

## The Theology of the Resurrection and Return | 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

---

- Verse 20 – Paul now dismisses any idea of no resurrection, having determined that resurrection (both of Christ and in general) is essential to the Christian faith. Christ is both risen and **the firstfruits** of those who have deceased.
- Verse 21 –
  - This testifies to the words of Jesus who said, **I am the resurrection** (Jn. 11:25).
  - This also testifies (along with the next verse) of a fundamental theological truth.
    - Death came **by man**, namely, by a particular man, Adam.
      - Death did *not* come because of our *individual sins*, but because of *Adam's sin*.
      - Even a sinless person would die, because this is the condition of the human race (with recognition that there is no sinless person).
      - Man's greatest problem is death. This is true for humanity of both genders, any ethnicity, and any status of life, including religious status.
      - After Adam's sin, the great need of humanity was **the resurrection of the dead**.
    - The resurrection (i.e.: physical life after death) came **by man** also, namely, by Jesus of Nazareth.
- Verse 22 –
  - This verse clearly says that **all** will be **made alive**. It would be impossible for **all** to mean "everybody" in the first part of the verse and not the second.
    - This does not require that *all would be saved*, for the text says nothing of the sort.
    - It only requires that every human experience the resurrection of the physical body, such resurrection being made possible by Christ.
  - Some try to remove the "everybody" aspect of the second **all** by focusing on those who have a relationship with Christ.
    - This simply doesn't work, nor is it even necessary when you remove the idea that Paul speaks of salvation.
    - Paul will emphasize the **all** vv. 24-28. How could Christ be over **all** if **all** were not **made alive**?
- Verse 23 –
  - This verse does not speak of the rapture, but the Second Coming.
    - First, it speaks about **his coming**. At the rapture he merely gathers us to Him in the air. Second, this is about those that **are Christ's**, which is Israel, His inheritance.
    - The church is the *body of Christ* and is *in Christ*, while Israel is the possession/inheritance of Christ.
    - Furthermore, the following verses are clearly about the millennial reign, which begins at **his coming**.
  - The verse, along with v. 24, speak of a three-stage resurrection:
    - **Christ the firstfruits** (who has already been raised).
    - **They that are Christ's** (His inheritance, the faithful Old Testament saints).
    - The final resurrection, **the rest of the dead** (Rev. 21:5).
  - Why doesn't Paul mention the rapture in these verses?
    - Because his focus is **them that slept** (v. 20).
      - The grammar in v. 20 requires that Christ be the firstfruits of those who were *already dead* at the time of His resurrection.

- In 1 Thessalonians 4:14 speaks of "those who are dying" (literal translation, aorist passive tense) while v. 20 speaks of "those who are being dead" (perfect passive tense).
        - The rapture is not germane to those who died prior to the resurrection of Christ.
- Verse 24 –
  - Note that *cometh* is a translators insertion. I would contend the the period does not belong at the end of v. 23. Rather, the sentence continues, **then...the end**, that is, the *last, the ultimate*, the point at which **all** will be **made alive** (v. 22).
  - This **end** or *ultimate* resurrection is the one referenced in Revelation 20:13. It is at this point, following the short release of Satan, that Jesus **shall have put down all rule and all authority and power**.
- Verses 25-26 –
  - For most of the millennium, Christ has no enemies. However, this is somewhat false scenario since the deceiver has been bound.
  - With Satan's release at the end of the millennium, he is quickly destroyed. However, Satan is *not* the **last enemy**.
  - After the destruction of Satan, *then* the **last enemy** which is **death** will be **destroyed**.
    - At this point, no human who has ever lived will be in the confines of Sheol (the grave).
    - Death will be *dead*, and God will sentence a *second death* which is very unlike the first (because the second involves *physical life* that has no end).
- Verses 27-28 –
  - I am convinced that the purpose of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is to restore the honor and glory of Almighty God.
    - His honor was tarnished and glory diminished when Adam, the crown of His creation, chose to reject God and follow Satan.
    - From this point, Satan has had dominion over God's created order.
  - In time, Christ (who died in order to become Lord of the living and the dead, Romans 14:9) will subdue all things beneath His feet, and thus the created order will be under the dominion of man again (through the Second Adam). When this is done, then the honor and glory of God will have been rightfully restored, and God will be **all in all** once again.
  - Even though Christ is God, there is a hierarchy in the Trinity which is beyond our comprehension. This hierarchy consistently has Christ as *the second Person of the Trinity*. Compare 1 Corinthians 3:23, 11:23, and John 14:28.