

1 Corinthians 15: The Great Resurrection Chapter

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel¹ which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received²: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas³, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James⁴, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain⁵; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

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? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep⁶ in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits⁷ of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one

¹ Gospel (Gk., *evangelion*), lit., “good news/glad tidings.”

² *Delivered...received*: the language of tradition (cf. 1 Cor. 11:2, 23).

³ *Cephas* (Aramaic) = *Peter* (Gk.), the Apostle.

⁴ *James*, the (step)brother of Christ and first Bishop of Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Gal. 1:19).

⁵ The same truth stated in the last verse of this chapter.

⁶ *Fallen asleep*, the common Christian designation of bodily death (cf. Lk. 8:52; 1 Thes. 4:13).

⁷ *Firstfruits* are the pledge offering, or guarantee, of the full harvest to follow (cf. Lev. 23:10).

in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet" (Ps. 8:7). But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject⁸ to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" (Isa. 22:13). Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."⁹ Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.¹⁰ And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a

⁸ Lit., *be subordinate*, expressing the "order" within God the Holy Trinity. The Father is the Source from which the Son is eternally begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds (Jn. 1:18; 15:26).

⁹ A quote from the Greco-Roman playwright Menander.

¹⁰ Cf. Jn. 12:24 – "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

living being” (Gen. 2:7). The last Adam¹¹ became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.¹² As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.¹³

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood¹⁴ cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.¹⁵ For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory” (Isa. 25:8). “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (Hos. 13:14). The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

¹¹ I.e., Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 20:22; Rom. 5:14-15).

¹² Cf. Jn. 3:13 – “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”

¹³ Cf. Gen. 5:1-3; 2 Cor. 3:18.

¹⁴ I.e., in its sinful, corrupted state (cf. Jn. 1:12-13; 6:63; Gal. 5:16-17).

¹⁵ I.e., Judgment Day, when the Lord returns in glory (see Matt. 24:31; 1 Thes. 4:16).