

“Raised on the Third Day”

January 23, 2022

Isaiah 22

Psalm 8

1 Corinthians 15:12-34

Have you ever had a peg break?

If you hang something that is too heavy on a peg,
it all comes crashing down!
That’s what will happen to Eliakim.

Isaiah 22 is speaking of the coming judgment –
the LORD God of hosts has a day when he will bring judgment on Jerusalem.

And when the day of judgment comes, the LORD God of hosts calls for weeping and mourning –
but instead, there was joy and gladness –

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

The people just don’t get it.

Like so many today, they think that what matters is *living life to the fullest!*

Isaiah then turns to Shebna, the steward of the house of David,
and he says that God is going to destroy him.

As the one over the household, Shebna was probably the ringleader of those who said,
“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

And Isaiah says that God will send Shebna into exile – where he will die.

And in that day, God will raise up Eliakim, son of Hilkiah –
who will carry the key of the house of David.

And at first all will go well:

he shall open and none shall shut – and he shall shut and none shall open.

But Eliakim cannot hold the weight of the house of David.

He is a strong peg,
but he is not the Messiah!

He is not the deliverer.

ONLY GOD CAN SAVE!!

Even the best of men is still mortal.

He may be a good and wise steward,
but he cannot save.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul will quote this.

Quite frankly, if there is no resurrection –
then why bother with weeping and mourning?

If there is no resurrection, then why not live it up?!

If this life is all there is,

then hey, go for it!
Have fun.

Who cares?

In Psalm 8, it speaks of how God has put all things under the feet of the son of man.
In one sense, this is talking about creation –
how God gave dominion over the creatures to Adam.
But of course, God did not give dominion to the *son of man* –
he gave dominion to *man* (Adam).
Adam was *not* the *son* of man!
He was Man.

So we also need to sing Psalm 8 as speaking of how God put all things
under the feet of the Davidic king – the son of David.

Certainly Jesus brings both aspects together.
Jesus is the second Adam and the Son of David –
the only peg that can hold the weight of the world,
because he is the one through whom God made the world!

Sing Psalm 8
Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-34

Last time we talked about how Christ descended into hell.
He took upon himself the wrath and curse that we deserved!
He entered the realm of the dead –
so that we might never dwell in darkness.

But what happened next?
Did Jesus stay dead?!
By no means!
The Apostles' Creed says it this way:
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

The Nicene Creed adds a phrase:
and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;

That line “according to the scriptures” is quoted from 1 Corinthians 15:4.
“He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.”

The whole of the Old Testament is all about the death and resurrection of the beloved Son.
Whether it was Isaac, whom Abraham received back, as it were, from the dead.

Or Israel who descended into hell (in other words, Egypt) –
and who was restored to life again 400 years later!
Or Jonah who spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish.
Or Elijah and Elisha who each raised a beloved son from the dead –
as a sign to Israel that their only hope is that God raises the dead!

The whole Old Testament is all about the death and resurrection of the beloved son.

So today I want to focus particularly on "Why the Resurrection Matters."

In 1 Corinthians 15:12-34, Paul works through three basic questions:

- 1) Why is the resurrection *necessary* (both as a historical event, and as a preached message)?
- 2) What is the *purpose* of the resurrection (for Christ, for us, and for all things)?
- 3) How should you approach life in the light of the resurrection?

1. "Christ Is Risen" – The Necessity of the Resurrection (v12-19)

Some people in the first century seemed okay with the resurrection of Jesus,
but objected to the resurrection of everyone else.

The resurrection was a controversial doctrine – both for Jews and for Greeks.

The Sadducees were a Jewish group that denied the resurrection of the body.

And most Greeks thought that the resurrection was absurd –

the body is the source and occasion for most of the pain and suffering we endure,
so why would you want your body back?

Paul replies that if there is no resurrection of the dead,
then not even Christ has been raised.

If you understand who Christ is
then *his* resurrection becomes the paradigm for everyone else.

And that is why Paul begins with "preaching and history" in verses 12-13:

a. Preaching and History – the Resurrection and Christ (v12-13)

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

Paul sets forth in verses 1-11 those things that are "of first importance" –

the gospel – the good news – is that Jesus died and was buried,

and that Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to over 500 people.

And he concluded in 15:11,

"Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed."

Our preaching is not just a matter of opinion or philosophy.

We preach a message about something that happened *in history*.

And such is the connection between the resurrection of Jesus *in the middle of history*
and the resurrection of the dead *at the end of history*,
that if you reject the one, you also lose the other!

What is that connection?

Look at verse 14:

b. Preaching and Faith – Christ’s Resurrection and Our Faith (v14-17)

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

Paul now adds *faith* into the mix.

History, preaching, and faith are all bound up together.
If the resurrection of Jesus did not happen,
then our preaching is “in vain” – it is empty.
I have nothing worth saying – and your faith is pointless.

In verse 15, Paul pushes even harder:

¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

Paul had said in chapter 14 that the apostles are ‘first’ in the church.

Every Christian needs to submit to the apostolic teaching.
And the apostles *all* have testified that God raised Christ.
If the dead are not raised, then they are false witnesses!

If there is no resurrection – then Paul and the rest of the apostles have lied about God!

¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Remember the basic gospel message of verses 3-4 –

“that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried,
that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures...”

That is a single message.

If you remove the resurrection – if Christ has not been raised –
then your faith is futile (the word means “useless”).

If Christ has not been raised from the dead
then believing in him won’t do any good.

At this point, Paul is simply making an assertion.

He is setting up the problem.

He will give the evidence for this in verses 20-28.

But his basic thesis is that

if our message is that Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead,
then if Christ was not raised from the dead –
the result is obvious – you are still in your sins!

Christianity without the resurrection isn't Christianity any more!

Anyone can say “we ought to love people.”
There are Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Atheists
who all agree that we ought to love people!
That is one of the most universally agreed upon principles of the human race!

The problem is that we are not very good at this!

How are you doing at loving people?
Do all the people around you feel loved by you?

I mean, okay, let's make this personal.

Do you always feel loved by me?
I know you don't!
I know that there are times when you feel like I've failed you!

And guess what.

You're right!
I have failed you.

Your pastor has not always loved you well.

The distinctiveness of Christianity is not
that the Bible tells us how to love each other better!

What makes Christianity distinctive is the teaching
that Jesus Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,
that he was buried,
that he was raised from the dead in accordance with the scriptures...

The gospel – the good news – is that God has done what we could not do for ourselves!
Now – if we respond to this good news by doing *worse* at loving each other –
then we haven't believed the gospel!

When I fail at loving you well, I am called to *repent* and turn away from my lazy ways
and believe the gospel of the resurrection of Jesus –
and love you better!

Paul is convinced that the resurrection of Jesus is the heart and soul of the gospel!
Without the resurrection of Jesus, not only is faith obliterated – but hope as well:

c. Preaching and Hope – the Pitiful State of This Life (v18-19)

¹⁸ *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* ¹⁹ *If in Christ we have hope^[b] in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

Paul – and the rest of the apostles – have been preaching the hope of the resurrection.
If there is no resurrection, then Christianity is pointless.

Verses 12-19 lay out a series of assertions
connecting the historical resurrection of Christ,
the preaching of the apostles,
and the faith of the church –
with the result that if our hope in Christ is only about *this life*,
then we have missed the point of the resurrection!

In verses 20-34, Paul fleshes this out.

Verses 20-28 provide the argument for the purpose of the resurrection –
and why Christ’s resurrection *must* result in *our* resurrection;
and then verses 29-34 explain why we would be most pitiable
if we only hope in Christ for this life.

2. “Christ the Firstfruits” – the Purpose of the Resurrection (v20-28)

In verses 20-28, Paul lays out three things that the resurrection of Christ does:

first, to bring life (v20-22) –
as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive;
second, to establish the kingdom (v23-25) –
Christ is the firstfruits of the whole of humanity;
and third, to destroy death (v26-28)
bringing all things into subjection under him.

a. To Make Alive – Adam and Christ (v20-22)

²⁰ *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

²¹ *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* ²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

It’s worth saying that Paul uses the definite article with both Adam and Christ.

For as in *the Adam* all die, so also in *the Christ* shall all be made alive.

Now, that’s *terrible* English.

We never use the definite article with a person’s name.

If I said that my wife is “the Virginia” -
you would look at me funny!

But in Greek, you *can* use the article with a proper name for emphasis.

Which Adam are we talking about?

Which Christ?
The Adam.
The Christ.

All other human beings find their identity and meaning in one of these men.

You are either *in Adam* or *in Christ*.

In Adam all die.

You haven't died yet.

But you will.

By a man came death.

And there is no way to escape the consequences of Adam's sin.

The wages of sin is death.

And because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God –
therefore all die.

But that's not the end of the story!

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

Christ has come in order to repair Adam's fault.

In Jesus, God has come and put on our humanity.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The Heidelberg Catechism summarizes this very well:

Q16: Why must He be a true and righteous man?

A16: He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin; he must be a righteous man because one who is himself a sinner cannot pay for others.

Q17: Why must He also be true God?

A17: He must be true God so that by the power of His Godhead He might bear in His manhood the burden of God's wrath, and so obtain for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

John Calvin has a beautiful way of explaining this:

“His task was so to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God;
of the heirs of Gehenna, heirs of the heavenly kingdom.

Who could have done this had not the selfsame Son of God become the Son of man,

and had not so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us,

and to make what was his by nature ours by grace?...

It was his task to swallow up death.

Who but the Life could do this?

It was his task to conquer sin.

Who but very Righteousness could do this?

It was his task to rout the powers of world and air.

Who but a power higher than world and air could do this?

Now where does life or righteousness or lordship and authority of heaven lie
but with God alone?

Therefore our most merciful God, when he willed that we be redeemed,
made himself our Redeemer in the person of his only-begotten Son.” (Inst. II.xii.2)

It must be a son of Adam who would repair Adam’s fault.

But no son of Adam could survive the wrath and curse of God.

God narrows his curse from all humanity in Adam, to Israel, and finally to one man, Jesus
So that in that one man, Jesus,
the blessing of God might now extend to the new humanity.

And that’s the second purpose of the resurrection of Christ:
to establish the kingdom!

b. To Establish the Kingdom – Christ the King (v23-25)

²³ *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

There is a proper order to the resurrection:

Christ the firstfruits –

then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

As firstfruits, Christ is the *first one* to be raised.

Now, someone might say, “wait, what about Lazarus?”

Elijah and Elisha *both* raised people from the dead!

True, but those were not full-fledged resurrections.

Those people were certainly raised from the dead –

but that was only a temporary resurrection.

Lazarus died again.

A temporary resurrection is a good thing – it shows that death will not win in the end!

But Lazarus wound up dead and buried.

And he is still dead – and buried!

But Jesus rose from the dead – never to die again!

His resurrection burst the gates of hell –

he arose from the dead by the power of an everlasting life!

He now sits at the right hand of the Father *in his glorified body!*

There is an embodied man –

sitting at the right hand of the Father.

So Christ is the firstfruits –
the first *one* to be raised –
but also, as *firstfruits*, the point is that *the rest of humanity*
will also be raised up when he comes.

And verses 24-25 describe what he will do when he comes:

²⁴ *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.* ²⁵ *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*

What is Jesus doing now?

He is destroying every rule and every authority and power.

Destroy may not be the best translation of this.

Paul is not saying that rule, authority, and power will be destroyed –
in the sense of *obliterated*.

Rather, Paul is saying that every rule, every authority and power will be destroyed
in the sense of rendered ineffective – brought to nothing – nullified.

What does this mean?

Well, let's not forget the Adam/Christ parallel!

God had created man, and given him dominion over the works of his hands
(we sang about that in Psalm 8).

Rule, authority, and power had been given to Adam.

But when Adam sinned, rule, authority, and power was handed over to the usurper, the devil.

Indeed, one could even say that *death* ruled humanity,
as we were governed by the fear of death!

What is Jesus doing now?

Jesus is rendering ineffective all rule, all authority and power.
Everything is being put in subjection under his feet.

He is bringing to nothing every power that has opposed him.

Now, you might be tempted to say that he's not doing a very good job.

After all, 2000 years later, the wicked still have considerable rule, authority, and power!

But *how* does Christ rule?

How does he render ineffective every rule, every authority and power?

It is not by the weapons of this age!

Neither the sword nor the ballot box can establish the kingdom of Jesus!
The kingdom of Jesus is established through the preaching of the cross.

In one sense, I am thankful for 1500 years of Christian rulers in Europe
who wanted their people to believe in Jesus.
But too often we lost sight of whose kingdom was our focus!

But through it all, Jesus continued to bring to nothing every rule, every authority and power!
Every kingdom that opposes Jesus – every power that withstands his reign –
is being nullified.

Think about our liberal, secular world:
what is it that drives them?
They want to see love, peace, joy – human flourishing.
They want to put an end to suffering and oppression and evil.

Those are all very noble ends.
In one sense, you could say that what they want is the Kingdom of Jesus!
They just don't know where to find it!

The attempt to establish the Kingdom of Jesus by force – or by popular election –
will inevitably fail,
because it attempts to use rule, authority and power
rather than the foolishness of preaching.

But this is the fun part of being a student of history!
In every age it appears to the faithful as though the gospel was perishing.
In every age, those who love Jesus mourn at the folly of this age!
And in every age, the gospel continues to advance to the ends of the earth –
in spite of the foolishness (or, dare I say *because* of the foolishness)
of those who preach the message!

But what about those who are doing it wrong?!
What about those who are harming others!
That's not right!

No, it's not.

But since when did that stop Jesus from putting an end to all rule and authority and power?
We should still heed the apostles!
Paul said, "do all things decently and in order" –
and he expected the Corinthians to listen and to do what he said!
But as we do our best to follow the apostles' teaching,
remember that *Jesus* is King!

Then in verse 26, Paul says:

c. To Destroy Death – that God May Be All in All (v26-28)

²⁶ *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* ²⁷ *For “God^l has put all things in subjection under his feet.”*

Paul cites Psalm 8 in verse 27.

(He had hinted at this in verse 25).

God has put all things in subjection under Christ’s feet.

After all, in the resurrection of Jesus, death has already been defeated.

But death has not yet been “brought to nothing.”

That will only happen when believers are raised from the dead.

In my experience, death still has *some* power.

I will die.

But because of the resurrection of Christ –

that power of death is only a fleeting and transient power!

Death no longer has the last word!

And Christ has come in order to destroy death – in order to nullify death!

As Paul goes on to say in verses 27-28:

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. ²⁸ *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.*

When Adam’s error has been fully rectified.

When death has finally been brought to nothing,

and all the corruption of Adamic rule and authority and power are ended,

then the Son will hand over the Kingdom to the Father,

in order that that God may be all in all.

This phrase “that God may be all in all” could be translated

that God may be everything to everyone –

or that God may be everything in every situation.

The point is that the Father and the Son are in such perfect harmony

that when all things are finally subjected to the Son,

then all things will finally be subjected to the Father!

3. “Dying Daily” – How the Resurrection Challenges Our Daily Life (v29-34)

And, in a small way, that begins even now in the church!

Verses 29-34 speak of three ways in which the resurrection challenges our daily life.

In verse 29, we have the strangest verse in the chapter:

a. Baptism for the Dead (v29)

²⁹ 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?

I cannot tell you with any certainty what Paul means by “being baptized on behalf of the dead.”

I wish I could – but after reviewing the 40 different proposals for what it means,

I am no closer to understanding it than I was before!

I take comfort in the fact that as early as the 2nd century,

people professed to be puzzled by this!

I *can* tell you one thing that it does *not* mean!

This passage does not support the Mormon practice of baptizing living people

in the place of the dead –

so that the dead are considered ‘converted’ after the fact.

Both Tertullian and John Chrysostom reject this practice as heretical and absurd –

and it is plainly contrary to apostolic teaching and practice.

(There is a simple rule of biblical interpretation –

that if a passage admits of several possible interpretations,

if one of those interpretations is inconsistent with the rest of biblical teaching,

then you can generally rule that interpretation out.

In this case, there are at least 30 orthodox interpretations of the passage,

so there is no reason to go with a heretical one!)

The phrase is literally translated,

“Otherwise, what will they do, the ones who are baptized on behalf of the dead?”

(some have rendered it, ‘what do they think they are doing?’)

Anthony Thiselton suggests that the idea may be that some people were getting baptized

in the hope of being reunited with those who had died. (p1248)

That makes as much sense as any view.

In that view, Paul is saying that if the dead are not raised,

then why are people getting baptized for the sake of seeing their departed friends?

Second, if there is no resurrection:

b. How Do You Approach Life in Light of the Resurrection? (v30-32)

³⁰ Why are we in danger every hour? ³¹ I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³² 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.”

Paul has endured all sorts of physical trials.

Why subject his body to this sort of beating –

if there is no resurrection of the body?

If the dead are not raised,
Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!

Paul cites Isaiah 22:13.

If there is no resurrection, then why do we put ourselves through all this?
Why not just enjoy ourselves?
Why put ourselves at risk every hour?

And this gets applied to the congregation in verses 33-34:

c. “Stop It” – What Is Getting in the Way? (v33-34)

³³ *Do not be deceived:*

or perhaps better, *stop being deceived!*

“Bad company ruins good morals.”^[d] ³⁴ 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.

Think about what Paul is saying.

If you know God, then you will not run with a bad crowd.
“Bad company ruins good morals” –
is a line from a Greek play,
but it had become a common saying.

Whoever you surround yourself with is what you will become.
If you surround yourself with people who are in rebellion against God,
then you will rebel against God.

You might tell yourself – no, I’m strong, I won’t follow the crowd!
But if you are with the crowd, then you *are following the crowd!*
And likewise, if you are with people who are seeking Jesus,
then you will seek Jesus!

Wake up from your drunken stupor –
and do not continue to sin!

Do not remain in your old ways and habits!

It’s awfully tempting to come up with excuses.

He said something hurtful...

Does that give you the right to say something hurtful back?!

She always does that thing that I don’t like!

Then love her enough to speak kindly and explain!

But pastor, you don’t understand what I’ve been through!!

No, I don't understand what you have been through.
But I do understand how my own misery leads me into sin –
which then leads to more misery –
which then leads to more sin –
and the cycle never stops until you hit the grave!!

Is that what you want?

Because that's what the world looks like without the resurrection!

So wake up!
Because Jesus Christ is raised from the dead!
He is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!

And so he will raise – at his coming – those who belong to him –
those who believe in his name!

So repent and believe in Jesus!
Oh, but pastor, I would – but my parents...

Paul says, Stop it!

Yes, I know, I will...
but sometimes...

No, *stop it!*

But what if...

No.

If Jesus Christ is risen from the dead,
then you are no longer who you once were!

And so stop it!
Wake up from your drunken stupor!
Repent and believe the gospel!