

**TITLE: THE RESURRECTION DEFENDED**

**TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-34**

**INTRO:** The central theme of Christianity is the resurrection. V. 12-34 addresses the reason for this chapter – some said there was no resurrection. So Paul addresses the consequences of this belief (Christ wasn't raised, the apostles are false teachers, our faith is vain, we're still in our sins), then guarantees that the resurrection is real by Christ's resurrection & defeat of death.

**I. CONSEQUENCES OF NO RESURRECTION (v. 12-19):**

- A. (v. 12) *If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead (which is preached – by apostles!), how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?* Here is the problem against which Paul writes this chapter.
1. Some said this, but not all. Why hadn't the rest (probably majority) corrected them? Paul shouldn't have had to address this!
  2. Sadducees may have infiltrated. The view may include or exclude Christ's resurrection. Either way it's a huge problem!
- B. (v. 13-14) Paul addresses both possibilities. *If there's no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.* So this addresses the 1<sup>st</sup> possibility – that Christ was raised, but nobody else will be. If there's no resurrection for us, then there's not for Christ either! Next, if those members didn't believe in any resurrection at all: *If Christ isn't risen (and therefore we won't rise), then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* Why would you be a Christian? Your faith is useless! Christian faith is centered on the resurrection – of Christ and of ourselves (defeating death).
- C. (v. 15-16) *We're found false witnesses of God...* We testified that God raised Christ, but if there's no resurrection, this isn't true!
- D. (v. 17) **AND, if Christ isn't raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.** You have faith that Christ died to forgive your sins (according to prophecy – v.3; **Isa 53:5,12**). But if He wasn't also raised according to prophecy (v.4; **Psa 16:10**), then He couldn't have fulfilled that prophecy, and therefore Jesus was not the Messiah. And so you are still in your sins!
- E. (v. 18) **AND, they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.** Christians who have already died are just DEAD! Of course, this is contrary to what Paul said in **1 Thess 4:16**, in which he addressed this very concern!
- F. (v. 19) If these things are true, then our only hope is in *this* life! What hope is that?! Hope is about the next life! We want to go to Heaven! But if there's no resurrection, then *we are of all men most miserable [to be pitied]*.

**II. THE GUARANTEE OF THE RESURRECTION (v. 20-28):**

- A. Guaranteed by Christ's resurrection (v. 20-22)
1. (v. 20) *But Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.* So Paul answers both possible false beliefs regarding the resurrection – Christ was raised, and is the 1<sup>st</sup> of all who will be raised. Others had been raised, but died again. Christ is the first to be raised, never to die again.
  2. (v. 21-22) Explained in v. 22 – contrast between Adam & Christ. Adam represents all humans since he sinned 1<sup>st</sup>; all die because of our sin, which was introduced by Adam (**Rom 5:12**). But resurrection came by one – Christ. So all shall be raised (**Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29** – *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and that that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*).
- B. Guaranteed by Christ's ultimate defeat of death (v. 23-26) – The events of and surrounding the resurrection:
1. Christ raised – *Christ the firstfruits* (v. 23a) – this is the only step that has already been completed. The rest is at the end.
  2. *Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming* (v. 23b). \***1 Thess 4:15-17** – dead in Christ raised (along w/the wicked – to damnation), then the righteous who are alive will meet them in the air. *This is the kingdom – past, present, future!* And it consists of those that are His **at His coming!** *We must remain faithful until our death or His coming!*
  3. (v. 24a) *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God...* The kingdom is the church (**Mt 16:18-19**), not a future earthly kingdom! He's coming back to deliver it, not establish it! It will be delivered up to God.
  4. (v. 24b-26) *He shall have put down all rule, authority & power. The last enemy is death.* Christ is reigning **now!** He defeated death, but until the end, death still has power over us (we still die). So when we're risen, death will be defeated!
- C. Guaranteed by Christ's authority (v. 27-28) – Everything is subject to Christ except God. It was God who gave Him the authority.

**III. FURTHER DEFENSE OF THE RESURRECTION (v. 29-34):**

- A. (v. 29) *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead...?* Is baptism for the dead (“proxy baptism”) a biblical practice?
1. What is baptism for the dead (literally “on behalf of the dead ones”)? This verse doesn't say (nor does any other!)
    - a. Some say it means being baptized for yourself (being dead in sin). But “on behalf of” yourself doesn't seem to fit.
    - b. Some believe it's a Christian being baptized for a non-Christian who died (Mormons believe it's for those who died under the old covenant (prior to baptism)). This would obviously make our responsibilities on earth meaningless, if someone can just be baptized for us after we're dead! But this is the false belief to which Paul refers.
  2. But Paul never authorizes it! He only says that it is done, and that it assumes that the resurrection is real. He could simply be referring to this practice in order to prove his point, without authorizing it. Jesus used the example of the unjust steward to make his point about being wise in this world (**Lk 16:1f**). But He never authorized the steward's lies!
  3. Scripture teaches us all we need (**2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3**). There are no commands to practice proxy/vicarious baptism!
- B. (v. 30-32) *Why stand we (apostles, etc.) in jeopardy every hour?* **2 Cor 11:23-28** chronicles many things Paul endured for Christ. *I protest (affirm, testify) by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily* – not literally, but Paul came close to death on a regular basis! He wasn't afraid to die (**Acts 25:11**), because he believed in the resurrection & life afterwards (**Phil 1:23** – *having a desire to depart and be with Christ*). *If after the manner of men I have fought with wild beasts at Ephesus* – this is probably a reference to how he was treated there (not literally thrown to the lions). If there's no resurrection, all this is useless!
- C. (v. 33-34) *Evil communications (company) corrupts good morals.* Don't be influenced (possibly by Sadducees). Watch who you spend time with! If a Christian can be convinced that the resurrection isn't real, then he'll be convinced of anything! *Awake to righteousness and sin not* (this is serious)! *Some don't have the knowledge of God...* You should (gift of prophecy - **12:8**)!

**CONCLUSION:** Who are your friends?! Bad company corrupts! We have the knowledge of God; we shouldn't be influenced by false teachers regarding the resurrection, or anything else. Do you believe in the resurrection? Does your life look like you believe in the resurrection?