
The Resurrection of the Dead

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 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.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 (ESV)

I greet you with grace, mercy and peace from God, our Father, and Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, and the Holy Spirit, who lives within us, as believers, empowering us.

Today, we observe the last Sunday of the church year. When we say *last*, usually we think about an ending. In reference to the church year, we speak about the last days on earth. But, for us, as Christians, the last days actually bring a renewal, or resurrection -- the coming of an everlasting kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth. As we study scripture, it tells us that we are currently living in the last days. Our epistle lesson, in keeping with that theme, is taken from what is called *the resurrection chapter*. The outline heading of this section is called “The Resurrection of the Dead,” and our section is part of that. What makes that possible is in the very first verse of our lesson, as Paul proclaims “**Christ has been raised from the dead**” This fundamental message is repeated over and over again in the New Testament. It was shared in the lives of the people of the early church and the apostles, and continues to be shared in our lives today. In fact, John, the apostle, in his gospel, states why the gospel was written and why the entire Bible is preserved, saying, ³⁰ **Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.** (John 20:30-31 ESV) The same resurrection life that Jesus showed is passed to those who receive the life He won for them and now can in that resurrected power. There are however, critics, who say every religion makes claims about the after-life and how to get there, and even the atheist, or secular humanist claims everything is in this life, nothing is after death, so....why believe the Bible? It is just another claim. It is true, that Christianity is the only religious movement where the creditability of the leader, Jesus, rests on the resurrection. Without a resurrection, you would have a dead leader and, therefore, what He promised about the resurrection would not be true. So, why should we believe anything He said? Alternatively, other religious founders make no claims of personal resurrections, nor have they returned from the dead to teach. They are simply dead and buried like every other human being. Jesus is

different. He made the claim he would rise, and His followers testify that that is exactly what happened. Is there evidence of the resurrection of Jesus? Let's look at some of the evidence of the resurrection, as we gain a deeper understanding and assurance of the faith we possess. We will also see why Jesus is referred to as *the first-fruits* offering, and what that means for us.

Some of the critics of the resurrection claim that Jesus never died and only appeared to rise, others say he only died physically, not spiritually, so no need for a physical bodily resurrection as the scripture teaches. John in his gospel writes, ³³ **But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.** ³⁴ **But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.** (John 19:33-34 ESV) This medically is a sign of death, the clear fluid looking like water would have surrounded the heart during heart failure and the blood would be coming from the heart. The soldiers were making sure that Jesus had already died. There is no question that Jesus died. Jesus appeared physically multiple times to the disciples and others. One such case, Jesus offers Thomas physical proof, in John 20 it says, ²⁶ **Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."** ²⁷ **Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."** ²⁸ **Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"** ²⁹ **Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** (John 20:26-29 ESV) Thomas has seen enough, he worships Jesus calling Him Lord and God. Jesus receives worship and commends Thomas and others who see with the eyes of faith. The disciples went on to testify to experiencing the resurrected Lord, and that testimony was accompanied by miracles, all of them suffering persecution, and eleven of the twelve apostles suffering tortuous deaths all for what they believed and new to be true. Peter testifies, ¹⁶ **For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** (2 Peter 1:16 ESV) They were eye witnesses and testified, suffering for what they knew to be true. The Holy Spirit brought people to faith and is still working today as more and more come to faith and He is calling to you. Jesus is here to deliver you from the punishment and power of sin, offering the free gift of forgiveness that cost Him on the cross. (Eph 2:8-10, 1 Pet 2:24) May you too believe and receive His gift of life.

Yes, we proclaim, ²⁰ **...in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** (1 Cor 15:20 ESV) The term first-fruit is term referring to a sample of the harvest that would be taken to the priests as an offering to the Lord. (Lev 23:10) Christ's resurrection was a first-fruit of the resurrection harvest of eternal souls yet to come. Jesus is the first to rise and those redeemed to follow. Just as he rose, so we too, who trust in Him will rise also.

Paul's next statement in the lesson, ²² **For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.** (1 Cor 15:22 ESV) Sin was passed on from Adam to us, thus we all die, but the all in Christ does not mean, universalism, the teaching that all will be saved regardless faith, even those rejecting Christ, since so many other scriptures contradict that. (Mark 16:16) It simply means that Jesus passed eternal life to those who believe, which is also evidenced by the next verse that says, ²³ **But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.** (1 Cor 15:23 ESV)

The next verse proclaims the final end to this world as we know it, as Paul says, 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.** (1 Cor 15:24-25 ESV) Jesus ushers in and rules in the new kingdom. Peter spoke, ¹³ **But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.** (2 Peter 3:13 ESV) The time when Jesus brings a new heavens and earth. The phrase **'enemies under his feet'** comes from the practice at that time of the subjects being lower than the sovereigns feet as they bowed before the king seated on his throne. Jesus broke the power of death at the cross. Paul closes with everything in subjection to the Son, and the Son subject to God, which means reigning as the trinity in full Trinitarian glory. Yes, Jesus is God, but one of the three persons that make up the one true God. Jesus in one with God and fully God. (John 8:48; 10:22,30; Col 1:19; 2:9) This simply means the full trinity will reign.

Knowing Jesus is raised from the dead, and knowing that all this is coming what should we be about today? Peter tells us, ¹⁰ **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.** ¹¹ **Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** ¹² **waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,** (2 Peter 3:9-12 ESV) Our lives are to be lived in holiness and godliness as the Holy Spirit lives through us waiting for the coming of Jesus. As believers, followers of Jesus, we are about what He told us, In Matthew 28, his commission to the disciples and also us, ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** (Matt 28:19-20 ESV) Sharing the good news of Jesus warning people of the coming end, baptizing and teaching. We proclaim the resurrection for we know just as He rose so too we will rise, as we share this gospel message, caring for others, living in His resurrected power. May God grant this to us all.

In His name we pray, AMEN. May the peace of God that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN.

