

Resurrection Hope

**Bible Background • MARK 16; 1 CORINTHIANS 15 | Printed Text •
1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45 | Devotional Reading • ISAIAH 53:4-12**

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **CONTRAST** the first Adam and the last, **ANTICIPATE** a new resurrected life different from the present one, and **EMBRACE** the call to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ despite ridicule or resistance.

In Focus

Anthony stood and looked at the cell he had called home for the last 10 years. He was just a twenty-two-year-old kid when he came into this place, scared and angry. To make matters worse, he was innocent! His court-appointed lawyer had convinced him that it was better to plea bargain and serve some time than to risk a full sentence from a jury trial.

As he walked through the long corridors saying his goodbyes, Anthony tried to focus on the good in his unjust incarceration. He realized that prison had slowed him down, maybe even saved his life. Even though he didn't do the crime he was accused of, Anthony's lifestyle back then was leading him to certain destruction.

Anthony thought about the college degree he earned while in prison. His parents had begged him to go after high school, but, no, he was too cool for college back then.

The most important benefit from prison, Anthony knew for sure, was his salvation. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior nearly five years ago. It was difficult for Anthony to be bitter about his experience. God had yielded many positive things from something negative.

In our study we will observe how God turned Jesus' negative experience of death into the positive experience of the resurrection. What "resurrections" has God performed in your life?

Keep in Mind

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:19-20, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV 1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

43 It is sown in dishonour; 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

The People, Places, and Times

Gospel. The Gospel is literally "good news." The equivalent Greek word, *euangelion* (ew-an-GHEL-ee-on), was used in relation to the announcement that Augustus Caesar was proclaimed ruler over the Roman Empire and would bring peace and joy. The biblical writers used this word to announce God's grace and the coming of His kingdom in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This is the substance of the message the apostles preached. In the Gospel's bare essentials, it is the telling of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and how we can be forgiven and welcomed into God's kingdom.

How do you usually share the Gospel?

Background

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul dealt with issue after issue. He addressed the divisions in the church (1:10–4:21), sexual immorality including incest (5:1–13) and fornication (6:12–20), marriage and divorce (7:1–40), idolatry (8:1–11:1), and different aspects of public worship (11:2–13:13). In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul addressed the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy. The apostle instructed the Corinthians to pursue love and the gift of prophecy because it builds up the whole church. Paul wrote that proper worship will result in even unbelievers admitting, "God is truly here among you" (from 1 Corinthians 14:25,

NLT). The chapter ends with Paul describing the proper order of worship. With all of these other issues dealt with, Paul finally launched into explaining the significance of Christ's resurrection.

At-A-Glance

1. Resurrection Clarified (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
2. Resurrection Witnessed (vv. 5-8)
3. Resurrection Guaranteed (vv. 12-14, 20-23)
4. Resurrection Promises (vv. 42-45)

In Depth

1. Resurrection Clarified (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

There were some in the Corinthian church who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Paul reminds them that he had already preached the Good News to them and they had, or so it seemed, fully accepted it. Before explaining the foundation of the Gospel message, Paul asserts that the message he had given them and he had received himself was valid. He then explains the foundation of the Christian faith: (1) Christ died for our sins. If this had not occurred, eternal damnation would await us all, but God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin (Romans 3:23). (2) Christ was buried. To ensure Jesus was dead, a rock was sealed across the tomb and guards placed outside (Matthew 27:62-66). (3) Christ rose on the third day. Death needed to be conquered so that salvation could be secured (2 Timothy 1:10). Paul notes that the Scriptures support what he says, and though Paul does not indicate specific verses, his references could include Psalm 69:9, Isaiah 53:4-12, Hosea 6:2-3, Jonah 1:17, and others.

How do you interact with people who profess to be Christians, but do not hold strictly to core doctrines?

2. Resurrection Witnessed (vv. 5-8)

Paul refers even more validity to the Resurrection by listing the witnesses. Peter and the Twelve saw the resurrected Jesus (John 20:19-29). They had been chosen to be witnesses (Acts 10:40-43). More than five hundred of His followers saw Jesus, including Jesus' half-brother James and other apostles (v. 6; Luke 24:33, 36-53). Perhaps a criterion for being an apostle, from Paul's perspective, was that one had to have been divinely chosen to see the resurrected Christ. They were sent out to preach the Gospel because they could personally testify to its truth. Paul was the last witness. Although he had not lived and journeyed with Jesus, he too had been chosen when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). The phrase "born out of due time" refers to a miscarried or stillborn baby. In essence, Paul was someone who was spiritually dead and therefore unfit to be an apostle because he had persecuted believers. However, God, in His grace, still chose Paul to be a witness. Paul mentions this in response to those in Corinth who were questioning his authority (1 Corinthians 9). Whether the other apostles or Paul preached the Gospel, it was the same message that the Corinthians had already believed.

3. Resurrection Guaranteed (vv. 12-14, 20-23)

Paul refutes the people's belief that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul's line of reasoning, in essence, concludes that if there is no resurrection, Christ did not rise and their faith would be useless. They would all still be in their sin, condemned forever. However, Paul reassures his audience that Jesus had indeed

risen from the dead. He continues to explain the benefit of this fact. Jesus did not conquer death only for Himself. He is the first of all who have died. His resurrection ensures that all who believe in Him shall have eternal life. To illustrate this truth, Paul compares Jesus to Adam. Just as Adam brought death for all, Jesus has brought eternal life for those who believe in Him. This was Christ's purpose all along; the Father sent Him so "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (from John 3:16). Jesus Christ was resurrected first so that all who belong to Him might be resurrected as well.

Many see Christ as being foreshadowed as far back as Adam's Fall (Genesis 3:17). What does this reveal about God?

4. Resurrection Promises (vv. 15:42–45)

Bible scholars disagree on the exact nature of the Corinthian church's doubts concerning the resurrection. Some argue that some Corinthians held that there was no such thing as Resurrection. Others think that the Corinthians held that Jesus Himself was not resurrected. Still, others believe that the Corinthians were at odds about the status of the believers who had already died and the ability of these believers to be raised from the dead at the return of Christ.

Paul is emphasizing that the Resurrection is not simply a tenet but the cornerstone of Christian faith. If he reasons, Christ died for their sins but He was not resurrected, then they have not been justified, and Jesus' death was in vain. The heart of Paul's argument is that although human lives are subject to death and the body will disintegrate, decay, and decompose—that is not the end of the story. They are also subject to the will of God, who through His Son, Jesus Christ, will bring forth resurrection of the dead.

Therefore, after death, there is continuity rather than a conclusion. Next, Paul launches

into the "mystery" of death that he obviously believes plagues these believers. Because of the sin of the first man, Adam, the "natural" bodies of all humankind are subject to death. However, praise be to God, because of the redemptive act of the "last Adam," Jesus Christ, believers now possess "spiritual" bodies. Paul asserts that these bodies are "incorruptible"; they are no longer subject to the laws of nature and the penalty of sin (i.e., death). If believers were only subject to the inheritance of Adam, it would be fitting that we return to dust since it is through Adam's sin that mankind dies. However, through faith, believers are joined to Jesus Christ. The bodies of the believers, through their faith in Him, now bear "the image of the heavenly." (1 Corinthians 15:49) It is these glorified "heavenly bodies" that are subject to be resurrected. Part of this glorious inheritance in Christ is the resurrection!

How does Christ's bodily resurrection give us hope in this life and the next?

Search the Scriptures

1. What is the Gospel message (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)?
2. How do Jesus and Adam differ (vv. 21–22)?

Discuss the Meaning

Many engage in frivolous activities attempting to understand who they are. As believers, the Resurrection has already determined our identity. How has the resurrection of Christ impacted your life? How can you begin to value your identity in Christ?

Liberating Lesson

Jesus was executed when found guilty of false charges during a trial that failed to follow due process. Resurrection on Easter morning, however, is God's first fulfillment of true justice for all. Even if we fail in a fight

against a system stacked against us, we know that God has the final word. Until that final word, we know we have the Resurrection power of Christ on our side. If He can conquer such an enemy as death, what can He not do? Meditate on ways the Resurrection motivates us to work for justice with hope.

Application for Activation

We love to celebrate life-changing events with others. We book banquet halls a year in advance and hire the best caterers so people can spend a few hours with us on our special day. The greatest event to ever happen to us is the Resurrection, and we should find ways to share it. Pray about at least three people with whom you can share the Good News and create a special occasion for the sharing. For example, meet for breakfast, schedule time at the gym, or invite them to a church function.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.

The opening of this chapter introduces Paul's concerns and lays the foundation for the argument he develops in the verses that follow. Some in the Corinthian church exalted the spiritual in a way that devalued the physical. Consequently, this path led to the denial of bodily resurrection. Paul begins with what they have in common. Paul uses the *euaggelion* (Gk. **ew-an-GHEL-ee-on**), which means good news message or Gospel, to describe what he preached and they, in turn, received as a means for salvation. They owe their existence as a community of faith to the Gospel he brought them. He warns if they cannot hold on to the same Gospel that saved them, their faith is in jeopardy of being ineffective and producing no fruit.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.

Paul presents the basics of the Gospel by highlighting three points of emphasis: Jesus died, was buried, and rose again on the third day, all in accordance with the Scriptures. This essence of the Gospel was passed down to Paul. It is generally accepted that these verses reflect an early creed, which would have developed out of some ecumenical gathering of churches rather than simply Paul himself.