

The Resurrection

Some Comments on 1 Corinthians 15

As churches around the world celebrate Easter, commemorating the resurrection of our Lord, we turn to what is known as "The Resurrection Chapter" of the Bible ... 1 Corinthians 15. Let us begin at verse 20.

Yet now Christ has been roused from among the dead, the Firstfruit of those who are reposing. (v 20)

Those who die are sleeping (reposing), without consciousness, awaiting the resurrection. When Christ was raised from the dead, He was "the Firstfruit" of those who are dead and who await the resurrection. Some in Paul's day were teaching that the resurrection of the dead had already occurred (see 2 Timothy 2:18), but this was not the case.

For since, in fact, through a man came death, through a Man also, comes the resurrection of the dead. (v 21)

Death entered the world of man through a single man; Adam. Life, or the resurrection of the dead, also comes through a single Man; Christ.

For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. (v 22)

It is a fact that ALL men die. Paul reports in Romans 5:12 that "through one man (Adam), sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned..." But it is a corresponding fact that in Christ ALL will be vivified (made alive). This does not pertain only to believers. ALL died in Adam ... believers and non-believers alike. Correspondingly ALL will one day be made alive in Christ.

Yet each in his own class: the Firstfruit, Christ; thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence; thereafter the consummation... (v 23)

ALL will one day be made alive in Christ, but not at the same time. There is an order to the resurrection. First is Christ ... and this event occurred over 2000 years ago. Next are those who are Christ's ... those who believe ... the Body of Christ, or the ecclesia (church). And then, subsequent to Christ and the Body, all others will also be made alive at a time here referred to as "the consummation" (the end, or the completion).

... whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority

and power. For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies under His feet. (v 24-25)

Some think Christ will reign forever. But here we see that Christ will only reign UNTIL He accomplishes the things His Father have assigned to Him. Even at the end of the book of Revelation Christ is reigning, and there are still sovereignties and authorities and powers in the world. But when they fulfill their purpose, and when Christ achieves His purpose, and when all enemies are under His feet, there will no longer be a need for Him to reign.

The last enemy is being abolished: death. (v 26)

We note that the lake of fire that is referred to in Revelation is called “the second death” (Revelation 20:15). As long as the lake of fire remains in existence, there remains the second death. But one day there will no longer be a need for the lake of fire, and it too will be abolished. We know the lake of fire must be abolished because it is called “the second death,” and we are told that death is being abolished.

For He subjects all under His feet. Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of Him Who subjects all to Him. (v 27)

There is no longer a need for death, or the lake of fire, or sovereignties, or authorities or powers because these things have fulfilled their purpose, and ALL is now subject to God. (Except God Himself is not subject, for He is “The Subjector” and all things are subject to Him.)

Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all. (v 28)

So Christ reigns UNTIL all has been subjected to God. Christ also is then subjected to God, and God now becomes All in all. Think about what it means for God to be ALL IN ALL. There are no more enemies. ALL is subjected to God. This being the case there is no longer a need for a King to reign, or sovereignties or powers. Today there is a need for these things ... but no longer when God becomes ALL IN ALL. This is perfection! The existence of a lake of fire or of an eternal torment, as many within the church teach, is IMPOSSIBLE. How can God be ALL in torment? The lake of fire has served its purpose as a means of bringing all things into subjection to God.

Ephesians 1:20-23 provides a similar message.

... rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all.

Christ has been raised from the dead ... and He is about the business of subjecting all under His feet. He (Christ) is the One completing the all in all. That is His purpose ... to bring all into subjection to God to the end that God becomes All in all. And we, His Body ... the ecclesia (church) ... serve as Christ's complement in this work. Our part is to proclaim the evangel (gospel) and to serve as Christ's Ambassadors, as if God was entreating through us. (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

And so 1 Corinthians 15 tells of the time when this comes to pass. Today all things are in process. Christ is in the process of bringing all into subjection to God. There are sovereignties, authorities, powers and lordships that help to bring this about. And when, at some point in the future, when the process has been completed and all have been subjected to God, the climax of history will occur ... and God will become ALL IN ALL.

Paul answers the skeptics

Later in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul faced his doubters and skeptics, who asked, "How are the dead being roused? With what body are they coming?" (v 35)

God is giving it a body according as He wills, and to each of the seeds its own body. Not all flesh is the same flesh, but there is one, indeed, of men, yet another flesh of beasts, yet another flesh of flyers, yet another of fishes. There are bodies celestial as well as bodies terrestrial ... Thus also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is roused in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is roused in glory. It is sown in infirmity; it is roused in power. It is sown a soulish body; it is roused a spiritual body. If there is a soulish body, there is a spiritual also.
(v 38-44)

What kind of body will the dead be given? The kind of body that God wills. We may be familiar only with these bodies of flesh, filled with corruption and dishonor and infirmity. But there are other kinds of bodies as God wills, and when the dead are raised they will have an incorruptible body ... a spiritual body.

... flesh and blood is not able to enjoy an allotment in the kingdom of God, neither is corruption enjoying the allotment of incorruption. Lo! a secret to you am I telling! We all, indeed, shall not be put to repose, yet we all shall be changed, in an instant, in the twinkle of an eye, at the last trump. For He will be trumpeting, and the dead will be roused incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.
(v 50-53)

Within God's kingdom these corruptible bodies of flesh will not suffice. But one day God will provide us with a body that is incorruptible and immortal, and fit for the kingdom. Here "the kingdom" does not refer to the aspect of the kingdom that is to come upon the earth, which Jesus spoke of to the sheep of Israel in Matthew, and which we see happening in Revelation. In the "terrestrial" aspect of God's kingdom there are still bodies of flesh ... and sovereignties and powers ... for all is not yet subjected to God. But when

all is accomplished and all things are subjected to God, we will see the kingdom in its fulness. It is this “universal kingdom” that Paul speaks of.

Now, whenever this corruptible should be putting on incorruption and this mortal should be putting on immortality, then shall come to pass the word which is written, Swallowed up was Death by Victory, Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting? Now the sting of Death is sin, yet the power of sin is the law. Now thanks be to God, Who is giving us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. (v 54-57)

So that, my beloved brethren, become settled, unmovable, superabounding in the work of the Lord always. (v 58)

He is risen. We, too, will one day be raised and will inherit an incorruptible, spiritual body. Death will one day be abolished. All will one day be subjected to God, and He will become All in all, once ALL are reconciled to Him. Therefore, knowing these things to be true, let us superabound in the Lord’s work during this present era!

– Bob Evely -