

Paul deals with the topic of the resurrection throughout chapter 15 and especially addresses the doubts raised in Corinth if believers would truly be raised physically from the dead. If there were no resurrection, there would be significant consequences (vv 12-19). But Christ has been raised from the dead (v 20), and that has real consequences.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us reason for hope and an anticipation of a positive future. If people were to live today in a manner consistent with their beliefs or lack of them, then they should really despair. They have no reason for a positive hope for the future. But Christ has been raised and there are positive consequences of that for us, two of which are developed here.

### **I. *A risen Christ guarantees our own resurrection.***

1. Paul expresses this guarantee figuratively by calling Christ “the first fruits of those who are asleep” (15:20).
  - a. “Firstfruits” is a term that comes from Old Testament ritual practices. The first fruits that appear each agricultural season, whether grain, olives, grapes, or whatever, were to be brought as an offering to God. Wheat, however, was a special “firstfruits”. When the first wheat was harvested, they were to bring to the temple a sheaf of the wheat and the priest would wave it before the Lord. Fifty days later they were to bring two loaves of bread made with yeast as an offering, the “bread of the firstfruits”, on the day we know as Pentecost. This was a reminder of God having fulfilled his promises (*cf.* Deut. 26:1-11) and an anticipation of all that God was going to give in the coming harvest (*cf.* Exodus 23 & 34). When Paul calls the resurrected Christ, the firstfruits, it is in clear anticipation of many more to come and a reminder of that which God has promised, the resurrection of all who belong to Him.
  - b. A second figurative expression contributes to this guarantee of our own resurrection. Paul calls the dead, “those who have fallen asleep.” Death is perceived by many people today as the end of life as we know it: either an absolute end or the start of a continuing immaterial existence. But by calling the dead “those who have fallen asleep”, Paul alludes to the fact that that person in their body will awake. The Bible teaches the eternal existence of the spirit and the resurrection of the body. Jesus Christ as the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” is the promise and pattern for our future life. As He was raised in His body, so also will all who are in Christ be raised in body. His was the first resurrection, but it will not be the last. His is the promise of many more to come.
2. Paul explains the guarantee of resurrection logically as well (15:21-22).
  - a. In general, if death came by man, so also resurrection must come by man. Death was the penalty upon man for man’s sin. Resurrection can only result when that penalty has been cared for by man.
  - b. Specifically, one man brought death and one man brought life. Death came by Adam because he sinned. When Adam sinned, his nature was changed to one who was in rebellion against God. All of Adam’s descendants inherit Adam’s rebellious nature and incur the same penalty: death. On the other hand life came by Christ. God took on flesh and became a man without sharing in Adam’s sinful nature. Having no sin Himself, He could pay the penalty of sin for others and so He brought life. All those who place their trust in Christ are said to be in Christ and receive spiritual life from Christ. The spiritual separation from God has been removed and physical death will either be reversed or, if the believer is alive when Jesus comes, physical death will be prevented.
  - c. Chronologically, however, there is a delay. The harvest feast, the feast of ingathering, does not occur until the end of the harvest season. Figuratively, there is a delay from the firstfruits until the final harvest. So also in the resurrection there is an order and a delay.

### **II. *A risen Christ will bring all things into their proper place of subjection to God.***

1. Christ will deliver the kingdom to God.
  - a. This presumes that Christ will reign (*cf.* v 25) which was prophesied in the OT, anticipated by the disciples, and explained further in Revelation. This required His resurrection, fulfills the purpose of man to have dominion over the earth (*cf.* Psalm 8:6), and fulfills the purpose of the Messiah to rule (*cf.* Psalm 110). His reign “with a rod of iron” refers to the subjection of all under Him.
  - b. Delivering the kingdom to God the Father also limits the reign of Christ to all outside of God (v 27).
  - c. Finally, delivering the kingdom to God terminates, in a sense, the rule of Christ in His mediatorial role. (Until the end God has chosen to rule man through a mediator. Jesus Christ is that perfect mediator. When the end comes, God will change His relationship to saved mankind. See Revelation 21:3. God will live among men. Christ will rule but as part of direct rule of the Godhead.)
2. Christ must abolish all other rule or authority and power.
  - a. The defeat of all enemies includes all temporal rule, e.g., human governments, etc., and all spiritual authorities, e.g., Satan, demons, etc. Revelation.
  - b. The last enemy needing to be abolished is death, an enemy which fights against the very design of God in creation. God intended man to have fellowship with Him. God created man as spirit and body. Death is the destroyer of both. But death will be conquered. The last enemy, the greatest enemy, will be abolished by Christ.

All of this serves one great purpose. That God may be all in all. God will be brought back to the middle point of everything and all will be in submission to Him. He will receive all the glory which He deserves.

Things are not moving toward greater chaos, but to order. It is not that things naturally are becoming more ordered, as the world might wish. Christ is moving all things toward their proper subjection to God.

Why is there a delay? Because God is gracious and is giving time to repent.