

V. Holy Week in Biblical Perspective  
*Resurrection Lord's Day*  
“Resurrection – Reality – Redemption”  
I Corinthians 15  
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Let's begin by looking at the opening verses in I Corinthians 15. I Corinthians 15:1-11 says [1] *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word 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 in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me. [9] For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy 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 was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. [11] Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I think many of you know these phrases for they have kind of been popular at many times but they all have kind of the same intention. Here are the phrases; ‘I’m going to speak plainly to you.’ ‘The bottom line.’ ‘Let me be clear.’ ‘I’m going to put my cards on the table.’ ‘I want to be as transparent as possible.’ These types of phrases have been used that lets the other person know what is about to come will be an unvarnished statement, that will be a little jagged on the edges, challenging, and they do it because they think the issue needs to be taken care of at the moment.

This is exactly what Paul does in the occasion afforded to him by a communication at the church at Corinth and by the reports that had arrived to him from this church. This was a special church for Paul for as far as we know, it is a place he spent the second longest amount of time at. He spent three years at Ephesus and 18 months at Corinth. It was a challenging ministry. Corinth had taken the philosophical insights of the Greeks in general and a man name Plato in particular and had now downloaded it into Christianity and tried to syncretize it. Paul is constantly trying to get them back to the Word of God alone as their only measure of what they are to believe and practice. Now that Paul is gone there have come into the pulpit ministry some extraordinary and dangerous theological errors that border on outright heresy. A theological error is getting something wrong from the Bible, but a heresy is doctrine that is theologically wrong and if you believe it will damn your soul. These are known as first order errors.

A number of first order errors had crept into Corinth while Paul had left and now, he gets the report. He is now about to answer it. I love I Corinthians 15 because it reminds me of two childhood experiences I have had. One in our family we always ate supper together and no one left the dinner table until we had our time of family conversation. I really enjoy that, listening to

my dad and mom and usually during those times I could ask questions and there was a lot that I would learn as they answered me.

The second thing I experienced in my childhood was taking home a sealed envelope that contained my report card and could only be opened by my mother and father. The report cards in my day not only contained the grades for each subject but descriptive statements from the teachers about me and my conduct in the classroom. I remember sitting in a specific chair as my father opened up my report card, read it and then began to deal with me. In other words, there were times when I drew things from my parents by questions at the dinner table and there were times that my behavior reported to my parents I drew some more response/communication from them. That is what the book of Corinthians is.

The epistle of Corinthians, is the Apostle Paul having left, writing back to them and the opening chapters are what you have with in common with other believers that are just marvelous. Then he begins to tackle the issues he has heard that has been happening and you can spot what he is handling by two phrases – one phrase, now concerning what you wrote, second phrase, now it is reported to me (something about what they were saying or doing). Each phrase begins his answer to the seven questions sent to him and in this study, we will see both phrases as he deals with two of the seven questions that he is going to correct.

I Corinthians 15 is Paul giving them a statement about the Gospel and the occasion of him writing it is because he has heard that some of them are saying that when believers die that's it for their body and that there is no bodily resurrection of Christians. This old platonic world and life view that says the spiritual is good and the physical is bad had basically said why would we want to keep a doctrine of a bodily resurrection if the physical is bad. This is unbiblical because when God made the body and the spiritual in Genesis He said it was good and then both are impacted by the curse of sin. And both are redeemed, the physical and spiritual by the work of Christ. So we are born again spiritually and will be raised in perfection physically. They were glad to compromise that truth in order to be accepted by the culture.

We are facing the same thing today in our nation. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is Good News but it's only Good News if the Holy Spirit changes your heart when you hear the bad news. Otherwise, the Gospel is scandalous, because the Gospel says three things and the heart in rebellion against God simply doesn't want to hear, but it abhors hearing it. Number one, it says you are a sinner and you need a Savior. Number two, you nor your manmade religion can't save you. Number three, there is only one who can save you and that's Jesus. If you didn't see it as a scandal then thank Jesus who sent the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see and ears to hear, otherwise it would have been a scandal to you also. That's why we say with Paul, 'I am what I am by the grace of God.'

So how does Paul deal with this error of the body of believers not being raised on the last day when Jesus comes? Interestingly, he doesn't deal with it by going directly to the bodily resurrection of believers. He deals with it by explaining to them the Gospel that Jesus died for our sins, was raised on the third day all according to the Scriptures, so that we who believe in Him might have everlasting life. He says unless your faith is in Him then your faith is in vain, but if your faith is in Him then you have eternal life because of what He did on the cross and what the Father did in the resurrection of the One who died on the cross for you.

What does that have to do with the error that believers' bodies don't get raised on the last day? It has everything to do with it. Paul is doing what we call casuistic law and the way you spot it in the Bible is by 'if (this is true)...then (this must be true)...' II Chronicles 7:14 says [14] *if My people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face*

and turn from their wicked ways, **then I will hear from heaven** and will forgive their sin and heal their land. If you draw near to Him then He will draw near to you (James 4:8). The way Paul will get to this terrible error, is he will affirm the resurrection of Christ on the third day. I want to show you why Paul does this for this is a glorious Gospel message and I want to give you five things Paul says about the Gospel here.

Number one, the Gospel is definitive. Paul says in I Corinthians 15:3, *[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.* He is talking about *the* Gospel. It is definitive.

Secondly, Paul is telling us that the Gospel is Biblical. Jesus died and rose again according to the Scriptures. This isn't something that is invented on the spot at the death of Jesus. This was prophesied in types, symbols, prophetic words and precepts all through the Old Testament and Jesus fulfilled it so it is Biblical.

Thirdly, this Gospel is historical. This happened in time and history. It is factual.

Fourthly, it is physical. A bodily resurrection occurred at a point in time on the third day after His crucifixion. He was crucified on the day of preparation, laid in the grave on the day of the Sabbath – the day of rest – and He came forth on the dawn on the day of the first day. There are three days related to His death and resurrection.

Fifthly, the Gospel is actual and verifiable. Paul talked to James, Peter, Mary Magdalene and the rest of the Disciples about Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. They all verified what happened. The Disciples had several encounters with Jesus after His resurrection and the women were the very first to realize He was raised and Jesus talked to them on that first day after His resurrection. Last of all Paul said after He ascended, He talked to him, the most unworthy of the Apostles, untimely born. This Savior is risen and it's verifiable. Paul even tells the Corinthians there are at least 500 up in Galilee who can verify this powerful message of the Gospel of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. One essential is that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

We were at the sunrise service this morning and the fog was everywhere. My wife asked me to pray that the sun would burn out the fog. I said to my wife 'thank you for a wonderful illustration and every time I do this kind of thing the Lord reminds me I am in sales not management.' Paul is basically burning out the fog. Basically, where there wasn't clarity, he is bringing clarity. We know in the Old Testament there were many prophecies about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and in the New Testament Jesus repeatedly told the Disciples He would be delivered up in Jerusalem, be put to death by the chief priests and scribes and on the third day He would be raised. So, why didn't anyone show up?

They were informed, they just didn't believe it. They went there wondering who was going to roll the stone away and to anoint a dead body. You have been informed, do you believe it? I am very serious. I know those here at Briarwood have been informed, but I'm asking you if you believe it. The only people who might have believed it were the ones who took measures against it in case it was true and that was the Pharisees. They didn't really believe it but they wanted to take measures in case the Disciples might try and pull a fast one to make it look like it. They are the only ones that even recalled it and their behavior changed because of it. Paul is affirming that Jesus was raised on the third day.

It's interesting to note that the Old Testament prophesied it, Jesus repeatedly told them and it didn't even make a dent with any of them. But afterwards, every time they talk about the Gospel and the Apostles, they not only repeat that Jesus is risen but they put the 'third day, just as He said.' That's why it shows up in the Apostles' Creed which is as follows;

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
He descended to hell.  
**The third day He rose again from the dead.**  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* church, (\* the church universal)  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
**the resurrection of the body,**  
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Tied to that is, because He is risen, we rise and now Paul is reversing it. If Jesus' resurrection assures our resurrection, then to deny our resurrection is to deny His resurrection.

Paul gives us two statements. If there is no bodily resurrection of Christians then there was no bodily resurrection of Christ. Then his next statement is, if there was no resurrection of Christ then there is no Gospel to proclaim/preach. Now, do you understand why when Paul starts to answer the question, he defines the Gospel? Paul is telling us the first of the first things is at stake here – a first order issue, the Gospel.

There are those today who will tell you not to get caught up in this bodily resurrection thing because they say we look foolish to the world and isn't it the spirit of the thing, anyway? No, it's not the spirit of the thing for it was His body that was raised. There is no Gospel if there is no bodily resurrection of Christ and if there is no bodily resurrection of believers on the last day then there was no resurrection of Christ on the third day. They are inseparable. What is at stake here is the Gospel.

What do we lose if we lose the bodily resurrection of Christ on the third day? Let me speak plainly here and give you the bottom line. You lose everything. Let's look back at I Corinthians 15.

I Corinthians 15:12-28 says [12] *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. [14] And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. [15] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that 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 futile and you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ (died in Christ) have perished. [19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

*[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (the death of a Christian). [21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. [24] Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. [25] For He must reign until He has put all his enemies under His feet. [26] The last enemy to be destroyed is death. [27] For “God has put all things in subjection under His feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that He is excepted who put all things in subjection under Him. [28] When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, that God may be all in all.*

Paul lays out seven things if Christ is not raised. One if Christ is not raised your Gospel preaching is act of blasphemy for, you're misrepresenting God. Secondly, your Gospel preaching is an act of vanity – it's empty. Three, your faith in Christ is futile. Futile here means without a point, without a purpose. In other words, if Christ hasn't been raised then there is no reason to believe in Christ because you have lost the object of your faith. Fourthly, if Christ isn't raised then the Apostles were all liars – we're all shamefaced liars.

Fifthly, if Christ isn't raised then we're still in our sins – we're still under condemnation. Wait, it's not Christ raised that saves us from our sins but Christ crucified – that's right but if there is no resurrection then there is no verification of the effectiveness of the atonement. A lot of crazy people can say they are dying for your sins but if this is the Lord and not a lunatic then it's the resurrection that tells us. Because He lives, I live. Romans 8:1 says *[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Sixthly, the Christians who have already died are lost, they are perished for eternity. Forget this absent from the body, present with the Lord for there is no Lord to be present with if He is not raised. Seven, Christians out of all of humanity are the most to be pitied if He has not been raised on the third day.

In fact, Christ is risen! What is important about the first fruits? There are two things important about the first fruits. The first fruits are always the best. Praise God I'm going to be raised but my resurrection doesn't compare with the resurrection of Christ. The Lord of glory is risen and He lives. The second thing great about first fruits is they assure the harvest is coming. Who is the harvest? It is you. It is the resurrection of all of His people on the last day. Jesus is the first One in history who was raised from the dead with the glorified body never to die again, but He is not the last one, because He lives so shall we live in a new heavens and a new earth with a new body for His glory likened unto Him.

Here is the takeaway. The resurrection of Christ on the third day is inseparable and assures the resurrection of every Christian on the last Day. I love the way Paul names all that you lose if Christ is not raised on the third day, but flip it – Christ is risen on the third day. What do you gain? The assurances that every believer will be raised on the last Day with a glorified body likened unto Him. You also gain the veracity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I get a chance every day of my life that sin is the problem and Jesus is the answer and because Jesus lived a perfect life, died for your sins, was buried and rose on the third day, you can have eternal life. I wouldn't be able to do that if He hadn't been raised on the third day because His death on Good Friday was a redeeming death, not a martyr's death or a model death but an atoning death whereby we are saved from our sins and in the resurrection the Father says, Amen, so be it forever! That is what we gain for now and all eternity.

Oh, but there are so many other things we gain as well. Funerals in this sanctuary, while being honest with grief turn into occasions for joy. Sure, there is grief because we in death for now we don't have access to the people we love. Frank went to be with Jesus and then I think he told Jesus 'I think I'd like to plant another church and I really would like those in my core group so can you send them on up' because we have had so many funerals here since he died. I don't think he could have planted a church without Barbara so she followed him within two weeks. We can be honest with grief for tears are real, but our grief is informed for our Savior saves us – when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord. The reason we can be present with the Lord is because He lives. So, in this sanctuary those moments turn into praise to God.

We gain continually the glorious truth that we like our Savior, who died that atoning death, His body went to a grave and so will mine. His soul went to hades – paradise, the intermediate state of blessing, not hades – abyss the intermediate state of torment, and on the third day, on time just as He said, the Holy Spirit summons the soul of Jesus from Sheol to be united with the body of Jesus in the tomb and the stone is blown away. The risen Savior, body and soul, glorified for all eternity comes forth and the summons now becomes a proclamation, 'Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!' That glorious truth begins to dissipate the fog.

We know there had to be a fog because the women and Disciples weren't there to meet Him, not anoint Him. I hope today that the Holy Spirit is allowed the inadequate preaching of this preacher to dispel the fog that has kept you from coming to Christ, who died for you and is risen to save all of His people and that's a fact! This had already been gloriously pictured in the Old Testament. You can see it in Exodus 28 where the people of Israel have been delivered out of bondage and God is going to be with them in a tabernacle and a temple, but there will have to be a mediator. One of the mediators has to be a priest and this will be a man named Aaron. All that he, the priest is supposed to do is outlined for us in this glorious book of Exodus in intercession for the people that they may be redeemed for their sins and be right with God.

The ceremonial sacrifices were described and then came the glorious moment where one place was sacred – the holy of holies – where God's presence dwelled. No man can be in His presence and behold Him and live according to Scripture, but yet the priest was to go in and bring the lamb's blood to pour upon the alter in that darkened room. The priest was to represent the sins of the people so he was fixed with what God calls the breast plate of judgment. When the priest walked in, he was bearing symbolically the sins of the people and then he made the substitutionary sacrifice, but would he live? Part of the priest's attire was the one piece robe that fit over his head down to his feet with linen pomegranates fashioned to the bottom and from them golden bells so that when he left the people to go in they could hear him and know that he was still living.

I can only imagine what they thought when he entered into the holy of holies into the darkness that they could not see, but they could hear the bells. They thought 'Our sacrifice bearer is living,' but then he would stop to make the sacrifice and the bells would no longer ring. He would pour out the sacrifice with a prayer of confession. Would the bells ring again? Would the sacrifice be accepted? Would the priest live who brought the sacrifice? When they heard the bells, Aaron would then come out with his hands raised bringing the Aaronic blessing, 'peace be unto you, the grace of the Lord be upon you, the peace of God be upon you.' That was the picture. It never saved but it only pointed to what needed to be done.

We need another Priest who can come before him, who has no sin and the blood of bulls, goats and lambs can't redeem us, for it has to be the Lamb of God. On the day of preparation, the Lamb of God was slain for us and then He brought the sacrifice. He was not only the

Messiah – Prophet, Priest and King – but He was also the Sacrifice. He brought the Sacrifice and said ‘It is finished! Into Thy presence I commend My Spirit.’ (John 19:30, Luke 23:46). Will we hear the bells? Will He live? On the third day He came forth and the first words He said to His Disciples was ‘peace be to you.’ He is risen! The Lord has proclaimed, the sacrifice has been accepted and because He is risen, so shall we.

Is Christ yours? Has the fog gone? The Father has proclaimed the ‘Amen’ and there is only One to save us and that One in fact is the risen Savior, so come. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the glorious privilege to declare the majesty and glory of Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Father, we thank You that because He lives, we live and we thank You that we can rejoice in the majesty of our Savior. If today you have never come to Him and would like to pray with someone, please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. On the third day He arose and if you’re in Christ today can be the beginning of a new life and on the last Day we arise, so now arise and come to Him. Father, I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.