

## THE GREATEST CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE-17

### 1CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER 15

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

Five main points in this chapter:

- A. The Gospel of the Risen Christ (see 1Cor. 15:1-11).
- B. The Consequences of Denying the Resurrection (see 1Cor. 15:12-19).
- C. The Order of the Resurrection (see 1Cor. 15:20-28).
- D. Implications of the Resurrection (see 1Cor. 15:29-49).
- E. Events of the Resurrection Day (see 1Cor. 15:50-58).

#### II. THE GOSPEL OF THE RISEN CHRIST (1Cor. 15:1-11).

- A. The gospel is the good news concerning the death, burial and resurrection of X (1Cor. 15:1-4).

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [2] by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. [3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4] and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

1. The brethren had received the gospel; they were standing in the gospel; they were being saved by the gospel; if they held fast to the word preached to them (1Cor. 15:1,2). Those who have obeyed the gospel are saved by the cross (1Cor. 1:18).
2. Paul had received this word or gospel by revelation (Gal. 1:12; 1Cor. 2:6-16). He knew that Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose on the third day, and was resurrected. This was all prophesied in the OT.

- B. Appearances of the resurrected X (1Cor. 15:5-8):

and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; [7] then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; [8] and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

1. In these verses Paul lists those individuals who were witnesses to the bodily resurrection of X. They include:
  - a. Cephas.
  - b. The Twelve.
  - c. Five hundred brethren at one time.
  - d. James (possibly the Lord's brother).
  - e. All the apostles.
  - f. Paul.
2. When Paul mentions that some of the five hundred brethren are asleep, he is speaking of physical death. In death the body sleeps, while the soul is still awake, active in the presence of God in Paradise (see Lk. 23:43).
3. In 15:8, Paul is simply saying that he was one called to be an apostle in a different way than the other Twelve.

- C. Paul's Special Apostleship (1Cor. 15:9-11).

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit 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 toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. [11] Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Paul felt that of all those who wore the name of being an apostle he was the least deserving. He felt this way because unlike the Twelve, he persecuted the church. But now by God's grace he is able to labor, even to the point of weariness for the cause of Christ.

#### III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING THE RESURRECTION (1Cor. 15:12-19).

- A. Denying the doctrine of the resurrection (1Cor. 15:12).

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?

In this verse we see the reason for the writing of this section of the letter. Some of the brethren in Corinth were saying that there was no resurrection of the dead. They were not specifically speaking of the resurrection of Christ, rather were saying there is no such thing as anyone being resurrected from the dead. Paul does not take time to mention the general resurrection here or in 1Th. 4:13-18. Jesus did speak of the resurrection of all the dead in Jn. 5:28,29.

B. The results of denying the doctrine of the resurrection (**1Cor. 15:13-19**).

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; [14] and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. [15] Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. [16] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; [17] and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19] If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

Paul now argues the serious implications, if there is no resurrection:

1. Christ has not been raised.
2. The preaching of the apostles (and anyone else for that matter) is in vain.
3. A person's faith in Christ is in vain.
4. Everyone is still in their sins.
5. The apostles are a group of liars (false witnesses); they preached the resurrection (Ac. 17:18).
6. Those who have physically died have perished eternally.
7. The apostles (and Christians) are to be most pitied of all people by society.

#### IV. THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION (**1Cor. 15:20-28**).

A. Christ, the first fruits (**1Cor. 15:20-22**).

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. [21] For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

If Christ is the first fruits of those who are asleep by His resurrection, then there are more to be resurrected. The first fruits always suggest more to come. Christ's resurrection is a pledge that on the final day, when the end comes, that those who are asleep, physically dead, may be resurrected also. Notice the brief contrast of Adam and Christ (also found in Rom. 5).

B. The resurrection order (**1Cor. 15:23,24**).

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, [24] then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Here is what is to happen on the final day, the resurrection day; X being the first fruits of the resurrection has already been raised so when He comes those who belong to X will be raised from the dead. Paul does not take time to mention that those outside of X will be raised but he does believe this according to Ac. 24:15. When X comes a second time, the dead in X shall be resurrected and this signifies the end of time as we know it. Jesus will deliver up the kingdom of God out of the kingdoms of the world to the Father (Eph. 5:27).

C. The last enemy is destroyed (**1Cor. 15:25-28**).

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. [26] The last enemy that will be abolished is death. [27] For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. [28] And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.

X abolishes all rule, authority and power because He rules the kingdoms of the world with a rod of iron, and treads the wine-press of the wrath of God (Rev. 19:15). Jesus rules the kingdom, however, with a scepter of righteousness (Psa. 110:1-7). X now reigns on His throne, awaiting the time of His return to abolish all the enemies of righteousness, and the last enemy to be abolished is death. It will be abolished by the resurrection of all the dead.

## V. IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION (1Cor. 15:29-56).

### A. Baptism by proxy is of no use (1Cor. 15:29-34).

1. If there is no resurrection then those who think they can be baptized for those who are physically dead are mistaken (15:29).

Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

2. This is a difficult verse. Some think Paul was discussing baptism by proxy. But, it has been proved that the practice of vicarious baptism did not originate until the second century. By Paul using the third person shows that he is speaking of a practice he does not participate in or endorse.

3. If Paul is speaking about proxy baptism the argument is that if the dead are not raised, why be baptized in view of their perished condition? If the dead are not raised, there is no reason to be baptized (15:18), since you cannot rise to walk in newness of life. One must believe in the resurrection of Christ for baptism to have any power and effect (15:17; 1Pet. 3:21).

### B. If there is no resurrection, then the sufferings and sacrifices of the apostles are worthless (15:30-34).

1. If the apostles had not been extremely sure of the resurrection, why would any of them have endured such hardship and sufferings, even unto death? This argument is unanswerable.
2. "Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die..." This was Epicureanism; and Paul's words here may be construed as saying that paganism is as good as Christianity if the doctrine of the resurrection is denied.
3. See v34; Barnes said this means, "Arouse from your stupidity on this subject!" The toleration of the skeptical teachers was a public disgrace to the church.

### C. The apostle asks two questions here (1Cor. 15:35):

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

1. "How can God raise the dead?" The answer is in 1Cor. 15:36-38.
2. "What kind of body will the resurrected body be?" The answer is in 1Cor. 15:39-49.

### D. Answer to "How Can God raise the dead?" (1Cor. 15:36-38).

You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; [37] and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. [38] But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

How foolish to ask when the proof is all around you. God can do it in the same way He allows a seed to die, be buried in the ground and then raised as a new plant.

### E. Answer to "What kind of body will the resurrected body be?" (1Cor. 15:39-49).

All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one *flesh* of men, and another *flesh* of beasts, and another *flesh* of birds, and another of fish. [40] There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the *glory* of the earthly is another. [41] There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. [42] So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; [43] it is sown in dishonor, 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*. [45] So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. [46] However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. [47] The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. [48] As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. [49] And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

1. First he appeals to the fact that there are different kinds of flesh in the world. It should not surprise us then to know that our resurrected body will be different from our earthly body.
2. The burial of the body and the resurrection of it is likened to sowing; sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in honor; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown as a natural, physical body, raised a spiritual body. The body will be raised on the final day, but it shall be changed (Phil. 3:20,21; 1Jn. 3:2).

## VI. EVENTS OF THE RESURRECTION DAY.

### A. The final resurrection is a mystery (**1Cor. 15:50-58**).

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. [51] Behold, I tell 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 trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

A mystery is something yet to be revealed. We do not fully understand all of the things about the resurrection on the final day, but that's because it is a mystery. Not everyone will go through the process of physical death. Some will be alive at the second coming of Christ. But everyone, whether physically alive or dead will be changed. This must take place because we cannot enter into the heavenly places with our present physical bodies.

### B. The last events as described in 1Cor. 15:

1. The Lord shall descend from heaven.
2. There will be the sound of the last trumpet.
3. The dead shall be raised (both righteous and unrighteous).
4. The righteous dead shall go first to be in the air with Jesus.
5. The living shall be changed and the righteous ones will follow those who had perished to X.

### C. Because of the resurrection (**1Cor. 15:53-57**):

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. [55] "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" [56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57] but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The perishable puts on the imperishable.
2. The mortal puts on immortality.
3. Death is swallowed up in victory!
4. The sting (worst thing) of death is sin is overcome.
5. The victory over sin is found in Jesus Christ.

### D. The admonition to the living (**1Cor. 15:58**):

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.

1. Be steadfast (faithful).
2. Be immovable (say no to sin).
3. Be always abounding in the work of the Lord.

## VII. CONCLUSION.

### A. As is always the case with prophecy, the admonition is to those living in the present. In speaking of these future events the brethren need to be reminded of their everyday responsibility in preparation for that day to come (1Cor. 15:58).

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.

### B. Our work is not in vain because there will be a resurrection from the dead.

### C. Next week:

Ephesians, Chapter 02.