

Lazarus, came forth as a result of His command. But in these instances the spirit returned to the same body that was laid in the grave. As such it was destined to return to the grave. <sup>1</sup>

*Christ is the firstfruits of them that slept* (20). He continues permanently in His position and role as the risen Lord. *Firstfruits* suggests two things: (a) the first blade or sheaf of the harvest which was brought to the Temple and offered (Lev. 23:10-11); (b) more fruit to follow later. In other words, "Christ risen is to the multitude of believers who shall rise again at His advent what a first ripe ear, gathered by the hand, is to the whole harvest." <sup>20, 1</sup>

There is in the expression **firstfruits** (*aparche*) the further idea of a vital, living relation between Christ and the believer. Even as the natural head of the human race was responsible for the imposition of **death** on all members of the human family, so the Head of the body of believers (Jesus Christ) imparts **the resurrection** from **the dead** (21) to those who accept Him. There is here no hint of universal salvation for all men, for the whole idea of the resurrected Christ is directed to the believers--with a warning that unbelief can bring spiritual death. Because of Adam all men became subject to **death**. Because of Christ, all men who believe become objects of eternal life (22). <sup>1</sup>

20. Godet, op. cit. II, 351.

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, Volume 8, p. 463.

## FIFTEENTH STUDY

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### THE RESURRECTION

It is believed that the Corinthian Church received their influence about the resurrection of the dead from their Greek background.

This Greek approach was based on the idea that matter, or material substance, was the source of evil. Thus the resurrection of the body was a thing of little appeal to those influenced by Greek thought. For these people the immortality of the soul, and the soul alone, was the object of their faith and hopes. Others apparently taught that the resurrection had already taken place (2 Tim. 2:18). To Paul this was heresy. Some taught that it actually took place in the act of baptism. Moule writes, "These heretics maintained that by baptism they were already made partakers of the risen life and that there was nothing further to follow" <sup>4, 1</sup>

Paul taught the Resurrection of Christ was "the firstfruits" which is the primary evidence of the Christian's resurrection from the dead. Our Redemption would not be complete without including the body. The early Church did not believe in an escape from the body; but they looked for an experience where there would be a complete change

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4. The Birth of the New Testament ("Harper's New Testament Commentaries"; New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 101.

1. Beacon Bible Commentary, Volume 8, p. 457.

of the body; a transformation; from a physical body to a spiritual body eternal.

The death and resurrection of Christ was the core of Paul's preaching. But for some reason, now the Corinthians had doubts concerning this truth. Without His bodily resurrection, there is no gospel or foundation for their salvation. So Paul starts by going back over, the gospel that he had preached to them in the beginning.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE RESURRECTION (I Corinthians 15:1-19)

1. If the Corinthians did not believe the gospel that Paul preached to them, then what does Paul say was the outcome for them? (I Corinthians 15:2) \_\_\_\_\_
2. What proof does Paul give in I Corinthians 15:3,4 of Christ's death, burial and resurrection?

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According to the Scriptures. The Scriptures Paul was probably referring to was from the Old Testament of Isaiah 53; Psalms 16; and Hosea 6:2, since the New Testament was not in existence at this time.

Next, Paul uses personal witnesses as more proof of Christ's resurrection.

3. Name these personal witnesses of Christ's Resurrection Paul mentions in I Corinthians 15:5-8.
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The Apostle Paul describes himself in I Corinthians 15:8 . . . *as of one born out of due time* - which in the Greek (*electroma*), means an abortion; an untimely birth; and indicates a child that is born in a premature and violent way. Paul's conversion was violent, unlike the twelve disciples who were called, nurtured, educated, and then commissioned. Nevertheless, he also saw the risen Lord (Acts 9:4,17).

6 Results of Rejecting the Resurrection (I Corinthians 15:12-19):

- (1) Denying the Resurrection of Christ (15:13)
- (2) Canceling apostolic preaching (15:14)
- (3) Making Christian faith imaginary (15:14)
- (4) Making apostles false witnesses (15: 15,16)
- (5) Man would even now be in sin (15:17,18)
- (6) Hopelessness (15:19)

THE ASSURANCE OF THE BELIEVER (I Corinthians 15:20-34)

The future resurrection of the believers is as certain as the past resurrection of Christ. The risen Christ is the Firstfruit of the great harvest of the believers whose ingathering is essential to the completion of the redemption in the kingdom of God. <sup>1</sup>

Christ was the first to rise from the dead. Prior to His resurrection none had returned from the grave as He returned. To be sure, some, such as

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1. Beacon Bible Commentary, volume 8, p. 463.