

# Who Christ is in the light of the resurrection

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*Corinthians Explained*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

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## **Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation**

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1 Corinthians 15:20-28. Let me only read verse 28.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

So far.

Who Christ is in the light of the resurrection. Who Christ is in the light of the resurrection. Four thoughts, he is the second Adam and you can see it in verses 21 and 22; secondly, he is the firstfruits, so to speak, the firstfruits in verses 20 and 23; in the third place, he's the only king in verses 24 through 27a; and in the fourth place, he is the Father's subject as you see in 27b and 28. So who Christ is in the light of the resurrection: he's the second Adam; the firstfruits; the only king; and the Father's subject.

Congregation, as you know, this is the third sermon on 1 Corinthians 15 that is about the resurrection, right? So important in theology in the Bible and also for the Apostle Paul. He really takes the time to explain things and he goes deep this morning about the resurrection, who Christ is and what he did, and what he will not do, and what he will do finally at the end. In the first part of this chapter, we found that the Apostle Paul was emphasizing that there were witnesses of the resurrection. He mentioned James, and he mentioned also the Apostle Peter, Cephas, and he mentions the 12, and he mentioned the 500 and he said, "Just ask those people yourself. Ask yourself if they're still alive what they've seen, if they are sure." So he wanted to emphasize that there is proof of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. "Go talk to those people yourself."

He also has the reasoning in the second part of this chapter, and he said, "You know, if there's no resurrection, then the preaching is vain, then your faith is vain, then we have been lying to you, that you are in your sins yet, that the dead have perished and we are most miserable of all men." And we had also turned it around, right, remember? If there is no resurrection, faith is vain. But there is a resurrection so faith is not vain, and preaching is not vain, and God's people are not most miserable because Christ has risen. So he's talking about witnesses and then the reasons that the resurrection must be true.

Then in our text in verse 20, he says,

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

We will combine that with another text later. And then verse 21 and 22,

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

In that first part of this third section, he's talking about the second Adam. The second Adam. You children know who the first Adam is, right? The first Adam, one of the most shocking verses in the Bible, you're just quiet while you hear them is in Genesis 3, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof," she took it, "and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Horrible. You're not supposed to. The consequence was so serious. They were warned and they did it and Adam was here representing mankind. He's the first Adam and the first Adam in the covenant of works, we call it, God had made a covenant with mankind and said, "If you obey me, you will have eternal life and you may be in paradise and eat of the tree of life. But if you eat of that forbidden tree, you will die, your wife will die, your children will die, your grandchildren will die, and mankind will die. Don't do it."

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In Hebrew it says "you will die death," which is an indication of very strong emphasis. "You will certainly die. Have no doubt about that. Adam, if you sin against me, entire mankind you represent will die physically, spiritually, eternally." And yet he did it. Absurd and foolish and dumb.

Therefore we read a little further the curse, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground," will return to the ground, "for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." So we were nothing before our conception, we're nowhere, and then we can also disappear, our body will disappear and return unto dust. How humbling.

Adam's sin is our sin. What Adam did is on our account. You may say as young people, "I don't agree with that. That's not fair. It is absolutely strange. I cannot accept that. Adam did it, I didn't. I didn't sin. I did not eat that fruit." But you know, God's organized mankind that way, that the sin of one is the sin of all. Why did the Lord do that? Why did the Lord organize mankind like that? Oh, there is so much wisdom behind that. So much wisdom behind that because that means that the sin of one affects mankind and it means that a second Adam could be really beneficial for mankind as well. So let me just say it plainly, young friends, if you disagree that the sin of Adam is on our account, you say it can't be, think it through, then the righteousness of the Lord Jesus cannot become yours either. If it's not fair that Adam's sin is your sin, then it's not fair either that Jesus'

righteousness is your righteousness. You can't disagree with the one and agree with the other.

But now "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Do you see that, that the second man, the second Adam? So because by the first Adam, his sin becomes our sin, and with the second Adam, his resurrection becomes our resurrection by faith for God's people. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The covenant of works is behind you, also there is the covenant of grace. In the covenant of grace, the Lord has said because of the work the curse has been broken, people cannot be saved by the covenant of works anymore, they're ruined it, so the Lord had a second covenant already from eternity and that covenant means that there is a second Adam, a new Adam, a later Adam, and that Adam is doing the work the first Adam was supposed to do. The first Adam ruined it and the second said, "I will do it." The first Adam sinned against all those commandments, in fact, and the second Adam didn't sin against any commandment. And through the first Adam we all die, and through the second Adam we can be saved.

What a wonder that it is necessary to become part of that covenant of grace. In that covenant of grace, by the way, the Lord offers sinners not salvation by good works, that is the covenant of works, in the second covenant, the covenant of grace, the Lord promises salvation for free without works. By faith only. Not works by faith. And faith is doing nothing and letting the Lord do all the work. So the first Adam worked hard and therefore he ruined things, rather he ruined things and the second Adam was perfect and he gives his righteousness away and also gives faith to the elect.

It says "all" here, "For as in Adam all die," that's right, all die, "even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Yes, when they're in Christ. The word "all" in the Bible has different meanings and sometimes it means all but that in that context, and that's also the case here. So all God's people shall be made alive because of the second Adam. The first Adam ruined it, the second Adam did it. And you children know, right, what that means. If someone takes the place of, if you're teacher is sick and there's a substitute teacher, right? So there is the first Adam and he can't do it anymore. The Lord says, "I will provide a substitute Adam, a second Adam, and he will do it." And that is our Lord Jesus. He's the second Adam. He said, "I come. Adam ruined it, I will come. I will do it and I will give life to my people and I will resurrect them from the death." Adam brought into death and the second lifts out of death.

So we really need that Redeemer. We are not automatically in the second Adam. We are automatically in the first. Sure, we are automatically in the first Adam but in order to become into the second Adam we need a wonder, we need regeneration. So I would encourage you to think this through for yourself. You are under the first Adam, are you also in the second Adam? What does the second Adam mean to you? Do you need a substitute or not? Do you need someone who is solving it and doing it because you didn't? And I know there are people among us this morning who have come to the conclusion that they are guilty, that they are not able to help themselves, and they have been concerned, and they have been seeking a solution and they have found a second

Adam. And it's so precious to them, right? The second Adam, he said, "I come to do thy will, O God, and thy law is in my inner parts." And what the Father said about that Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased."

So this is the same as you will find in Romans 5, Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The second Adam, I hope you may know him, love him, adore him, worship him.

Let's go to the second thought, the firstfruits. Verse 20 and verse 23, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits," firstfruits, look at that, "of them that slept." Verse 23,

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

So that needs some explanation. As you know, I'm not a farmer. I've also not been a farmer and my father wasn't a farmer either, but my grandfather was, great grandfather, rather. But I can imagine what it would be to be a farmer, a young farmer and to have your farm for the first year and then your first harvest. You think the land has been planted and the crop looks great and it's harvest time, and the first load is coming home, the first load of grain or corn, and you may be driving that tractor yourself, maybe you're just standing next to the barn and the tractor is coming in, the first one, the first one, and is that not emotional? I would think so. I would just be impressed, the first harvest, the first piece.

So in Israel they had no tractors but they had sheaves, right? So there were bundles of wheat and those bundles were brought home and also then separated the chaff from the grain, but the first sheaf that was harvested had to be brought to the priest and the priest on the morning after the Sabbath day, so this is on Sunday morning which is interesting, on Sunday morning he was waving it before the Lord. Just holding it and he was waving it, moving it, and then they burned it and they sacrificed it unto the Lord. So that was the firstfruits, the first of the harvesting. It was a holy thing and then the rest came afterwards and they could keep that.

So the Apostle Paul applies this to Christ. Christ is the firstfruits. Christ is harvested by the Lord and Christ rose from the dead. Rose from the dead because he is brought to God. And so the Lord says, "So my people will follow." I see this in Leviticus 23, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf and the lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD." Firstfruits, "that every man in his own order. Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."

So the Apostle Paul is writing that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is just the firstfruits. That's important. He's the firstfruits but so much more will follow. It will not stay like that, it's not only the first sheaf and the only tractor, there is so much more for many more loads, many more loads, many more sheaves will be brought in. And so the Lord says the Lord Jesus the firstfruits and so many will follow, so many resurrected people at his coming when the Lord Jesus comes back. And he's coming. Then the harvest will continue, not begin, the harvest will continue and the Lord will raise all his church to begin with, to begin with, he will raise all his children from the dead, and all those sheaves will be brought in, all those resurrected people are the harvest of the Lord. And does the farmer like harvesting? I think harvesting is even better than sowing, isn't it, and plowing? Harvesting is the result, right? And so the Lord is harvesting his people and he will have all of his people in the garner, in the barn, in heaven, on the new earth, rather.

So when we see the Lord Jesus rising from the dead, we have to keep in mind he is just the firstfruits, so much more is to follow. And we see that word "first" often in the Bible. Let me show you. There's some different accents here and there. Romans 8, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." To with, the redemption of our body. The Lord is not satisfied with only the souls. He doesn't only want the souls of his people, he wants their bodies too. And the Lord Jesus became man, right? Why? To save man. And he received a body and soul, to receive body and soul, and the Lord Jesus resurrected bodily, really bodily, not spiritually but bodily. He rose from the dead and being raised from the dead he gave eternal life. "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches." It's a different aspect.

So the Lord Jesus is the one holy and also he makes his people holy. Or Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." The firstborn, do you see that? "That in all things he might have the preeminence." So preeminence, what is the Lord's preeminence, is it a different word? That is the fame. The fame, when someone is famous, right, so that Christ may be famous, that Christ may be really known, the Lord Jesus may be important, have the preeminence, that he being our focal point. The firstborn from the dead that in all things, and among all things, he may have the preeminence. The Apostle Paul is emphasizing that, Christ the preeminence. Christ the famed. Christ the servant. Christ needs all the attention. Christ needs to be adored. He is the firstfruits, after all.

Do you? Have you ever adored him and looked upon him? Did he have the preeminence for you that you say there's nobody kinder, sweeter, more powerful? That you receive something, that fellowship with him? That he became so suitable, so necessary, so precious that he became the preeminence? You know, the Lord does that by working in the heart that needs, there's great need for the Savior, great need because I cannot bring any harvest in because I cannot please the Lord in any shape or form. And then having a second Adam provided and someone who is the firstfruits, and then to rejoice in it.

Revelation 1:5, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead." Did you hear it? The first begotten of the dead, "and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." That's the purpose. The purpose of the Apostle Paul writing this is that people would just be stunned, that the church of God will be adoring him because he is the first begotten of the dead and the prince of the kings of the earth. And what a depth, "and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

First begotten, first raised, firstfruits. Someone says, "That's not right." Some smart child, he says, some people say, "Lazarus was before him. The daughter of Jairus was resurrected before him. The son of the widow of Nain was before him. So it's not true. He wasn't the first one." Christ was the first. The other ones had been resuscitated but not resurrected. Resuscitated, what's the difference then? When you are resuscitated then you come back into that old mortal body again and you have to die again. Like Lazarus, he rose from the dead but he had to die again because he was not resurrected, he was resuscitated. But the Lord Jesus was resurrected and received an immortal body and in such a body the church will live forever. They will be not resuscitated, they will be resurrected. So think about that.

The third thought: the only king. Verse 24 through 27. It's getting a little difficult now but I think you will be able to see through the vines.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, [so the Lord Jesus will give up the kingdom to God] even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

The Lord Jesus will put it down, not his own power, not his own authority, but of the enemies, right? And when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power,

25 For he must reign [let me talk about that, in what sense he reigns], till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

When did he do that? Did he do it already?

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

The only king. Then cometh the end, that's the crucial beginning of verse 24, "Then cometh the end, that is the end of the world. Some people have different opinions on that, they say that's the end of the resurrection. No, no, that's in the context of the end of the world. And at the end of the world, at the second coming of Christ, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, when he shall put down all rule and all authority for he must reign. What it comes down to is this: the Lord Jesus is king in three different ways. It's not difficult. In what way is the Lord Jesus king? Well, he is the co-Creator. He created the universe with the Father. It's his kingdom. The universe is the Lord Jesus'.

Will he ever give that kingdom away? How can he? Secondly, the kingdom of the Lord Jesus is his people. His people are his kingdom. He is not giving that away ever. But there's also a third way in which Christ is king. I never have seen that really but, you know, that is the benefit of studying a chapter like this. The Lord Jesus received a special power and authority temporarily over the whole universe and all things happening on the day of his ascension when he went to the right hand of the Father. And he reigns from there, and to him is given all power in heaven and on earth. And in that power of the Lord Jesus, no, no, no, not this second person, on the right hand of the Father is the raised, resurrected Jesus. The resurrected Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. The God-man. Not a second person, of course connected to the second person, but the second person is not seated on the right hand of the Father but the second person in the Lord Jesus with his human nature. With a human nature he suffered in and he rose with, that human nature he conquered sin with, that human nature that he was going to save.

And in that sense, he reigns right now. So we would say, "Whatever. What's the difference? We already knew that there was a providence. We already knew that the Lord Jesus reigns forever, that all things are in his hands and nothing happens without his will." Right, you know in the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 9 and 10, all things in his hands. We knew that, that God governs and holds onto things, that nothing happens by chance. We knew that. Right, but you knew that of God and now you hear in detail you may not have known and that detail is that God governs everything since the ascension day until the end, that he governs that time period through his Son. You will say, "Why is that important God wants the glory for that?" God has revealed himself in this way. That's what the Lord has said. It's his will. And that is precious, right, precious that the Lord Jesus is in complete charge of everything and to him is given all the power. In fact, this is a quote from Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 because I read in Psalm 8, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." I would not have known that Psalm 8 was a messianic Psalm if it would not have quoted here in 1 Corinthians 15 that all things are subject unto him.

So right now, the raised, the resurrected, the physical Lord Jesus in his human nature is in heaven and from there he governs all things because the Father has put all things in his hands and that's why you need to be at his feet. Not the feet of God the Father in the first place because God the Father refers you to his Son and he says, "It's in him. You have to be there." You have to be at his feet, the resurrected Savior, and to him is given all power so he governs all things and you may take your refuge unto him and say, "Lord Jesus, I heard that thou art the address, I heard that address, I hear in the Bible that all power is given unto thee." And cry out unto him and seek your salvation in him because the Father has said, "Seek it in him."

"And hath put all things under his feet," Ephesians 1:22, "and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." It's in more places. Hebrews 2:8, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him." We don't see it yet but all things are in his power. So we are safe there. You can trust that. Nothing can

go wrong. The Lord Jesus with his resurrected body is at the right hand of the Father and he receives all the power and he knows what he's doing. He knows what he's doing.

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him," that is 1 Peter 3:22. Do you see? I quote it again, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." And not only the enemies, and not only the animate things, the things with a will and with life, all things, all things, no limits, are in his hands.

All things are under the feet of Jesus except one, right? "He hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest," it is clear, "that he is excepted." Who is he? The Father. "But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he," that God, "is excepted, which did put all things under him." It's God the Father who put all things under him, under Jesus. So Jesus has all things under him except the Father who put all things under him. It is what the Lord has written, right? We may think this is too deep or too complicated or not interesting, but you know it's in the Bible so it must be important, there must be something sweet in there and important there and something God glorifies in it. Some would say contemplate on that, that the Lord Jesus has all things under his feet until the end, and when the end comes, the resurrection of the rest, right, then the Lord Jesus will give that kingdom back to the Father. Not the kingdom of the universe. Not the kingdom of his people. But that kingship and kingdom from the ascension day to the end, the time period that all things are under his feet. There comes an end to that and then the Lord Jesus will give it back to his Father.

Last thought, the fourth thought is the Father's subject. We cannot understand, we cannot possibly understand the Holy Trinity, God the Father being the first person, the Lord Jesus being the second, and the Holy Spirit the third. Is the Father more important than the Son? More important than the Holy Spirit? No. They're all divine. Three persons in the holy Godhead and yet there is an order. An order. The Lord Jesus was born from the Father, the firstborn, the first-begotten of the Father, and we don't read anywhere else that the Holy Spirit is born. He was given. He was issued from the Father and the Son.

So God the Father has given his only begotten Son into human flesh, not the other way around. It's quite important. That's what we see in verse 27b and 28, "But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him." We talked about that. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him." So when he finished we see the Lord Jesus is still working. Some smart young person may say, "He said it's finished so he didn't have to do anything else anymore. It was finished, he said it himself on the cross." He wasn't. He wasn't finished. He was finished with his suffering. He was finished with paying the price. He did not have to give more blood for he had appeased the wrath of God. But he was not finished in the sense that he had saved all his people. He was not finished in the sense that he didn't have to do anything anymore. On the right hand of the Father he continued to make intercession, to reign, to govern all things and to put all things under him, and at the very last when the end comes, then the Lord Jesus can say it is finished and then he'll be finished, and then he will give



all things back to the Father. Back to the Father, that kingdom in that special sense, right, he will give back to the Father.

So an example, children. There was a king and he had a dear son and they were very close, and that son had the same blood as his father, the king, right, the same family and had the same authority, he was the heir even of his father. Then a war broke out and the father came and said to his son, "I give you the authority to go with the army and to fight the enemy. I give you that authority." And that son went out in the war, that prince, and he conquered the enemy and he came back to his father and he said, "I did it. I conquered them." He gave the authority back to his father.

No, I'm not talking about the work the Lord Jesus did on earth, I'm talking about the work the Lord Jesus is doing now in heaven. He is the Captain and he is the General and he is the leader and he is in the war against all the enemies. He is still conquering. He's still conquering. He's still fighting until all things have been subdued unto him, and then at the end he will give the kingdom back to the Father.

So you say, "Kind of new to me." I had the same feeling, kind of new to me, always new things in the Bible. But the Lord Jesus wants the honor on that. He wants to be acknowledged on that. He wants us to call upon him for mission work, and for all things happening, and for Ukraine, and for the Russian people suffering. So we need to call upon his name and say, "Lord Jesus, resurrected Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father, we call upon thy name." Even for political problems in this life, for everything because all things, all things are in his hands so we don't have to fear either, right? You might say it goes completely wrong, it's getting out of hand, but it isn't. It is not going out of hand. The Lord Jesus is on the right hand of the Father with his resurrected body and he was given all power and he has not given it back yet.

And then someday at the end he will give it back. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." That God may be all in all. What does that mean? Do we believe that there will be pantheism, we believe in pantheism that all things will be united with God and they will be divine themselves so that just everything will be gone because God will be all in all, it's all gone, everything will be gone? No. I don't know exactly how to put it but it's most perfect fellowship with God. God will be everything to everyone. God will be so glorified and manifest himself in people there will be such a unity.

Compare it to the three times, compare the time before the fall, with after the fall, with after the second coming, and think of the word possible and impossible. So maybe the children can memorize this and see at home what you still remember. Before the fall it was possible not to sin, right? Do you remember that? Before the fall it was possible not to sin and after the fall it was not possible not to sin. Do you see that? So before the fall it was possible not to sin, after the fall it was not possible not to sin and then when the Lord Jesus comes back and he gives things back to his Father it will be not possible to sin. Do you see that? Possible not to sin, not possible not to sin, and not possible to sin. There will be eternity not possible to sin and God will be all in all, and he will have his people

in the day of his power. And don't forget that the enemies will not be annihilated, and don't think that Satan will not exist anymore, they will be subdued and they will suffer, there will be a hell as well. So although it says all things, God will be all in all, yet there is also hell and the lake of fire.

Christ is the second Adam. You need that substitute of Adam. Christ is the firstfruits and the rest follows, certainly follows. And Christ is the only king in his resurrected body together with his soul and his divine nature. He is at the right hand of the Father. He still governs and he continues with his work and we have hope for things, also hope for the young people. And the Lord Jesus has been so willing to come to this earth, "Here I am to do thy will." And after his death, he was willing to continue working at the right hand of the Father and at the end no problem, he will give it all back to his Father and then God will be all in all. Will you be part of it? Amen.