

1. I Cor. 15 is Scripture's great passage about the resurrection of the body. First read vss. 1-11. Paul begins by saying that he has preached the Gospel to them. They received it, were saved by it and were standing in it. Paul received this Gospel by revelation. Gal. 1:12. No human being taught him. His Gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ, is according to the Scriptures. Vss. 3-4. The risen Christ had appeared to Peter, the twelve, more than 500 brethren, James, the Apostles, and, finally, to Paul. In vs. 11 Paul says that all the Apostles preach a Christ Who died and rose again and Who is gracious and merciful to believers. All of this is important for a proper understanding of our text.
2. Whenever Paul mentions Christ's resurrection he uses a form of the Greek perfect tense (vss. 4, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 20.) In each case it means "He was raised with lasting results (for us)." Five times the chapter speaks about the dead being raised. Vss. 15, 16, 29, 32 and 35. The manner of raising is mentioned four times. Vss. 42, 43, 44. The phrase "resurrection of the dead" is used four times. Vss. 12, 13, 21 and 42. No less than twenty times this chapter speaks about the resurrection of the dead. For the Egyptians and Sadducees religion was only of the dead. The unbelief of natural man rejects the resurrection of the body. Jn. 11 tells us how the Jewish authorities tried their best to deny Lazarus' resurrection. Their final solution was to kill Lazarus and Jesus. Unbelief chooses further death rather than life. See Jn. 11:57 and 12:10.
3. Human reason always finds objection to the wonderful doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This had infiltrated the congregation of Corinth. Vs. 12 fully translated from the Greek contextually means: "Now if, as has been proved by argument after argument, Christ is being preached that He has been permanently raised from the state of death, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Denial of the resurrection of the body from the state of death is equal to denying Christ en toto because only He made resurrection possible. Vs. 21 reads: "Since through man (Adam) death came so also through man (Jesus) came the resurrection of the dead." Jesus will raise all, both believers and unbelievers, on the last day. Unbelief scoffs at this or, at best, has doubts about it. Only the person who is born again accepts this wonderful doctrine.
4. Vss. 13-15 are repeated in vss. 16-18. 13 corresponds to 16. 14 corresponds to 17. And 15 corresponds to 18. The corresponding contents are similar and repetitious. Why did Paul do this? It is exceedingly important.
5. In vss. 16-19 Paul uses simple Christian logic to bring the denying Corinthians back to the truth. Cf. Lk. 11:14-20 where Jesus uses simple Christian logic to show the falsehood of His enemies. They maintained that His miracles were performed with Satan's help. Jesus shows them how absurd their argument is.
6. Vss. 13 and 16 simply say: "If, as some of you Corinthians maintain, the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised." Why not? Because He is a true human being.
7. Vss. 14 and 17 say in effect: "And if Christ has not lastingly been raised, our preaching is a lie, and your faith amounts to nothing. And what's worse, you're still dead in your sins." Cf. Jn. 8:21,24. The entire Gospel stands or falls with Christ's resurrection from the dead.
8. Vss. 15 and 18: "If you doubting Corinthians are correct then we are false prophets and those who considered death only a sleep in Christ have perished."
9. Vs. 19: "If in this life only we are hopers in Christ, we are the most pitiful of fools." Here ends the simple Christian logic.
10. Vs. 20: "But now has Christ been raised from the dead, never to die again, and become the guarantor of resurrection and everlasting life to those who are sleeping in His name."

Sermon Outline on I Cor. 15:12-21, Easter Sunday

Theme: WILL I RISE FROM THE DEAD?

Introduction: Have you ever asked yourself this question? Likely you have. Many people don't even ask it because they deny it. The question arose in the Corinthian congregation. Very likely the question was asked by Gentile Christians whose background was pagan. The pagans deny a resurrection of the body. We must ask this question because there may be people here today who are uncertain about this.

I-Why This Question Arises At All

A-Many ask it because they do not know the Gospel.

Read the first eleven vss. of this chapter. Paul always went out teaching as he describes it in vss. 1-11. It was the preached Word which was received only by faith in Christ. It said that, according to the Scriptures, Christ died for the Corinthians. It also said that, according to the Scriptures, Christ was permanently (never to die again like Lazarus) raised from the dead. His resurrected body was seen by Peter, the twelve, 500 brethren, James, all the Apostles and, finally, by Paul. (Acts 9:1-3). Paul was so convinced of the Gospel that he worked harder than all the rest (vss.9-11). He is not boasting. This is what the unbeliever must hear to change him from the uncertainty of "Will I rise from the dead?" to the certainty of Job (19:26) who said: "I know that my Redeemer lives and that, on the last day, I will stand with Him and see Him with my own eyes."

B-Christians may ask this question either because they are not thinking correctly or because they don't really know Christ.

Very likely the Gentiles among the Corinthians were only asking: "Will I rise from the dead?" The text does not say that they denied that Christ rose from the dead. Perhaps they were saying: "Christ rose from the dead. Yes. But He was also true God and therefore death could not hold Him." And so, in vss. 13-18 Paul leads them through several logical steps to bring them back to Christian assurance. Paul reminds them that if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ did not rise, our preaching is a lie, our faith is vain, we are false witnesses, we make God a liar, we are still in our sins (Jn. 8:21,24), those who fell asleep in Jesus have perished, and we, of all people, are most pitiful because our trust in Christ is only for this life.

II-The Real Cure For This Question

A-It denies who Christ is. At Jn. 14:19 Jesus said: "Because I live ye shall live also." Only the God-man could say this. At Jn. 11:25 He said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Only the God-man could say this. He told the dying thief: "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." Lk. 23:43. In the night when He was betrayed He said to His disciples: "In My Father's house there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." Jn. 14:2-3. Four times in Jn. 6 Jesus told His audience "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day." Only the God-man could say this.

B-It denies what Christ did. Vs. 20 of our text says: "Christ has become the first-fruits of them that slept." What were the first-fruits among the Israelites? There were two harvests. The first-fruits were a guarantee of the second harvest. Likewise, Christ is the first-fruits of those who fall asleep believing in Him. They will surely rise as did He. He did not die and rise for Himself. He did that in our stead, as our Substitute. Vs. 21 says: "Since by man death came, also by man (Christ) resurrection from the dead came about." Is death a certainty? Truly, it is. Because of Adam. Is resurrection a certainty? Truly, it is. Because of Jesus.

Conclusion: SLAVA BOGU. HALLELUJAH. CHRIST IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN INDEED!