

**TITLE: THE RESURRECTION PROCLAIMED**

**TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11**

**INTRO:** Chapter 15 is about the resurrection (of Christ, and of His people). This was another problem the Corinthian church had – the claim that there is no resurrection (v. 12). Either they doubted *any* resurrection (including Christ's), or they believed in Christ's, but not in anyone else's. It cannot be overstated how serious a problem this is. Without the resurrection, Christianity is a dead and invalid religion, Christ hasn't yet come, and we are wasting our time!

**I. THE PROPHECY OF THE RESURRECTION (v. 1-4):**

(v. 1-2) *I declare unto you the gospel (good message) which I preached to you (my message hasn't changed), which ye have received, and wherein ye stand....* In spite of all their problems, Paul says they're still standing in this gospel (they're not beyond hope)! *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached...unless ye have believed in vain.* Contrary to the denominational teaching "once saved, always saved," Paul states that a Christian **can** fall from grace (cf., **Gal 5:4**), having "believed in vain!"

(v. 3) *I delivered to you first of all (the first thing he delivered to them) that which I also received (directly from Christ – Gal 1:12), how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures....* He's reminding them of the fact that Jesus **was** the promised Messiah, who came to die for our sins, just as prophesied (**Isa 53:5** – *He was wounded for our transgressions... v. 12* – *he poured out his soul unto death...he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors*).

(v. 4) *And that he was buried, and that he rose again the 3<sup>rd</sup> day according to the scriptures.* He was buried according to the scriptures (again **Isa 53:9** – *and he made his grave with the wicked...*). And he was resurrected according to the scriptures (**Psa 16:10** – *thou wilt not let leave my soul in Hades (Sheol), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* His resurrection on the third day was according to Christ's words – **Mt 16:21**).

- The gospel is more than the death, burial, & res. of Jesus. It is something to be obeyed (**2 Thess 1:8**), and how do you obey facts?  
- And it seems that it includes all these issues he's addressed in this letter – it's being obedient to **all** of His commands.

So having warned them of the coming persecution (**7:26**), he now encourages them that this Christianity is the right place to be.

**II. THE WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION (v. 5-8):**

(v. 5) *And that he was seen of Cephas (Peter), then by the twelve.*

1. It seems that Jesus showed Himself to Peter first (which would mean "first of the apostles," since **Mark 16:9** says He first appeared to Mary Magdalene). **Luke 24:34** references this fact ("Simon"), but gives no details about this appearance.

2. After appearing to Peter, He then was seen by the twelve (the apostles).

a. He appeared to the apostles more than once (**Mt 28:17; John 20:19, 26**).

b. Of course, Judas is not there, but the apostles were commonly called "the twelve." They were only eleven for a very short period of time, and would be "twelve" again after Judas was replaced by Matthias (**Acts 1:26**). So this is what Paul calls them. (Actually, some manuscripts have "eleven" instead of "twelve.")

(v. 6) *After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present...*

1. This is about true, real verification of the facts! These could attest to the truth of the resurrection, most of them being still alive to testify even at the time Paul is writing.

2. Over 500! This is an incredible amount of witnesses to see Him alive at once. If this doesn't convince someone, then no amount of witnesses will. (If you don't believe 500, would you believe 1000?)

3. So any doubters in the Corinthian congregation would have to deal with **multiple** eyewitnesses! This also refutes the claims that Jesus' resurrection can be explained by hallucination (there is no such thing as group hallucinations – certainly not 500 at once)!

(v. 7) *After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*

1. *He was seen by James.* This is probably *not* James the apostle, considering he was martyred early (**Acts 12:2**), and has already been included with "the twelve" as having seen Jesus alive. This James was most likely the brother of Jesus, who was not an apostle, and had not even been a follower (**John 7:3-5**). It seems that it may have been this very event – witnessing Jesus alive after His crucifixion – that made him a believer, a Christian, and an eventual leader in the church in Jerusalem (**Acts 15:13f; 21:18**), and author of the NT letter bearing his name. We aren't told about Jesus' appearance to James, but Paul, being inspired, knew it happened because the Holy Spirit had told him (and may have also known this fact from James personally).

2. *Then by all the apostles* – this is a reference to one of the later appearances to the apostles (e.g., **Jn 20:19, 26**).

(v. 8) *Last of all he was seen by me also, as of one born out of due time.* Paul is referencing **Acts 9:3-6**, where he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Apostles were chosen personally by Jesus. But Jesus had already died, risen, and ascended to Heaven. Nobody would've thought that He would choose another apostle now. But He did. And Paul's witness is just as real and true as anyone else's, but would require extra work on his part (v. 9-11), probably because of how different his experience was.

**III. THE CREDIBILITY OF PAUL AS A WITNESS (v. 9-11):**

(v. 9) *For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle... – we might think that this is because of how and when he was chosen, but not so. It's because I persecuted the church of God.* Paul recognized the blessing he'd received, and acted accordingly!

(v. 10) *But by the grace of God I am what I am (an apostle, after having been the chief of sinners—1 Tim 1:15). His grace...was not in vain... – I labored more abundantly than all – he's not looking for glory; he's saying "I had to because of my past (Phil 3:13)."*

(v. 11) *Therefore, whether I or they, so (thus) we preach, and so ye believed* – the gospel message (the death, burial, & resurrection of Jesus). It doesn't matter whether you heard it from me, Peter, James, Apollos, or whoever (**ch.1-4; Phil 1:18**). Just don't forget it!

**CONCLUSION:** This message, its truth & its witnesses, is "the gospel wherein ye stand!" We are to be firm, fixed, established in this. We must know, believe, and proclaim Christ's death *and* resurrection. Because if it's false, so is Christianity. But if it's true, then the rest of the gospel message is true, which provides salvation to any who will obey!