

## INTRODUCTION

No one has been resurrected except the Lord Jesus. You may be confused because a number of people have been resuscitated in the Old Testament. Elijah prayed for a widow's son who had died, and he came back to life. He wasn't resurrected. He was resuscitated because he died later on. If you remember the Lord Jesus raised Jairus's daughter from the dead and even called out for Lazarus after he had been dead for four days. They came forth, but they were not resurrected. They were resuscitated and later died. In an interesting passage of scripture that a lot of people overlook, the Bible says that the moment Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And it said many holy people came out of their graves and appeared in Jerusalem. They weren't resurrected. They were resuscitated. And the word "resurrection" has the idea of being raised up never to die again; that happened to Jesus and it's going to happen to us. And so this passage is about our own resurrection.

There were people during the time of the Bible who did not believe in a literal resurrection of a body. In fact, there was a whole Jewish party in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus called the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. Someone had said that's why they were "sad, you see," because they didn't think there was going to be any life after death. They were the ones who asked Jesus that ridiculous question to try to trip him up. They said, "There was a man who married a woman, and he had six brothers. He died, and they didn't have any children. So she married the next brother. He died with no children. She married the next brother until she'd married all seven brothers and all seven brothers died. So, whose wife will she be in the resurrection?"

First question I have is what was she putting in their soup? They were asking a ridiculous question, and they didn't even believe in the resurrection. Jesus said, "You err because you do not understand the word of God and the power of God." And what does the word say about the resurrection? Without the power of God, resurrection could never take place.

First Corinthians 15:23-34 says:

<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? <sup>30</sup> Why are we in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! <sup>32</sup> What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” <sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” <sup>34</sup> Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

## **I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE RESURRECTION**

I'm not just talking about the resurrection of Jesus. I'm talking about what Paul says about how “each one will be resurrected in their own order.” And that word “order” is the Greek word that was used when soldiers line up in sequence. So what Paul is saying here is that there is a sequence. There's an order to the resurrection and what's the order?

### **1. Jesus**

Now that's already happened. Jesus has already been resurrected, but he is the first fruits. This goes back to the Old Testament barley harvest festival. The Israelite farmers depended so much on the success of their crops. When they planted a field of grain and it started growing, they would take a sheave of grain, the first fruits, when it first began to put a head of grain on the stalk. They would gather it up and would take it to the temple in Jerusalem. And they would literally wave it before the priest. And it was sometimes called a wave offering. And these were the first fruits, and then they would donate it to the temple. Now, what is the purpose of a first fruit? Well, first fruits were given in gratitude to God, but they were also given in hopes and full expectation that there would be more crops to come. You see, first fruits said “there's more to come.”

It is a beautiful picture of how Christians ought to give or tithe their income. You give your first fruits to the Lord, the first 10% out of gratitude to God, but also out of a hopeful expectation and belief that there's more to come. You give the first and you give the best. Now that's what Jesus was. He was the first one to be resurrected.

### **2. Christians**

Verse 23 talks about “those who belonged to him.” Now we could call these people saints or

Christians, because I think some Old Testament saints/believers will be included in this group. First Thessalonians chapter four verse 16 says the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice, the Archangel and the trumpet call of God. And it says the dead Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together to meet them in the air. When Jesus comes back, it's going to be an amazing experience. The dead in Christ are going to rise first. They've got six feet farther to go than we do, right? I mean, they're down in the ground there. Then we who are alive will be changed instantly, and we'll receive our resurrection body. And so that event is the second in the order and it hasn't happened yet. This is the rapture of the church.

### **3. Tribulation saints**

Dr. Stanley Toussaint and I were discussing this passage of scripture and he believes and understands it exactly the way I do. When 1 Corinthians 15 says “the end,” it is not talking about a time; rather, it's the ones who live in the end are the ones who come in the end. They're next in order, and we read about them in Revelation 20 after the battle of Armageddon, just before the thousand-year reign of Christ, the millennium. John says in verse 4, “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony for Jesus, because of the word of God [This means during the tribulation] for they had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ 1,000 years.” So here is the order. Jesus Christ was resurrected, never to die again. That's Christ, the first fruits. When Jesus comes back to rapture the church in the future, then all of the believers, living or dead, will be caught up and resurrected, raptured, never to die again. But then the book of Revelation teaches that there's going to be a seven-year period of tribulation. And during this time of tribulation, it's going to be the worst time planet earth has ever experienced. Jesus said it's never been that way before or after. During that time, some people will turn to Jesus Christ. Now they're going to suffer terribly. They're going to die hideous deaths, but at the end of that seven-year tribulation revelation, just as the millennium begins, that group will be raised to life so they can live during the millennium.

And so this is what the apostle Paul is saying. The order of the sequence of the resurrection is: Jesus, Christians, tribulation saints.

## **II. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY**

This is describing what's going to happen at the end of the tribulation. After these tribulation saints are raised in verse 24, Jesus is going to hand over the kingdom to God the Father with “all dominion and authority and power.” Those are words that are always used in the New Testament to describe spiritual order. It's used sometimes to describe the ranking of angels, or it can be used to describe the

rankings or the organization of demons. Ephesians chapter six talks about spiritual warfare. And it says we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rulers. The same words are there: dominion, authority, and power. Jesus has and will totally destroy death, Satan, and the demons.

Paul says the last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

When Paul says that everything has been put under Jesus' feet, it's clear that this doesn't include God himself, who put everything under Christ. In other words, Paul is arguing for the final victory that Jesus has already won.

### **1. The prediction**

God predicted that he would ultimately win the final battle. Rewind to the Garden of Eden. God created Adam. He created Eve. How long did they live in the garden before they sinned? Sometimes people think it's just one chapter to the next one. So maybe what two weeks? A year? We don't know. They could have lived there 10 billion years before they sinned. God must sit in heaven at laugh and laugh at man trying to figure all this stuff out!

When Satan tempted Eve and she influenced Adam to sin, the beauty and the perfection of paradise in Eden was destroyed and corrupted and ruined by man's sinful choices. God pronounces a curse on them, and one of the things included in that curse was death. Adam and Eve never would have died. I suspect they never even got old. Wouldn't that be nice? They just stayed the same. They never were going to die. But one of the consequences of sin is always death. The book of James tells us that when lust is conceived it brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished, brings forth death. Eve and Adam lusted after the fruit. They sinned. And as a result, they died as God had said, "The day you eat thereof, you shall surely die."

And part of the curse was pain and childbearing. All mothers have experienced that firsthand. Part of the curse also involved thorns and weeds and briars. But sometimes people forget that when God pronounced a curse upon man and woman, he also pronounced the curse on Satan, the old snake.

Genesis 3:15 is the very first Messianic prophecy in all the Bible, a prophecy about the Messiah, Jesus. God says, "I will put enmity between you [the devil] and the woman, between your offspring and hers." Because Satan slipped in and ruined this whole picture, God made him an enemy. He says, "You're going to be an enemy to man and woman. And they're going to be an enemy to you. There's going to be animosity between your offspring and theirs." Does that mean Satan is a daddy? Well, that means he's hatched a lot of devilish plots through the years, and his demons could be included in his family. But God says someone is coming—a seed of woman—who will crush Satan's head and Satan will strike his heel. And that's the first prediction in the Bible about Jesus. Jesus is the seed of woman. That's what the Bible says is unique about Jesus. He was conceived by God, but he

was the seed of a woman. And did you know that this animosity between the seed of woman (people) and the devil himself has gone on through the centuries? It came to a climax on the cross where what was predicted in Genesis 3:15 took place.

## **2. The performance**

God performed what was predicted. How do we know that it happened on the cross? How do we know that Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled on the cross? Hebrews 2:14 says Jesus destroyed him who holds the power of death, that is the devil. Did you know that one of the tools that Satan has used through the years is not death, but the fear of death?

I really don't think dying is all that bad. I really don't. I really do think that to live is Christ and to die is gain. So the idea of death doesn't bother me a bit. But there are times that I kind of get afraid about how I'm going to die. Doesn't everybody? And honestly, I don't really fear dying in a head-on collision. I kind of fear the idea of lying in a bed and lingering for years and years. That's kind of what I fear, not necessarily for me, but for my family members. There's a measure of fear tied to death. Why do we call him the grim reaper? Fear of death is the last enemy.

The prediction God made is that one day, Jesus is going to crush Satan's head, but then he's going to strike his heel. And what does that mean? Paul was just talking about how Jesus put everything under his feet. We're talking about feet here. We're talking about heels. Where does that terminology come from? It was a military custom that when an army would conquer a nation, the king or the conquering general would literally have the conquered general kneel before him. And that conquering king or the conquering general would place his foot on the neck of the foe that had been conquered. He would put it under his heel. Then he might kill him, or he might let him live. It was a symbol that said, "I'm putting you under my foot because I'm in charge and you're not. I'm the winner. You're the loser. I'm the victor. You're the conquered one." That's the terminology that the apostle Paul employs here when he says he put everything under his feet.

And here's what happened when Jesus hung on the cross. He was crushing the head of Satan. He was destroying him who had the power of death, but simultaneously when he was crushing the head of the serpent, you know what the serpent was doing? The serpent was biting the heel; that's why Jesus died.

Wouldn't have been nice if Jesus could have just come to planet earth and just stomped on the devil and kept on living? Why did he have to die? Real simple. He had to take our part of the curse. That's what salvation is: Jesus taking our curse upon himself. And so when he crushed the head of the serpent, he was destroying death.

And the power that Satan had was to make us fear death. Even though there are times that we do fear death or how we're going to die, those are the moments that we are really not understanding exactly what Jesus Christ has done. The Bible says

in Psalm 23:4, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”

The most natural thing for you to do is to fear death, but it is the most supernatural thing for you to trust Jesus, because he has conquered death. And so that's the destruction of the enemy.

### **III. THE MESSAGE OF REDEMPTION**

This message of redemption and this message of the resurrection is a message that must be preached. And it must be defended. In verse 29 Paul is talking about a different group. We know that Paul and his crew were not baptizing for the dead. He's talking about some group that baptizes for the dead, but then he contrasts and says, “But as for us...” Paul says there are groups like there are today calling themselves Christians who are totally confused about the truth of the gospel.

#### **1. Many are deceived about the gospel**

There are many people who are deceived about the gospel, and they call themselves Christians. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has, from its inception, practiced proxy baptism for the dead. And then they base it on this one little thin verse right here. And they started a long time ago, baptizing by proxy. Now, let me tell you what that means. Let's say they had a daddy or a granddaddy or a grandmother who wasn't a Mormon. They died and went to a “purgatory” place. They don't use the word “purgatory” but being sent to a spirit prison, kind of a nebulous nowhere land. Basically on this verse, they developed a doctrine that said, “If you wanted to be baptized for your dead granddaddy, you could do that by invoking their name and by being literally baptized.” And when you were literally baptized by proxy as a substitute for that dead person, then suddenly that person in the spirit prison could hear the message of Mormonism and receive it and be escorted into the celestial houses.

They developed a whole doctrine about it. That's why Mormons are so interested in genealogy because they want to know all about every one of their relatives. Their members are also very evangelistic. They put Baptists to shame. A few years ago, they started using birth records and death records, which are public records, to baptize by proxy by the hundreds of thousands. And this act was uncovered a few years ago. And if you remember, there was a big flap about it and people were saying, “I don't want you baptizing by proxy my father or my mother.”

But they believe if they invoke the name of that dead person and get baptized for that person in the spirit prison, that person could become a Mormon. They've done it for literally millions of people. Why don't we know more about that?

Because it was a very mysterious, right? It only takes place in the Mormon temple. And unless you are a very advanced Mormon, you have never been in a Mormon temple. You may have been to the visitor center attached to the temple. But non-Mormons can never go in the temple, and not all Mormons can enter. Only those who are advanced Mormons in good standing can even go into a temple. Those

who've come out of Mormonism to Jesus Christ tell us that there are thousands and thousands and thousands of baptisms going on in all of the temples by proxy for dead people. How'd you like to have that for a job? You'd be waterlogged by the end of the day! when

This is all based upon a spurious interpretation of this one verse. Now there are at least 62.5 different interpretations of that verse. I won't bore you with all of them, but I will point out two things. Number one, I do not think this was something that Paul and mainline Christians practiced. That's why he said that's what *they* do and "But as for us..." There was a heresy called the Marcion heresy in 168AD. He was considered a heretic and was kicked out of the church.

But there's another interpretation of it that I think is exactly what Paul was intending here. A Greek preposition makes the difference. Now a preposition can mean a lot of different things. If you look at it at face value, it would seem to mean "in the place of" or "if I was baptized for you." It's the idea I'm being baptized instead of you. But the better and very common usage of that little preposition is the word "Because of..." It reads, "If now there's no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized *because* of the dead?" Now that could happen. Couldn't it? Throughout my ministry on a number of occasions I preached a funeral of a Christians and the family members say, "Because John was a Christian, and because he was such a wonderful guy, I want to become a Christian. I want to be saved because of John." There are thousands of people who have been saved and baptized because of someone they loved who's dead. Right? So that's one way to look at it. What Paul is saying here is these people are confused and they're deceived because when somebody is dead, there is no second chance. Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed unto man once to die and after that, the judgment.

## **2. Some are dedicated to the gospel**

Paul never complains. And he's not trying to make you feel sorry for him. But in verse 31, he says, "I face death every day." In verse 32, it says he fought wild beasts. Scholars have looked at that one verse right there and compare it what they would do with prisoners who were Christians. They put them out in the colosseum and they would loose lions and bears and enraged bulls to fight and slaughter the believers. That's what they did for sport. Ephesus has a beautiful coliseum where the Christians were thrown to the lions. And could it be that Paul is saying here, that when he was in prison at Ephesus he was thrown into the colosseum? He says, "If there is no resurrection, I'm the biggest idiot who ever lived because facing danger and fighting wild beasts was nothing but a big, sad joke. If there is no resurrection. Let's don't study. Let's don't serve. Let's don't sacrifice. Let's just eat. Let's just drink. In other words, live for pleasure. Live for your sensual calling. That's all, because you're going to die anyway.

But Paul also says that if there is a resurrection, we should be dedicated to the gospel and be willing to sacrifice for it.

## **CONCLUSION**

What have you sacrificed for Jesus? I'm not talking about money. Have you ever faced danger? Have you ever suffered ridicule? Have you ever made a decision based upon your dedication and commitment to Jesus Christ that ended up being a terrible sacrifice to you relationally or even physically? If you truly are dedicated to Jesus Christ and dedicated to the gospel, there is no price too high for you to pay. The good news is that after you die, there's going to be a resurrection. As surely as Jesus was raised from the dead, you are going to be raised from the dead. And the resurrection body will be built to last because it's going to have to last a long time.

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