

1 Corinthians 15C

- Returning to chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, we find Paul in the middle of a teaching on resurrection
 - The church in Corinth was debating whether resurrection was true
 - Under the influence of bad teaching, some in the church had come to think that the death of the physical body was the end
 - While we might continue to exist in spirit form only, we would never again receive a body
 - No more enjoying the physical world
 - No more walking on earth, enjoying food and drink, working the land, enjoying the Creation God made to be enjoyed
 - Moreover, all God's promises for a kingdom and a glorious new life were false promises, according to the Corinthian's view
 - Even worse, their viewpoint on resurrection directly contradicted the Gospel itself
 - By denying resurrection, the church was essentially denying Christ's own resurrection
 - They were challenging the very idea of a risen Lord
 - So Paul began his response by pointing out their contradictory position, claiming to be followers of a resurrected Lord while denying the possibility of resurrection for His followers
- Paul ends his opening argument with a self-evident conclusion

1Cor. 15:19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

- If the power of the Gospel dies with our bodies, then of what value was it to us?
 - How did faith in Christ produce the hope of eternal life if our body can never be replaced?
 - Rather than being rewarded for our faith, Paul says we should be pitied by the world

- While the rest of the world enjoyed their bodies, eating, drinking and engaging in all kinds of merriment, we restrained our flesh
- But for what benefit? Without resurrection, then when our flesh is gone, we lose all opportunity to enjoy life in those ways
- If resurrection isn't true, then Christians are the most pitiful, duped, confused and miserable group of people on earth
- No, our faith in Christ is not about producing happy outcomes in this life, because its promises are focused on the resurrected life
 - We deny our flesh today in obedience to Christ's promises, so we may enjoy a new life in a new body in a future day
 - We hope in resurrection, because that is the reward
 - So we hope in Christ not for this life but for the next
- So having illustrated the illogical nature of the Corinthian position, Paul now moves to instructing them on the reality resurrection, including ultimately how the resurrection of the church will take place

1Cor. 15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

1Cor. 15:21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

1Cor. 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

- Paul begins where everything begins: with Christ's work on our behalf
 - When Christ was raised from the dead, He was the first fruits of those who have died
 - In other words, Christ was the very first human being to receive a resurrected body
 - We know others in scripture who have bypassed death on earth like Enoch or Elijah
 - And we know of other men who died temporarily and were raised to life like Lazarus
 - But none of these have yet received a new body, one that will never die again

- Elijah and Enoch present a mystery yet we know from scripture they have not yet received new bodies
- And Lazarus and others came back to life, yet in their old bodies...they eventually died again!
- These people haven't been resurrected yet, because Jesus must be resurrected first, according to scripture
 - He leads the way of salvation
 - His death and resurrection become the way to the Father, and none came go before Him
- In vs.21-22 Paul explains that Jesus' death and resurrection was necessary to reverse Adam's mistake in the garden
 - When Adam sinned, he placed himself in a sinful state, with a fallen nature incapable of reconciling itself with God
 - His nature lacked the perfection required for fellowship with God
 - And Adam had no ability to correct the problem, since once perfection is lost, it can never be regained
 - His nature was marred forever, and because God decreed that Adam and Woman would procreate after their own kind, then they were doomed to reproduce sinfulness in their offspring as well
- So the death we experience today is the a result of Adam's sin
 - We share in Adam's penalty because we share his nature by birth
 - One man's mistake brought a consequence for all of us
 - Therefore, Paul says in vs.21-22 that if we can accept that by one man's mistake, we all suffer death...
 - Then we can also understand that by One Man's resurrection, we can all share in His resurrection
 - The principle is that one man set the human race on a course of death, and One Man made a way of escape for the same
- Christ came as a man for the express purpose of reversing the predicament created by Adam's sin in the Garden

- Christ became a new Adam, a man created by God to establish a new beginning for mankind
 - Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin so that He didn't begin His earthly life inheriting the sin of Adam
 - Then, Jesus lived in perfection and without sin though He was tempted
 - His perfect life preserved His claim to being a new Adam
 - Had Jesus sinned at any point, then His life would be no more helpful to us than Adam's had been
- But because Jesus lived a sinless life, He was eligible to become a new Adam Who gives birth to the children of God
 - That's why we say we are "born again" by faith, for our likeness of Adam is put to death and in its place comes the likeness of Christ
 - That transition takes place in two steps
 - First we received Christ's Spirit at the point of faith
 - And then later, we receive a new sinless body on the day of resurrection
 - And these things are made possible because Christ's death and resurrection forged this new path for all of us
- Christ's resurrection is the turning point for humanity
 - It is the antidote to death
 - When you and I are resurrected, we will never fear death again, because we will have been created anew in the likeness of Christ
 - We no longer fear death, for we no longer deserve the penalty of death
 - We have been born again into the family of Christ
 - This is why the Bible declares that Jesus conquered the grave and death
 - Death is no longer a part of our future
 - Yes, our physical body must die
 - But that death is not the death that we are to be concerned with

- The death of the body is a necessary step toward a new perfect existence
- Made possible by resurrection
- So we might ask when do Christ's children get to follow Him into a resurrected body?
 - Certainly, today we don't see walking around us the new bodies of those saints who have died already
 - So clearly, they haven't yet been resurrected
 - When do we join Christ in a new body?
 - Paul begins to explain the timeline of events in the next passage

1Cor. 15:23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

- Paul says these is an orderliness to God's plan for resurrection
 - Each stage of the resurrection happens according to a certain timing
 - First, of course, Christ is resurrected
 - Before Christ's own resurrection, no resurrection was even possible
 - This resurrection has already happened, of course, so that moves us to the step two
 - Paul says in v.23 that the next step of resurrection is reserved for those who "are Christ's"
 - To be Christ's means to be believing in Christ
 - Christians
 - All those who have come to believe in Christ since the day of His resurrection
 - Paul says this group will receive their new bodies at Christ's "coming"
 - This phrase can be a source of confusion to many

- When the New Testament references the “coming of the Lord” or “Christ’s coming” it’s a reference to the resurrection of the church, as you see here in v.23
 - The resurrection moment for the believers of the church is the moment the Lord comes for His Bride, the Church
 - This is not the second coming of Christ, when He returns to reign on Earth
 - This is a different moment: the resurrection of the Church
 - Paul will come back to explaining this moment in greater detail later in this chapter
- Meanwhile, Paul moves forward in the timeline

1Cor. 15:24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

- In v.24 Paul says “then the end”
 - In my English translation, we also see the word “comes” inserted in the text, but in the original Greek that word is not there
 - The actual phrase in Greek is “then the end”
- Paul is brushing over some details in this discussion for the sake of brevity, but elsewhere in scripture we learn what specifically happens “at the end”
 - According to Revelation 20, there are two periods of resurrection in God’s plan for humanity: the First and Second Resurrections
 - The first resurrection begins with Christ Himself
 - Then it moves to the Church, as Paul says here
 - Then it follows with the Old Testament saints and those saints who live during the Great Tribulation and those who are born in the Millennial Kingdom
 - You can learn more about the stages of the first resurrection in the Revelation study
- All these saints receive their new bodies at different points in time, but collectively they are called the “First Resurrection” in scripture

[Rev. 20:4](#) Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

[Rev. 20:5](#) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

- John tells us that there is a first resurrection, but the rest of humanity won't be resurrected until after the thousand years of the kingdom
- This first resurrection is the resurrection unto eternal life
- It is the resurrection for saints only
- It begins with Christ and comes to conclusion with those who are resurrected during the 1,000-year kingdom
- But as Rev 20:5 told us, the "rest" of humanity didn't receive new bodies until after the 1,000 years are complete
 - Then is the Second Resurrection
 - The end of the kingdom is the end Paul is talking about at the beginning of v.24
 - The Kingdom of Christ will last on Earth for 1,000 years, but it must come to an end
 - And then follows the second resurrection
 - Revelation says the Second Resurrection is reserved for all unbelieving souls who have been confined in Hades waiting for this day

[Rev. 20:11](#) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

[Rev. 20:12](#) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

- This is the Great White Throne Judgment, when unbelievers are finally judged

- And then they are thrown into the Lake of Fire to live eternally because they did not receive the Messiah to atone for their sinful deeds
- We need to understand that all mankind is resurrected eventually
 - Resurrection isn't just a reserved for the believer
 - Resurrection is a fact for every human being
 - The believer's reward is to be resurrected into a new, sinless body that will enjoy eternal life with God in peace
 - But unbelievers are resurrected into eternal judgment, because their new bodies still exist in the sinful nature inherited from Adam
 - They have not been born again, so they have no escape from the judgment of sin
- Then in v.24 Paul says the end of the Kingdom means Christ handing all authority back to the Father, as the Father abolishes all power and authority in His Creation apart from His own
 - This is a fascinating insight into the distant prophetic plan for Creation
 - After Christ's Second Coming to earth, He sets us a kingdom to rule over humanity on earth
 - Christ presides over a world that still exists in sin
 - The resurrected saints will not have sin
 - But others in the kingdom will still have sin
 - Necessitating Christ's perfect judgment and our ruling with Him
 - As we read in Reve 20:4, we are ruling with Jesus over this world during that kingdom
 - But this rule has a purpose, and that purpose according to scripture is to allow Christ to put all Christ's enemies under His authority

[1Cor. 15:25](#) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

[1Cor. 15:26](#) The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

[1Cor. 15:27](#) For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

[1Cor. 15:28](#) When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

- The final and greatest enemy of God is death itself, and the source of death, that is Satan
 - So Christ will rule until that final enemy is conquered
 - The moment Satan and death are conquered is at the very end of the Kingdom
 - But once that victory is won, then the purpose of the Kingdom has been fulfilled, and Jesus hands back authority to the Father
- In v.27 Paul quotes from the Psalm 8
 - The pronouns cause some confusion at first, but if we replace them with proper nouns, it makes easier reading

[1Cor. 15:27](#) For the **Father** HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER **Christ's** FEET. But when the **Spirit** says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that **the Father** is excepted who put all things in subjection to **Christ**.

- Paul says that the goal of the Kingdom is to put everything under Christ's rule
- But of course, the Father Himself is not to be subjected to Christ's rule
- Therefore, once the final enemy is gone, the Son obediently returns all authority to the Father
- At that point, the Son obediently subjects Himself to the Father once again, and Paul says God returns to being "all in all"
 - It's not clear what this moment means for the Godhead, but the simplest explanation is that the expression of the Godhead returns to a singular expression
 - The Three Persons of the Godhead still exist, of course, as they always have existed

- But they no longer express themselves into Creation in Three Persons separated one from another
- Instead, the Godhead expresses itself as One, in a manner similar to the way God existed at the beginning of Creation
 - When the Godhead said Let Us make man in Our image
- In other words, Christ came to earth as a man to die and resurrect and rule so that as a man, He could conquer all the enemies of God in Creation
 - And once He completes this mission, His purpose to exist in the form of man is met
 - And then He will return to the Oneness with the Father that He has enjoyed since before the beginning
- Resurrection is a key step along that path of redemption
 - It proved His claims to deity, and it opened the door for our own rebirth into new sinless living
 - That new spiritual birth and physical resurrection sets us on a course of eternal fellowship and reigning with Christ
 - And once Christ has ruled to the extinction of all God's enemies, then the next phase of eternity will begin
 - A glorious endless age of living with and enjoying the fullness of God in the new heavens and earth
 - And it all began with a resurrection
 - The risen Lord Who promises we will share in His future by faith in His promises
 - Our own promise of resurrection begins with our confession of faith in Christ as Lord
 - How can we call ourselves Christian and live in the hope of new life without a belief in the literal, physical resurrection of the dead body?
 - As Paul says in Romans 8

Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your **mortal** bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.