrection of the dead.

**“your faith is vain you are still in your sins**

“If Christ has not been raised” the next problem is that faith is futile and there is no forgiveness of sin. Without forgiveness of sin, we have no hope of a proper relationship with God.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS ISSUE?

**18. “Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished**

Okay, do you remember you classes in philosophy, especially in logic. Well this is a test for me, and your thoughts are important to me.

The Greek word for “fallen asleep,” is a euphemism for death. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, the third problem is that all dead saints have perished.

The Corinthian Christians’ believe that, in Christ, there is the assurance of salvation for those who die.

I don’t think Paul is saying that those who have died have no hope of salvation but the contrary. Neither is he saying that the Corinthian Christians do not believe in Christ’s resurrection. He is stringing together a logical series that starts with the assumption that Christ has been raised from the dead. If that is true, then it is illogical to say that there is no resurrection of the dead.

(If all crows are black, what happens if a white or green crow is found?) Hmmmm? I wonder.

**19. “If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable**

This is the fourth and final consequence if there is no resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then the only benefits we can derive from our faith are those that we can gain in this life. There would be no future life, and therefore no future benefit.

We need to stop here and acknowledge that there are benefits to be gained in this life by faith in Christ. What are some of those benefits?

## 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. The first fruits of those who are asleep

*20. But now Christ has been raised from the dead. He became the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21. For since death came by man, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. 22. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then those who are Christ's, at his coming.*

### 20a. "But now Christ has been raised from the dead"

In verses 13-19, Paul outlined the consequences, all negative, if there is no resurrection of the dead. However, he has not been arguing that there is no resurrection. He was only outlining the consequences if there were to be no resurrection.

### 20b. "the first fruits of those who are asleep"

The term, "first fruits" could also be used metaphorically. The prophet Jeremiah said, "Israel was holiness to Yahweh, the first fruits of his increase" (Jeremiah 2:3).

The idea behind the first fruits was that the first fruits of any harvest are especially valuable. Sandy loves tomatoes, so she waits all winter for the joy of the first ripe tomato of summer. Yahweh required Israel to sacrifice their first fruits as a way of acknowledging Yahweh's priority in their lives.

When Paul says that the resurrected Christ is "the first fruits of those who are asleep," and His resurrection signals the abundance of resurrections yet to come.

### 21a. "For since death came by man"

In verses 21-22, Paul introduces what some of the commentaries I searched have called an Adam-Christ typology.

Typology is a method of interpreting scripture. Think of a "type" as similar to an analogy. An analogy takes something that we understand (such as a pump) and uses it to help us understand something that we might not otherwise understand (such as our hearts).

Do some of your own scans of Old and New Testament examples of this concept.

Melchizedek is a type of Christ (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 5:10; 6:20; 7:1-28) and Jerusalem is a type of the heavenly kingdom (Isaiah 60:14; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 14:1).

In the "type" of verses 21-22, Paul says that "death came by man," and then goes on to say that "the resurrection of the dead also came by man."

WHAT DO YOU THINK THESE VERSES MEAN??

Here are some other examples:

"you are dust" (Genesis 2:7).

"to dust you shall return"

When do you hear those words in Christian Liturgy?

## **21b. “the resurrection of the dead also came by man**

Paul introduces the second part of the Adam-Christ type.

- just as a man (Adam) sinned and died—and brought sin and death into the world
- so also a man (Jesus Christ) was raised from the dead and brought about resurrection.

Jesus Christ reversed the curse that Yahweh placed on the man in the Garden of Eden.

So death came through a human being (Adam), but resurrection also comes through a human being (Jesus Christ).

For more on this Adam-Christ typology, see 1 Corinthians 15:45-19 and Romans 5:12-21.

## **22. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive**

Paul is not advocating universalism—a belief that Christ will save all people, regardless of their spiritual status.

- In verse 18, he talks about “they...who are fallen asleep in Christ.”
- In verse 23, he talks about “those who are Christ’s” as those can expect to be made alive in Christ. I
- Paul uses this phrase, “in Christ,” frequently to describe a saving relationship between the person and Christ. He says, “For you are all children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27). It is those who are “in Christ” whom Christ will make alive.

## **23a. “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits**

The Greek word for order was sometimes used for military organization. In this verse, it suggests a particular sequence. Christ was the first to be raised from the dead—the first fruits of those who would be raised.

## **23b. “then those who are Christ’s, at his coming**

The resurrection of those who belong to Christ will take place at his Second Coming (see Matthew 24:29-31; 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 John 2:28).

The idea behind Christ’s Second Coming has its roots in the Old Testament “day of Yahweh”.

Fight insomnia with these verses from the OT: (Isaiah 13:6, 9; 58:13; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7-8, 14, 18; 2:2-3; Malachi 4:5).

In Christian thought, the Day of the Lord will come at an unexpected time.  
The scripture suggests that we must all be prepared for its coming.  
Many believe the time that the day of the Lord takes place, people's fates will have already been finalized.

YOUR THOUGHTS?

The Lord bless us and keep us;  
The Lord make his face to shine on us  
The Lord be gracious to us  
and give us peace.

Numbers 6:24-26