

Resurrection: The Guarantee of Restoration

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

BI: The resurrection guarantees that Christians will live forever in a restored creation over which Christ reigns as sovereign, victorious King.

It's difficult to imagine what was lost when Adam and Eve sinned. From the moment they drew their first breath and opened their eyes, everything was perfect. No sin, no guilt, no deceit, just absolute freedom and joy to love and be loved by one another and their God "Naked and unashamed." They lived in a spectacular garden full of every sweet fruit and edible plant imaginable. There were birds and animals and fish of every kind and they all lived in perfect harmony with one another. There was satisfying work and abundance of pleasure. There was the perfect kingdom ruled by a glorious and benevolent King, and oh how they loved Him! He loved them as well and made Himself available to them every day. The fellowship they enjoyed with Him in the cool of the day was the best part of being alive.

But then, in a moment, everything changed. A single act of disobedience was all it took. Who could have imagined the devastation one little sin could cause. From the spot where the forbidden fruit fell from Adam's hand, an invisible poison began sweeping the earth with catastrophic potency. The first sign of it was the shame that suddenly filled the hearts of our first parents. It drove them into hiding where they fashioned ridiculous fig-leaf garments to cover their bodies. First shame, then covering, then blame-shifting and accusations; what happened to the relationship of this perfect couple was terrible. Worst of all, however, fellowship with their King was ruined.

In response to their sin, He took one of their precious animals, killed it, and used the skin to make new coverings for them. Then He expelled them from the garden into a world that was rapidly being overrun by thorns and briars, and where the animals began attacking and eating one another. It wasn't long before people also began killing one another. Some made themselves rulers and authorities over families, tribes, cities and nations. And in the shadows where no one could see there were also demonic forces at work provoking men to exalt themselves, kill one another, and rebel against God.

Because of the first man's sin, mankind now lived in the hopeless clutches of sin and death. But God had a plan. This, after all, was His world and He loved it. In fact, here is how God loved the world; He gave His Son, His only one, to reverse the curse and set men free.

Since the devastation was caused by the actions of a man, it could only be reversed by the actions of a man. So, because of His rich mercy and deep love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions and sins, God became a man. Living on the earth for 33 years He did what Adam failed to do. He obeyed God perfectly every moment of every day in every circumstance. Like Adam He was tempted. In fact, He was tempted in every way as we are, but He never, ever sinned. His was a life marked by the perfect righteousness man needed to have fellowship with God restored. Then, at the end of 33 years, he was seized like an animal and killed. But His death was no accident. It was by the design of God Himself who sent His Son

on a mission to pay for the sins of a world of people who desperately needed a Savior.

Why did the sinless Son of God die a bloody death on a cruel Roman cross? He did it to reverse the curse and restore His kingdom to what it once had been when man walked with God in a garden. And His mission was a great success! How do we know? Because it was confirmed on the third day by an empty tomb where two angels sat proclaiming “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here! He has risen just as He said!”

Over the next forty days He appeared to many: to the women at the tomb, to Peter and the Twelve. He walked with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, ate breakfast on the shore of Galilee with the fishermen, invited Thomas to touch His nail-scarred body, and then ascended into heaven in broad daylight before the eyes of some 500 people! More than that, He appeared to Stephen when he was being martyred and to Paul on the road to Damascus. Oh yes! Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen just as He said!

But the resurrection of God’s Son is not the end of the story. God’s people still live in a sin-cursed world, and if the curse is going to be fully reversed and the kingdom completely restored, then there is much work left to be done. Christ’s resurrection was only the beginning. How will it proceed from here? That is exactly what Paul is writing about in our text for today.

Read 1 Cor. 15:20-28

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is far more significant to God’s plan of redemption than we ever imagined. Yes, as believers we understand that Christ’s resurrection secured our salvation. Because Jesus rose from the dead believers cannot be held in the clutches of death. One day we too will be set free to the joy of eternal life. But the ramifications of Christ’s resurrection reach far beyond the salvation of individuals. God has a far greater purpose in mind, and everything is moving along just as He planned it. Let’s consider the sequence of events God has on the schedule of redemption as He moves things toward final restoration.

I. The Immediate Effects of Resurrection (20-22):

1. Read 20-22

2. In these verses Paul reveals how Christ’s resurrection applies to us. His resurrection is not just a historical event and theological truth. It’s something that’s going to have a profound effect on the future of all who believe.

3. To make his point, Paul draws from the O.T. feast of First Fruits as kind of an analogy. First Fruits took place at the beginning of the spring Barley harvest. On the day of Passover, a farmer would go out into his Barley field before the beginning of harvest and cut a sheaf of fresh grain, bundle it up and leave it standing in the field to dry. On the next day, the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread, the sheaf was taken and prepared for the offering on the third day. On the third day, then, the grain from that sheaf would be taken to the temple and given to a priest to wave before the Lord as a wave offering. The point of this sacrifice was to say, “Lord, by offering You this sample of grain from our fields, we give you thanks and praise from our hearts for the great harvest that will soon follow.”

4. Now that's an interesting bit of history, but here's the amazing thing. In the mystery of God's perfectly timed providence, Jesus rose from the tomb on the 16th day of the month Nisan, the very day of First fruits. Paul seizes upon that fact to teach us that just as that first sheaf of grain served as the promise of the harvest to come, so the resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of a great harvest of resurrected saints to come. The First Fruits had been offered, but the great harvest is yet to come!

5. Consider the theology behind all of this. (Read v. 21-22)

6. Where did death come from? It came by human means: "By a man came death." Man was the channel conveying death to his kind. Therefore, if the curse of death was ever to be reversed, the process needed to come by the same channel. This is why God had to bring salvation by means of a man; a perfect Man; a Man who was, in fact, God in human flesh who could serve as man's new representative.

7. As Paul writes in Gal. 4:4-5, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

8. Adam's personal life had affected everyone joined to him. In the same way, Paul argued, Christ's personal life affected everyone joined to Him. How did it affect us? It affected us by taking away the sting of death. Because Christ has risen, all who are joined to Christ are spiritually risen. We no longer need to live in fear of death because death has no claim upon our lives any more.

A. Hebrews 2:14-15 "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

B. Revelation 1:18 "I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

9. When you were born again it was as if you died with Christ and rose again to a new life. You no longer have to look forward to the prospect of death because Christ died in your place. Now His promise to us is, "Those who live and believe in me will never die" (Jn. 11:26).

10. If you are a child of God by faith, then you have already experienced spiritual resurrection. The curse of death has already been removed. For those who are "in Christ" death has been defanged. It serves now only as a door that opens to the presence of the Lord.

11. This was the immediate effect of Christ's resurrection. But there is much more to come. Complete restoration did not happen all at once when Jesus rose again. It would be brought about by a sequence of events that occur one after another over a long period of time. Paul now wants us to consider...

II. The Overall Order of Resurrection:

1. Read v. 23

2. The term "order" (τάγμα) here means "class," or "division." It was a term used of military ranks or divisions. But each in his proper rank. There are two ranks of the resurrected host. First there is the Captain in his solitary glory. Then there is the rest of his army now sleeping, to rise at His trumpet's sound (1 Thess. 4:16).

3. The Captain was resurrected in 33 AD. He was the "firstborn of the dead" (Col. 1:18). But some day the trumpet will sound and the army under the rule of this Captain will be raised to join Him. Paul writes in 1 Thes. 4:16-17, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."

4. This, beloved, is the great harvest of souls of which the resurrection of Christ was merely the First Fruits. There remains in God's plan another resurrection that will bring to life *NOT* one man only, but all of the redeemed.

5. You see, salvation is not only about our sins being forgiven in this life. No! The Lord has planned so much more for His people. He is restoring all things to their original glory and He has promised it so that we will live in hope while we await that glorious day.

A. 1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."

B. Romans 8:11 "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

6. The early Christians has a term that reminded them of these promises. It was Maranatha, which mean "Oh Lord, Come!"

7. If this were the only result of resurrection it would be more than enough. But there's more. We have seen the Immediate Effects of Resurrection, the Overriding Order of Resurrection, and

now...

II. The Final Goal of Resurrection:

1. Read 24-28

2. After the saints are resurrected then comes the end. The term for “End” here is *Telos*, meaning “conclusion” or “completion.” Just before Jesus died he said “tetelestai” meaning “it is finished.” And indeed, His work of redemption was finished on the cross. But one day God will bring about the completion of His plan for all of redemptive history. It will be the conclusion of the drama of sin and redemption in which “the Adam” and “the Christ” have played out their respective parts. This will *Really* be the end.

3. On that day, Christ will hand over the kingdom to God the Father. But before that can happen, He must first abolish all rule, authority, and power on the earth and take His rightful seat as Sovereign King over all.

4. The term “abolish” here means to “put an end to,” “stop,” “invalidate,” “nullify,” “cancel,” “destroy,” or “replaced.” That pretty much paints a clear picture, doesn’t it? When the King comes, all other ruling parties are out.

5. “Rule, Authority, and Power” are terms used to describe human authority (Rom. 13:1–3) and demonic powers (Eph. 1:21). In this context he had in mind the destruction of all powers that are raised against the kingdom of Christ, whether human or supernatural. That is to say, Satan and His minions are living on borrowed time. And so is every human authority that stands against the glory and majesty of Jesus Christ. God intends to roll back all the worldly, wicked, and demonic authorities and powers that took over the world after the fall. Only then can there be the complete restoration of all things.

6. And notice that this passage seems to indicate that Christ is going to take his time accomplishing this. Verse 25 says,

7. I can’t help but make the connection between this passage and Rev. 20 where the Lord revealed to the apostle John that one day the dragon (Satan) will be capture and bound for a thousand years during which time Christ will rule on earth. The resurrection of the saints happens immediately previous to Christ setting up his kingdom on earth and we will reign with Christ for a thousand years.

8. Then Rev. 20 says that God will release Satan from his prison for a time “to deceive the nations,” but eventually he will be “thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

11. Then, when all of those enemies of God are cast aside, one final enemy will be dealt with. (Read v. 25).

12. Then, when death is abolished, the Son of God will hand over the Kingdom to His Father and all things will be restored and made new. (Read Rev. 22:1-5)

13. You see beloved, the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of all that comes after. God intends for Christ to be King of kings and Lord of lords over a world that is as perfect as the Garden of Eden. But how would this King have a kingdom if all of His people succumbed to the curse of sin? Who would He rule over if mankind was left to die in their sins? We had to be rescued from the power of sin and death! Only then could all things be restored and made new. Only then could we regain perfect unity with one another and perfect fellowship with God.

14. Do you see a little better how great is the Father's love for us that He would go through all this trouble to redeem us and restore us to the glory we were created to enjoy?

15. Have you struggle against temptation and sin this week? Don't lose heart. If you are a child of God, sin's days are numbered. Satan's days are numbered. Your struggle against the flesh will not last forever. Someday you will hear your King say, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat. 25:34).

16. Until that day, let us rejoice in the glory of Christ's resurrection. Let us bask in the reality that though we often sin against our Lord, He does not count our sins against us. He understands how difficult it is to live in a sinful world. He sympathizes with our weaknesses, and one day He will surely and infallibly fulfill His promise to rescue us from all the influences of sin (both from without and from within) and restore us to perfect, unhindered, shameless, joyful fellowship with Himself forever.

17. Until then, may we be found faithful: faithful to keep short accounts of sin; faithful to live in the hope of the eternity with Christ; faithful to take risks for the gospel; and faithful to worship this glorious God whose grace toward us is infinitely greater than we ever dreamed.

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Exegetical Outline

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

²⁰ But

now Christ has been **raised** from the **dead**,
the **first fruits** of those who are **asleep**.

²¹ For since by a **man** *came* **death**,
by a **man** also *came* the **resurrection**
of the **dead**.

²² For as in Adam all **die**,
so also **in Christ** all will be **made alive**.

²³ But each in his own **order**:
Christ the **first fruits**,
after that those who are Christ's
at His coming,

²⁴ **then** *comes* the end (τελος),
when He **hands** (*key verb*) over the **kingdom**
to the God and Father,
when He has **abolished** (*key verb*)
all rule
and all authority
and power.

²⁵ For He must **reign**
until He has put all His **enemies** under His feet. ²⁶

The last **enemy** that will be **abolished** is

death.

²⁷ For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN **SUBJECTION** UNDER HIS FEET.

But **when** He says,

“All things are put in **subjection**,”

it is evident that He is excepted

who put all things in subjection to Him.

²⁸ **When** all things are **subjected** to

Him,

then the Son Himself also

will be **subjected** to the One

who **subjected** all things to Him,

so that God may be all in all.