

Raised with Christ: The Unfolding Effects of One Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:20–34 | May 7, 2017 | Body Life @OBC

This week we visited family in Chicago . . . and went to the Museum of Science & Industry.

There . . . we toured the U-505, a German submarine from WWII.

This hulking machine of war was captured on June 4, 1944—one of only 6 subs captured in WWII and the first marine vessel captured since the War of 1812.

As we learned, the capture of this U-Boat made available information about the entire German fleet of U-Boats—a fleet who in 1944 sunk over 1300 Merchant Marine Vessels.

It's conjectured that this collection of information effectively shortened the War in the Atlantic Ocean by many months.

But of course . . . it was the events that happened 2 days later . . . on **June 6, 1944** . . . when the Allied Forces . . . a day known as D-Day . . . that WON effectively won the war.

If the capture of U-505 shortened the Battle in the Atlantic, it was the brave and bloody beach invasion at Normandy that led to the defeat of Hitler and the Axis powers.

As many historians have said, D-Day was the day that won the war . . .

With 1,000 ships, 200,000 soldiers, and countless bomber squadrons battering the German defenses, the Allies victory was not a matter of IF, but WHEN.

That being said . . . until **May 8, 1945** when Germany surrendered . . . the battle raged. If D-Day inaugurated the victory . . . it was not culminated until VE-Day.

So it is with the kingdom of Christ.

In his 1st coming, X atoned for sin, defeated the devil, & inaugurated the kingdom of God.

Make no mistake . . . in Christ, atonement for sin has been secured . . . the victory has been won . . . the devil has been defeated . . . and the enemies have been warned.

Today We AWAIT his return . . . even as the battle rages on.

Until V-Day . . . when X comes in power to reign . . . bombs will explode, bullets will fly, the Devil's lies will destroy, and the bodies of God's saints still sin and die.

In this way . . . we live in a victorious but dangerous time. Christ is on his throne in heaven, but on earth . . . his rule is not yet recognized.

Christ is exalted at God's right hand . . . He is interceding for his people . . . He is sending his Spirit and His Word . . . he is building his church . . . and yet he does so in a world filled with enemies that do not submit to his power and authority YET!

This is the condition of our world . . .

And no NT passage describes this victorious warfare better than **1 Cor 15:20–28**.

Not surprisingly, **15:20–28** has often been used as a proof-text for debates around eschatology.

Eschatology might be defined as the study of last things or end times . . . but it would be wrong to think of eschatology as only study of the future.

Eschatology has been at work since the Garden of Eden . . .

When God said to Adam and Eve – subdue and rule, have dominion over creation, he spoke with the END – the **Eschatos** – in mind!

When he made the world . . . God had Christ's kingdom in view . . . and all redemptive history is moving towards this reality.

So . . . **eschatology** is best understood in terms of the whole Bible and not just books like Daniel and Revelation . . .

Indeed . . . the KoG—God's rule on the earth—is a unifying theme for the whole Bible.

It's one we find **patterned** in Eden, **promised** to Abraham after it **perished** with Adam.

This kingdom was seen **partially** in Israel under kingship of David and Solomon.

But it was also lost because of their sinful leadership.

During this time of judgment, God inspired the prophets to foretell a greater kingdom that would come not by law . . . but through God's gracious provision of his Son.

Finally, the kingdom arrived when Jesus came.

Only it did not come in fullness. Rather like the Allies invasion of Normandy, Christ's D-Day—his cross and resurrection—won the right to rule the kingdom.

And now he waits and we wait for V-Day . . . only X does not sit passively as he waits.

Rather, the Son of God lives to intercede for us . . . so that what is ordained in heaven might come to his people on earth.

And one day . . . when he returns . . . he will raise the dead to life and establish his kingdom once and for all – this is a glorious truth and one we consider today!

Now . . . It is SO important to see 1 Cor 15 is written to give hope / holiness to God's ppl.

It's not a passage for the seminary cafeteria . . .

We misuse this chapter if we use it as ammunition against others.

That's not what it is for . . .

Look at the context in vv 32–34 . . .

Paul makes a final appeal to the resurrection saying if Christ is not raised, then go live a life of unchecked hedonism – **'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'**

Then he follows with three commands . . .

(1) Do not be deceived . . .

(3) Do not go on sinning.

(2) Wake up from your drunken stupor

Each of these commands has reason

(1) Do not be deceived . . . **Bad company ruins good morals** . . . He warns that participation with those who deny/don't care the resurrection will result in sin . . .

He's not telling Christians to have no dealing with unbelievers. He's telling them that indiscriminate friendship with the world and will result in wickedness.

So he says . . .

(2) Wake up from your drunken stupor . . . **as is right** . . . His command suggests some in Corinth were getting drunk... the very thing Jesus warned his followers not to do.

Why? Because those who drink to excess cannot do what God wants them to do – to love and serve others, always being ready for the Lord's return.

Christ's return is chiefly a doctrine for sanctification, a motivation for holy living. And drunkenness is a denial of Christ's return.

(3) Do not go on sinning . . . **For some have no knowledge of God.** He exposes again the inconsistency between what the Corinthians have said and what they are doing.

Those who say they believe in the resurrection but go on sinning . . . dishonor God and bring shame on themselves.

So . . . this is the reason why Paul writes about the resurrection.

He's not giving a class on eschatology. Or supplying a step-by-step vision of the future.

He's referencing the resurrection to secure the believers in their gospel hope and to motivate them to walk in holiness.

So . . . our purpose is not to extract from this passage speculation about the millennium which leads to division . . . but to ground our hope in the resurrection . . . and to seek to live holy lives . . . waiting for the return of our Lord!

So . . . to do that . . . we need to see the **UNITY** of X's resurrection AND its **UNFOLDING** effect.

First . . . we'll see in vv. 20–22 . . . the UNITY of Christ's resurrection – i.e., the unity that Christ's resurrection creates between us and him.

Then in vv. 23–28 . . . we will see how this unified resurrection begins to unfold in redemptive history—the time between Christ's D-Day and V-Day.

Finally, next Sunday, we will pick up the rest of this section . . . to vv. 34 . . . to see further how Christ's resurrection impacts our present lives and future hope.

Today . . . let's consider the UNITY of Christ's Resurrection

First, . . . in **vv 20–22** . . . Paul explains how Christians benefit from X's resurrection.

So far in chapter 15, this point has not been made clear.

In **vv 1–11** . . . he explains the necessity of the resurrection FOR THE GOSPEL.

→ If there is no resurrection, there is no good news.

In **vv 12–19** . . . he explains the necessity of the resurrection FOR SALVATION.

→ If there is no resurrection, our faith is in vain, we are left in our sins (v. 17).

But in both arguments, Paul asserts the need for resurrection . . . but he doesn't explain *HOW* we benefit from the resurrection.

How is it that the death and resurrection of man we've never met changes us?

How does the resurrection work?

How does it impact us today?

And . . . How do you get in on Christ's resurrection?

This is what Paul addresses in **vv. 20–22** . . .

And to do so . . . Paul turns to two **Old Testament ideas**.

The first is the concept of the Firstfruits.

Verse 20 reads . . . **“But in fact . . . READ”** . . . then v. 23 also labels Christ the **FF**.

Firstfruits is an Old Testament concept related to sacrifices and festivals in Israel. And it also speaks of the firstborn from the womb.

Genesis 4 is the first place it comes into view . . . when Abel brought the firstfruits of the field for a sacrifice. Ever after it was an indication of bringing the Lord the very best.

More directly related to X's resurrection is the festival of firstfruits described in Leviticus 23--this feast was held 3 days after Passover. **Just like Christ's resurrection.**

Is this a coincidence? I don't think so . . . **X is our Passover Lamb** . . . AND he is the Firstfruits of God's end-times harvest.

In the OT . . . the feast of firstfruits came at the beginning of harvest season, promising more to come.

This is the point Paul is making here—that what Christ has experienced in his resurrection from the dead is proof of a coming harvest of resurrection. (**Thiselton**, 1224)

Indeed . . . Christ's resurrection is not something he did for himself, by himself, or unto himself. Rather . . . **His resurrection is a shared event!**

He is the firstfruit of God's eschatological people – the firstborn of a new humanity.

This is a glorious reality with incredible implications for the Christian.

(1) **His resurrection secures yours.** The bodily resurrection Xians will experience when Christ returns is not a different or second resurrection. Rather, the future resurrection of believers is part of the same harvest. Like Christ, we will be sown into the ground, to be raised on the last day. So . . . those who know Christ can have full assurance of our future resurrection because Christ has been raised from the dead.

(2) **His resurrection sends his LIFE to us now.** Ephesians 2:5 says we experience the resurrection now in our “inner man” as God makes us alive in Christ. Likewise, Romans 8:11 says, **“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.** Resurrection is not simply a future reality for the Christian.

Amazingly – The future has invaded the present. By his HS we can experience Res Life

(3) **Resurrection to eternal life is only given to those who have life now.** Those who are made alive in their inner man are the ones who will be raised to life at the 2nd coming. To say it more forcefully, only those who have resurrection life now (expressed in faith, repentance, spiritual fruit, etc.) will be raised with Christ then, when the harvest comes.

So . . . this imagery of firstfruits dominates Paul's understanding of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 – we'll see it again in **vv. 37–38** – And in v. 20, it explains how X's resurrection raises others

Now why does this matter?

Remember the expectation in Israel was that of an end-times national resurrection. There was not prevalent an understanding that one man would die and rise again.

But once Jesus came to inaugurate his kingdom through his death and resurrection Paul and all the apostles had to reckon with HOW Christ's resurrection kicked off the final RES

And here . . . the solution is found in Christ's corporate solidarity with his people, his covenant headship . . . which brings us to **verses 21–22**.

In verse 21 . . . Paul makes a general comparison between Adam and Jesus.

Verse 22 names Adam, but in verse 21 . . . is a comparison between these two men.

As 1 man—Adam—brought death, 1 man—X—has brought resurrection from the dead.

In other words, if there was any hope of a resurrection of the righteous, it would need to come through the resurrection of one man, just as Paul says.

This corporate solidarity may strain our modern individualism... but it's not impossible . . .

As the 2016 presidential election reminded us, our government is not a pure democracy . . . it was never intended to be . . . it has always been a democratic REPUBLIC . . . a people represented in GOV'T by elected officials.

In the Bible . . . we don't find a republic . . . but we do find corporate representation.

And this is explained in terms of biblical covenants. So when Adam sinned against God, God imputed his sin and guilt and death to the whole human race. → **Romans 5**

ASK: Why would God do that ?? . . . Well . . . the Bible teaches . . . this is how God relates to humanity – through covenant relations and covenant headship.

Even more . . . God imputed Adam's sin to us . . . B/C that's how he would later secure our salvation . . . THRU a new Adam, a new man, he imputes righteousness.

This is the point of verse 21 and it is confirmed in **v. 22 = "For as in Adam . . ."**

What wonderful news!

The resurrection from the dead has been secured in Christ . . . and even more
The resurrection from the dead is not something we only experience in the future.

It is experienced NOW . . . by the Spirit. The Spirit is what unites us to Christ . . .
AND WHAT IS THAT UNION LIKE? It is resurrection life from Christ himself – **v. 46**.

Thus we do not see in Scripture multiple resurrections, rather we find one resurrection of Christ and his people. Still . . . this ONE, UNIFIED resurrection does UNFOLD over time!

The Unfolding Resurrection

Like the days between D-Day and V-Day . . . we live a world where the effects of the resurrection have begun . . . but haven't finished.

Tho' Christ is exalted in heaven . . . on earth . . . spiritual warfare continues – bullets still fly, bodies still die, and the rule of Christ is only visible in pockets of people gathered in his name.

Indeed . . . While X sits enthroned at God's right hand . . . his rule is not yet universal.

Paul is not so naive as to think that X's resurrection means immediate peace/prosperity. . . Rather, Christ's rule in the church actually raises hostility in the world.

So . . . Paul takes the next 6 verses to explain how X's resurrection is unfolding.

Now I have to admit . . . these sentences are dense

They are overloaded with biblical truth. And not surprisingly . . . they have been variously interpreted by commentators and theologians.

SOME have used them to advocate an explanation of a future millennium. They cross-reference 15:23–28 with Revelation and explain Paul's order in light of John's vision.

OTHERS have seen in these verses a description of the final events of history without as much attention to ordering future events.

I can see the reason for both approaches, but I follow the second, because I don't think Paul's is talking about various stages of the end times . . .

The context of this passage relates to Christ's resurrection and its present implications.

Certainly, it speaks of future realities, but not with specifics needed to draw conclusions about the future.

Now . . . I could be wrong and some might interpret this differently, but I think Paul is describing life in btw Jesus 1st or 2nd coming W/O SPECIFIC CHRONOLOGICAL DETAIL

So . . . regardless of your millennial views. . . I don't think 1 Corinthians 15 is definitive. So I'm not going to tackle that issue. . . b/c I see Paul is addressing a different question.

Remember . . . he is writing to secure believers in Christ . . . and to motivate holiness..

He is not forecasting future events, because again . . . for Paul the future has already come into the present . . . the resurrection is not just future. In Christ, it's here!

By the HS . . . those in Christ are already experiencing the firstfruits of the resurrection . . . even as we are waiting, praying, and hoping for our bodies to be transformed.

So . . . that's a bit about my approach to these verses . . . now let's see what's there.

Again . . . the main point is the unfolding effects of Christ's Resurrection . . .

And . . . I think we can best get a handle on vv. 23–28 by looking at as **four pairs of R's**

So... In v. 23 we find 2 RANKS of people in the resurrection – Christ and those who belong to X

In v. 24 we find 2 RESULTS of Christ's resurrection – salvation for those who belong to Christ and judgment upon enemies who oppose him

In vv. 25–26 we find 2 OT REFERENCES that Paul cites to explain Christ's resurrection

In vv. 27–28 we find 2 GIFTS of REDEMPTION – the Father giving to Christ his people in time and Christ giving these same people back to the Father at the end of time.

For sake of time . . . we'll consider the 1st 2 pairs today. . .
we'll pick up the 3rd and 4th next week.

Look at verse 23 . . .

The verse begins with a contrast . . . not because it is opposed to what Paul had just said . . . but to clarify that Christ's resurrection does not deny a future resurrection.

This was the error in Thessalonica.

There . . . Some said the resurrection of the redeemed had already come.

P responds: "No, when the Lord returns in glory . . . he will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God"
And THEN "the dead in Christ will rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

For all Paul speaks of the present impact of Christ's resurrection, there is still a future resurrection to come! And this is why he speaks of "each in his own order" in v. 23 . . .

The word for "ORDER" is not used anywhere else in the NT, but because it is often used in military contexts . . . it may be translated RANK or ORDER.

Significantly, this military context fits the language of enemies, subjugation, and warfare found in vv. 24–28.

Therefore, we can read v. 23 as saying that Jesus, as head of his army, has been raised. And when he returns, at the Second Coming, those who belong to X will be raised.

Like **1 Thess 4** . . . it is not everyone who is raised to life . . . but only those who have trusted in Christ . . . will be raised to LIFE at his coming – key word . . . raised to **LIFE**

This truth fits a larger argument in 1 Corinthians 15:24 ... **but let's not miss this point—**
If you have X . . . you have life indestructible and hope eternal with God
If you don't have X you only have the breath in your lungs . . . **AND THEN . . .**

So . . . v. 23 teaches there are 2 ranks in the resurrection – Christ and those who belong to him.

I don't believe he has a third rank in mind.

Some have said that verse 24 includes unbelievers who be raised at the end.

The problem with that interpretation is that it imports teaching from other passages.

It is absolutely true . . . unbelievers will be raised bodily.

John 5:29 speaks of the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment.

~ **Matthew 25:46** speaks of R into eternal life and R into eternal punishment.

This is what Revelation calls the second death.

The resurrection of the unrighteousness is a true and sobering reality . . . but it is not something Paul addresses here.

In verse 24, Paul says . . . **Then comes the end . . . when he delivers the kingdom . . .**

As I read it, I don't take verse 24 as describing a third group—unbelievers.

Rather, I think Paul speaks of the END in general as the goal of all God has done.

The word “end” means goal / purpose. Therefore, he's not talking about the chronological end of the world, but the eternal and sovereignly designed END of X's work.

What is that END? Paul lists as Two Glorious Results of Christ's Resurrection.

The two RESULTS are these . . .

FIRST X's resurrection results in the salvation of the elect . . . As he delivers his kingdom – i.e., the people of his kingdom – to God the Father, **he accomplishes the first result.**

SECOND X's resurrection results in the defeat of his enemies . . . As he destroys every rule, authority, power who rejects him . . . **he accomplishes the 2nd objective/ result.**

When we return next week, we will explore HOW this works in verses 25–28.

But for now we will leave it at this: Christ's death and resurrection have perfectly accomplished salvation and judgment.

Salvation for all those who trust in Christ.

Judgment for all those who reject, refuse, or just run past Christ.

While the outworking of this reality is still ongoing . . . the results are in . . .

Christ's resurrection has justified his people (Romans 4:25)

AND Christ's resurrection has brought judgment on all his enemies (Colossians 2:13–15)

Church . . . this is how Christ will one day bring peace to all his creation . . . but for now in between D-Day and V-Day . . . we see the risen Christ dividing humanity.

In his D/R, Jesus split human race . . .

Christ himself spoke of this division . . . In Matthew 10, he said he did not come to bring peace, but a sword—a sword that would divide neighbors, friends, and even families.

In other words, from the dead flesh of Adam's rebellious race, Christ would redeem a people for his own possession and adoration.

And how does this relate to the resurrection?

In the resurrection, Christ became the firstborn from the dead, the firstfruits of the new creation. **In his life, we find life.**

As 1 Corinthians 15:45–49

Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

This is the believers hope . . . that the Son who died for our sins also arose to make us like himself and hand-deliver us to the Father.

But the resurrection also works in the other direction. In the resurrection, Christ has received authority over all flesh and thus seated at God's right hand, he has the right to judge.

As Acts 17:30–31

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Oh Friends . . . do not miss this . . .

The Jesus who was raised from the dead is not the meek and mild Jesus who is so often pictured in church foyers and Christian greetings cards.

He is the risen Lord . . .

who dwells in glory,

who has the right to judge the living and the dead,

who sends out his armies to proclaim the gospel,

and who described in Revelation as having eyes aflamed with fire,

a tongue like that of two-edged sword,

and a voice like the roar of many waters.

Friends . . . do you know this Jesus?

Do you know his resurrection life?

If you do . . . you are most of all to be blessed.

Do not treat lightly what Christ has done or who he is.

Seek him. Know him. Love him. Follow him more and more . . . until your faith turns to sight.

If you don't . . . it's not too late.

There is still time to seek him and find him, . . .

For today is not a day of judgment, but a day of salvation, forgiveness, mercy.

Jesus Christ came as a friend of sinners . . . to invite you to know his love, to sit at his table . . . and to prepare yourself for his return.

This is why he came . . . to raise the dead to life.

This is why Paul wrote . . . to teach the resurrected how to live with Christ.

This is why we call attention to Christ's resurrection . . . that we might embrace him both now and forever.