

The Resurrection

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Text: 1 Corinthians 15

Introduction:

- I. The Graeco-Roman world handed down **three basic views of the after-life**:
 - A. **Epicureanism: Materialism**; no life after death (Ac. 17:18, 32). The school of Epicurus, a Greek philosopher (342?-270 B.C.), held that the goal of man should be a life of pleasure regulated by morality, temperance, serenity, and cultural development.
 - B. **Stoicism: The soul merges with deity** and loses its personality (Ac.17:18, 32). “When the day shall come which shall part this mixture of divine and human here where I found it, I will leave my body, and myself I will give back to the gods” (Seneca). Stoics believed that all things happen as a result of divine will and therefore man should calmly accept everything without passion, grief, or joy (sometimes interpreted as indifference to pleasure or pain). Zeno founded this school c. 308 B.C. The word *Stoic* derives from *stoa*, porch. The *stoa poikile* (painted porch) in Athens, where Zeno taught, gave his disciples their name.
 - C. **Platonism: Immortality of the soul**, but no bodily resurrection. Plato (*pleton*, “broad shouldered”) the disciple of Socrates, was born at Athens in 428 or 427 B.C. His views of the after-life seem to have impressed some of the Corinthians. The great majority of “Christians” who studied philosophy down to Augustine were Platonists.
- II. Corinth’s **accessible location** certainly invited a wide circulation of these views.
 - A. 1 Co.15:33 implies that some of the Corinthians had been keeping company with deceivers (perhaps trained in sophistry?). That a congregation where Paul had labored would experience a problem over an issue as basic as the resurrection verifies the skills of the god of this world to deceive (2 Co.4:3-4).
 - B. The Corinthians were not the only Christians whose surroundings affected them adversely (2 Tim.2:17-18).
- III. The frequency with which early Christians taught and discussed the resurrection suggests a **preoccupation** with the subject. Many modern disciples seem to lack this fervor.
- IV. This outline discusses 1 Corinthians 15 under **four headings**:
 - A. The connection between **the resurrection of Christ** and **the general resurrection**, 1-34.
 - B. Some **questions** raised by this subject, 35-49.
 - C. The **death of death**, 50-58.
 - D. **Modern duplications** (more or less) of the Corinthian error.
- V. There is no evidence that the Corinthians asked Paul to address this subject. Findlay believes that “some” (v. 12) openly expressed their opinion, making it a matter of common report(917).
 - A. 1 Co.1-6 discusses **factions, division, immorality, and lawsuits**.
 - B. 1 Co.7-14 and 16 answers **questions** that the Corinthians had asked in their letter.
 1. “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote” (ESV), 7:1-24
 2. “Now concerning the unmarried” (7:25-40)
 3. “Now concerning food offered to idols” (8:1-11:1)

4. “Now concerning spiritual gifts” (12:1-14:40)
5. “Now concerning the contribution for the saints” (16:1-12, combined with personal matters)

C. This formula conspicuously vanishes in 1 Co.15.

- VI. Nothing in the context suggests that the Corinthians **deny the resurrection of Christ**. On the contrary, they apparently admit His resurrection, but **deny the general resurrection**. Paul uses this inconsistency, arguing from something they admit (the Lord’s resurrection) to prove the point they deny (their own resurrection).
- VII. Only *some* of the Corinthians hold to a false view of the resurrection (15:12; cf. 4:18; 8:7). We have no way of knowing the size of this group. Paul intends to prevent the leaven from spreading (cf. 5:6).

Body:

I. The Connection Between The Resurrection of Christ and The General Resurrection 1 Corinthians 15:1-34: Six Proofs.

A. *It is in harmony with the Scriptures, 1-4.*

1. Though the Corinthians have previously received and believed this information, they need a reminder. Their spiritual immaturity (3:1-3) forces Paul to take them back to kindergarten class.
 - a. Paul makes known to the Corinthians the gospel that he has already preached to them (1). The word (*gnorizo*) in this context conveys a mild reproof (cf. 12:3; Ga.1:11).
 - b. The wording of v.1 shows that the gospel is much more than “**good news**” as some narrowly define it. Those who say that we cannot preach the gospel to saints because they have already heard (and therefore it is no longer “news”) fail to see that this approach also forbids preaching the gospel to alien sinners more than once (because it is no longer “news” to them).
 - c. Various clauses qualify “gospel”:
 - 1) He has already **preached** the gospel to them.
 - 2) They have already **received** this gospel (unlike “His own” who “received Him not” (Jn. 1:11) (see Farrar, 483).
 - 3) They **stand in** the gospel (i.e., they have taken a stand on the truth; cf. Ro. 5:2). It was their foundation. It determined their belief and conduct.
 - a) “He adduces three proofs that their own experience has shown to them the value of his doctrine: *parelabete* (you received, rd) looks to the past, *hestekate* (you stand, rd) to the present, *sozesthe* (you are saved, rd) to what is being done for the future” (Robertson/Plummer, 331).
 - 4) Their salvation depends on their **holding fast** to the word that Paul preached,
 - a) “The *logos* is ‘the word of the gospel’ (Acts xv.7; cf. Eph.i.13, Col.i.5), ‘the story of the cross,’ etc. (i.17)” (Findlay, 919).
 - b) It is the **power of God** to those who are being saved (1:18).
 - c) It saves only those who **hold it fast** (*katecho*, as in 11:2).

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- 1] The context shows that “the Corinthians are saved by the gospel if they hold it fast in the way, i.e., with the same contents as Paul had delivered to them” (Grosheide, 348).
- d) “‘*Unless you believed in vain,*’ may mean ‘pert. to being without careful thought, *without due consideration, in a haphazard manner,*’ but mng. 3 is also prob.: ‘pert. to being without purpose, *to no purpose*’” (BDAG, 281).
- 1] Fee says, “Some would make it mean here ‘without consideration’ or ‘idly’.... This is possible, but it misses the irony and the close tie to v. 14” (721).
- 2] Robertson and Plummer just as emphatically insist, “There are two defects possible; they may not be holding fast what he taught, or they may have received it so hastily that they do not comprehend it ... *Eike* is not ‘in vain’ (AV., RV.), nor ‘without cause’ (RV. marg.), but ‘without consideration,’ ‘heedlessly,’ ‘rashly’” (332).
- e) Either position poses a problem for those who believe the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance (or preservation) of the saints (e.g., Kistemaker, 527-528; MacArthur, 400).
- 1] On the one hand, advocates of this position reject biblical warnings that a believer can stop believing, turn away from God, and be lost (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 4:1; 2 Tim.2:18; Hb.3:12, etc.). Because they embrace the doctrine of **unconditional security** of the believer, they reject or modify these warnings. Their position forces them to contradict many Scriptures.
- 2] On the other hand, advocates of this view admit that a person may believe, but not in a way that brings salvation, and then fall away. MacArthur calls them “sham believers who had useless, non-saving faith” (400).
- a] An old verse describes the doctrine well: “If you seek it, you can’t find it; if you find it, you can’t get it; if you get it, you can’t lose it; if you lose it, you never had it to start with.”
- b] Calvinists seem to overlook the lack of security that their *own* position creates for believers. **How can a “believer” know in any given instance if his faith is real or genuine?** How can a “believer” enjoy security when he faces the possibility that he may fall away, thus demonstrating that his faith never rose above the level of a sham?
- c] Kistemaker admits, “This means that the believers are being saved provided they hold on to the gospel and apply it to their lives” (528).
- 1} But what of those who do *not* hold on to the gospel and apply it to their lives? By admitting the possibility of a fall, they surrender their security.
- 3] The truth, of course, teaches **conditional security** for the believer, which is Paul’s point in 1 Co.15:1-2: “*if you hold fast...*” (cf. Hb.3:6, 14).
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- a] This necessitates a **faith that works in love** (Ga.5:6; 1 Th.1:3), unlike the mental assent that demons possess (Ja.2:19). Salvation does not come “at the point of faith” as Calvinists commonly assert.
- b] If one cannot believe in vain, why did Paul raise the issue in the first place? Was he in the habit of giving idle warnings? **Can one truly believe in vain?**
- d. Paul delivers to them what he had **first received** from the Lord, v. 3 (cf. 11:23; Ga.1:1, 12).
- e. The prepositional phrase *en protois* (v.3) means “**among (the) first things,**” and may be understood in two ways:
- 1) **Priority in time.** The phrase occurs nowhere else in the NT. It clearly means *first in time* in 1 K. 17:13 (LXX) where it contrasts with *afterward*: “*First make me a little cake...and afterward make something for yourself and your son.*” (Cf. 1 K. 3:1; 21:9, 17; 1 Chr. 11:6.)
 - a) Abbott-Smith includes the phrase under the heading “1. of Time or Place” (*Manual Greek Lexicon of the N.T.*, Third Edition, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981, p. 389).
 - b) Thayer agrees: “among the first things delivered to you by me, 1 Co. xv.3” (555).
 - c) Fee grants the possibility of this meaning. “What is less certain is the meaning of the prepositional phrase translated ‘as of first importance.’ As the marginal reading indicates, this could also mean priority in time” (Fee, 722).
 - 2) **Priority in rank or importance.** “Among the first = most important things, i.e., as of first importance” (BDAG, 893).
 - a) “*For I delivered to you as of first importance...*” (ESV; cf. NASB; NRSV; NIV, NET, et al.).
 - b) Fee believes “...both the form and language suggest that the former (priority in rank or importance, rd) is Paul’s concern” (722).
 - c) If “first of all” affirms the foundational nature of the resurrection, it also explains why some prefer to define it in terms of time. We usually lay a foundation first. If the Corinthians destroy this foundation, the superstructure must fall.
 - 1] If Christ was raised from the dead, then all his other miracles are sure, and our faith is impregnable; if he was not raised, he died in vain, and our faith is vain. It was only his resurrection that made his death available for our atonement, justification and salvation; without the resurrection, his death would be the grave of our hopes; we should be still unredeemed and under the power of our sins. A gospel of a dead Saviour would be a contradiction and wretched delusion. This is the reasoning of St. Paul, and its force is irresistible” (Schaff I, 173).
 - d) The plural expression “first of all” encompasses the material of verses 3-5 and includes the eyewitness testimony of the next section.

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- 1] “The four clauses which follow tell us what the apostle preached at Corinth. In vs. 6 the construction of the sentence changes although it is clear that the thought is continued even there, for we can be sure that Paul preached about Christ’s appearance to him near Damascus (vs. 8)” (Grosheide, 349).
 - 2] The Book of Acts records two instances where Paul’s preaching includes the resurrected Lord’s appearance to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 22, 26).
- f. Twice in this section Paul repeats the phrase, “*according to the Scriptures*” (3-4).
- 1) In perfect harmony with the Scriptures, Paul affirms the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Those who deny the facts resist the Scriptures.
 - 2) Even to a Gentile church, Paul readily connects Old Testament predictions with New Testament fulfillments (cf. Ac. 13:32-33; 17:1-3; Ro. 1:2-4; 1 Th. 1:10). This shows:
 - a) His respect for the Old Testament (cf. 10:1-12; Ro. 15:4).
 - b) His confidence in the power of fulfilled prophecy (Ro. 1:2).
- g. The **death** of Jesus is taught in Ps. 16:9-10; Ps. 22; Isa. 53, etc.
- 1) Other passages depict **His death in types**: Gn. 22; Leviticus [see Jn. 1:29], Jonah 1, etc.
 - 2) The NT never says **Christ “slept”** as it does of Christians (1 Co. 15:6).
 - 3) By dying, Jesus did far more than set a good example for His followers. He died to save us from our sins. T. C. Edwards holds that Paul could not have said “Christ died for our sins” if Christ’s death “were only an example of self-denial, not because *huper* must be rendered ‘instead of’ (*in loco*), but because the ref. to *sin* involves with *huper* the notion of expiation” (via Findlay, 919).
- h. The **burial** of Jesus is implied in Ps. 16:9-10 (Ac. 2:25-34) and Isa. 53:9 (cf. Ac. 13:29).
- 1) His burial “functions to verify the reality of the death. In the present context it emphasizes the fact that a dead corpse was laid in the grave, so that the resurrection that follows will be recognized as an objective reality, not merely a ‘spiritual’ phenomenon” (Fee, 725).
- i. The **resurrection** of Jesus stresses His present life.
- 1) The perfect tense denotes an abiding result: He lives (4). See Isa. 53:12; Ps. 16:10 (Ac. 2:25-34).
 - 2) “By death and burial He came down to our level, by Resurrection He raised us to His” (Robertson/Plummer, 334).
- j. The **third day** fits the prophetic pattern (Jonah 1:17; Mt. 12:40; also cf. Gn. 22:4). See the Lord’s comments in Lk. 24:46.
- 1) Jesus used a variety of **synonymous expressions** to designate the time of His resurrection:
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- a) *Three days and three nights*, Mt. 12:40.
 - b) *In three days*, Mt. 26:61; 27:40; Mk. 15:29; Jn. 2:19-20.
 - c) *After three days*, Mt. 27:63 (Mk. 8:31).
 - d) *The third day*, Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Lk. 24:7, 21, 46; Ac. 10:40.
 - 1] (This *third day* occurred on the *first day* of the week, Lk. 24:1, etc.)
- 2) The **three day motif** often occurs in Scripture in the context of an important decision or a time of great tension or both.
- a) Gn. 42:17-18: Joseph imprisons his brothers for *three days*, but releases them on *the third day*, warning, “*Do this and live...*”
 - b) 1 K. 12:5, 12: Rehoboam needs *three days* to determine the new tax rate for Israel. On the *third day*, his reckless answer divides Israel and Judah.
 - c) Est. 4:16; 5:1: Esther requests a fast for *three days, night and day* before she approaches Ahasuerus – though she actually enters on *the third day*.
 - d) In Jewish counting, **a part of a day counts as a whole day** (synecdoche).
 - 1] In 1 Kings 20:29, the Israelites and Syrians camp opposite each other for seven days, but join battle on the seventh day. In our reckoning, if they start fighting on the seventh day, then they camped only for six days. In Jewish reckoning, the partial days count as wholes.
 - 2] Luke does not contradict Matthew and Mark in calculating the time of the Transfiguration. Matthew (17:1) and Mark (9:2) place it *six days* after the events of the previous chapter; Luke (9:28) places it about *eight days* after. Matthew and Mark use the exclusive method of reckoning time, but Luke the inclusive method (six whole days and two partial ones). We use the inclusive method when we ask someone, “How was your day?”
 - 3] “The rabbis said, ‘A day and a night make an ‘*Onah* (season, rd) and a part of an ‘*Onah* is as the whole’; and again, ‘The part of a day is as the whole day’” (Strack and Billerbeck via Leon Morris, *Matthew*, Pillar N T Commentary, 1992, p. 326).
2. One who denies the resurrection, to be consistent, must deny all Old Testament predictions. Even the enemies of Christ fulfilled all the things written concerning Him (Acts 13:28-29).
- B. ***It is confirmed by witnesses, 5-11.*** Four times in four verses Paul repeats the phrase, “*He was seen*” (5-8). Godet says *ophthe* “may signify *was seen*, or *appeared (in vision)*; in each case the context must decide. In this passage, after the word: *He was raised* (ver. 4), the choice is not doubtful; it can only designate, according to the writer’s view, a bodily appearance. This is also plain from the very object of this whole enumeration of apostolic testimonies. What is St. Paul’s aim? To prove our bodily resurrection. Now it is impossible
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to understand how a simple vision, a purely spiritual appearance of the Lord, could serve to demonstrate our bodily resurrection” (760).

1. Their *quantity*.
 - a. **Twelve apostles.** Though there were only eleven living apostles at the time of His resurrection, *the twelve* had become a technical term for the apostles. In John 20:19-24, because Thomas was absent, only ten were present for His appearance. In Ac. 1:6-12, eleven apostles saw the Lord (Matthias was chosen after this). Jesus hand-picked these men to serve as His witnesses (Ac. 1:2-8; 2:22; 4:20, 33; 10:40-41, etc.).
 - b. **More than 500 others at once.** “The occasion of the appearance to the 500 is unknown; but it is probably to be identified with Mt. xxviii. 16...” (Robertson/Plummer, 337, et al.).
 - 1) In Mt. 26:32, Jesus informed His disciples that, after His resurrection, He would go before them to Galilee. In Mt. 28:7 and 10, after His resurrection, He repeated the same message to the women and, through them, notified His disciples that they could see Him in Galilee. The disciples met Him there (Mt. 28:16).
 - 2) “Nowhere else has *ephapax* the meaning *simul, at once*” (Findlay, 920; cf. BDAG, 417). ESV translates it, “at one time.”
 - 3) If 500 witnesses do not convince an unbeliever, it is unlikely that any larger number could do so. These things were not done in a corner (Ac. 26:26).
 - a) “In a Jewish court of law, the presence of two or three witnesses was mandatory to prove the veracity of an event. By appearing to five hundred believers at one time, Jesus provided overwhelming proof of being alive” (Kistemaker, 532).
 - b) “The words *five hundred* and *still live* have evidently, in the apostle’s view, an apologetic bearing: ‘You can go and ask them, if you like: there they are, still, and in great numbers’” (Godet, 763).
 - 4) “**Some have “fallen asleep”** may remind us of the Lord’s visit to the house of Jairus. “*Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping*” (Mk. 5:39). To Him, waking the dead was as easy as waking a girl from her sleep. Our word *cemetery* derives from *koimeterion*, sleeping-room, burial place (Liddell-Scott-Jones, Gk.-English Lexicon, 1996, p. 968).
 - c. Modern society profits from a **variety of witnesses** in many areas of life.
 - 1) Different camera angles provide additional information to assist referees as they decide disputed calls in football games.
 - 2) Each witness to a car wreck may provide additional information that determines what happened.
 - 3) Witness protection programs prove the value that our society places upon eyewitness testimony. A witness may cause a criminal to panic. His destiny depends on the evidence that a witness can bring to a trial. Without protection, some witnesses experience an “accident” before they have an opportunity to testify. The enemies of Christ reveal a similar motive when they try to silence His apostles through intimidation (Ac. 4:18; 5:28).

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- 4) **Additional testimony** does not imply **contradictory testimony**. Actually, it lends authenticity to the evidence and decreases the likelihood of collusion.
 - d. Paul does not include **the women** who saw the resurrected Lord. His proof is selective, not exhaustive.
 - e. Modern skeptics claim that eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord (and those who wrote Scripture) were nothing more than **camel riders** who lacked the intelligence to examine miracles objectively.
 - 1) See the appendix for an evaluation of this claim.
2. Their **quality**.
- a. **Peter**, 5. (Paul usually prefers the name *Cephas*, 1:12.) Though Lk. 24:34 alludes to this meeting, none of the “biographers” of Christ record the substance of the meeting itself.
 - 1) He denies the Lord three times (Lk. 22:54-62).
 - 2) He later fearlessly, even aggressively, proclaims Him (Acts 2-5).
 - b. **James**, 7. Since Paul has already included the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus with the twelve apostles, this must refer to the Lord’s brother (cf. 9:5).
 - 1) He was formerly an unbeliever (Jn.7:5; Mk.3:20-21).
 - 2) The resurrection must have made a believer of him (Ac. 1:14; 10:40-41; Ga. 1:18-19). Paul met James on his first visit to the Jerusalem church.
 - c. **Paul**, 8-10. “What is the meaning of the expression *last of all*? It means that Paul is last in line of all the appearances” (Kistemaker, 533). (This excludes John who saw the glorified Lord on Patmos [Rv. 1:12-20]. John had already seen the resurrected Lord. Jesus appeared to John on Patmos for other reasons.)
 - 1) Paul was formerly a persecutor, 9. What changed him?
 - a) Money? (2 Co. 11:7-10)
 - b) Ease? (1 Co. 15:10; 16:33)
 - c) Popularity? (1 Co. 4:9-13)
 - d) Sensuality? (1 Co. 6:9-20)
 - e) **Truth? (2 Co. 4:2)**
 - 2) Paul was the only apostle who did not accompany Christ during His earthly ministry (8). Paul is not discussing when he was born again. He is recording Christ’s resurrection appearances. “*As by one born out of due time*” (*ektroma*) indicates “an untimely birth, sc. into the apostolic family” (Zerwick-Grosvenor, p.528). “His appointment is abnormal, but so is Christ’s appearance to Paul near Damascus” (Kistemaker, 534).
 - 3) *ektroma* occurs three times in the Septuagint (Nu. 12:12; Job 3:16; Ec. 6:3).
 - a) Moses intercedes with God on behalf of Miriam, pleading that He not leave her decayed as an *abortion* coming out of the womb (Nu. 12:12). “It here denotes a child which had no life even in the womb and which
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was thus still-born” (Carl Schneider, Theo. Dict. NT, Gerhard Kittle, Gerhard Friedrich, ed., 1976, vol. II p. 465).

- b) Job 3:16 and Ec. 6:3 translate the Hebrew *nefel*, “miscarriage,” the abortive thing that *falls* from the womb before the time is ripe (cf. NET Bible).
- 4) Several sources include the idea of *premature* in their definition. “An untimely or premature birth – ‘untimely birth’” (Louw-Nida, 23:55, p. 257).
 - a) “...Paul likens himself to an *ektroma*, and in vs 9 explains in what sense: that he is as inferior to the rest of the apostles as an immature birth comes short of a mature one, and is no more worthy of the name of an apostle than an abortion is of the name of a child” (Thayer, 200).
 - b) “So *ektroma*, derived from *ektitrosko* (pierce, tear), literally means a fetus born before its time and violently” (Spicq I, 466).
 - c) “The twelve were disciples of Jesus before He called them to be Apostles, and He trained them for promotion: Saul was suddenly torn from opposition to Jesus to become His Apostle. Theirs was a gradual and normal progress; his was a swift and abnormal change” (Robertson/Plummer, 339).
- 5) Some sources suggest that *ektroma* may include a “*birth beyond term,*” though the main point is “*some deficiency in the infant*” (BDAG, 311).
 - a) “The verb is used of a living child untimely born....The suggestion here is of the strangeness of the birth, the imperfect development, and of the child being the last born....” (Cambridge Gk. Testament, 218).
 - b) Farrar agrees: “When he remembered the lateness of his conversion, and his past persecution of the saints, regards himself as standing in this relation to the twelve” (485).
 - c) “The other apostles were called when they were already believers; they are like ripe fruits which fell, so to speak, of themselves from the tree of Judaism, and which the Lord’s hand gathered without effort, whereas he, Paul, was torn, as by a violent operation, from that Judaism to which he was yet clinging with all the fibres of his heart and will” (Godet, 767).
 - d) Whether the passage emphasizes Paul’s *premature* “delivery” (becoming an apostle) before meeting all the qualifications required of other apostles (Ac. 1:21-22), his *untimely* “birth” as an apostle (BDAG, 311), his birth *after* the natural period had passed, or merely repeats an *insult* hurled at him by his opponents, the main point is clear, as v. 9 shows.
- 6) Some critics reject the Lord’s resurrection because He appeared **only to believers**. Their premise ignores the facts.
 - a) Jesus appeared at least **twelve different times** over a **forty day period** (Ac. 1:3) in a variety of locations.
 - b) The purpose of the biblical record is not to provide an **exhaustive list of witnesses**, but to give enough details that all who examine the

evidence can know the facts. Even before His resurrection, Jesus did not perform random miracles, but chose His audiences (cf. Mt. 13:58; Lk. 4:29-30; 23:8; also see Mt. 7:6).

c) Jesus *did* appear to **unbelievers**. Consider:

1] **Saul of Tarsus** (not only an unbeliever, but hostile, Ac. 8-9, 22, 26).

a] The transformation of the most dangerous persecutor into the most successful promoter of Christianity is nothing less than a miracle of divine grace. It rests on the greater miracle of the resurrection of Christ. Both are inseparably connected; without the resurrection the conversion would have been impossible, and on the other hand the conversion of such a man and with such results is one of the strongest proofs of the resurrection (Schaff I, 296-297).

2] **James, the brother of Jesus** (Jn.7:5). Josephus records the death of James at the hand of Ananus, the high priest, adding that this injustice caused King Agrippa to depose Ananus from his position (*Antiquities of the Jews*, The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus, Book XX. Chap. IX. No. 1. Philadelphia: David McKay Co., n.d., p. 598).

a] James knew Jesus longer than other witnesses, making his testimony invaluable. His martyrdom makes sense only if Jesus was raised from the dead.

3] **The other apostles** (Mk.16:9-11; Lk.24:11, 25; Jn.20:25). Schaff says, "Their faith in the resurrection was too clear, too strong, too steady, too effective to be explained in any other way" (I, 177).

a] **Thomas** illustrates the general doubtful disposition of the apostles (Jn. 20:24-29). He refuses to believe unless the evidence passes his rigid standards. Paul omits these facts.

b] Even **Judas** the betrayer acknowledges the innocence of Jesus (Mt. 27:3-10).

7) **Paul**, the last and least of the *apostles* later calls himself the least of all the *saints* (Ep.3:8), but *first* of *sinners* (1 Tim.1:15). God's grace (10) produces genuine humility.

a) The *last* of the apostles (8) means **the last one called**. "The fact that the manifestations had ended with the one to St. Paul is against the theory of hallucinations. If all the appearances had been hallucinations, they would probably have continued, for such things are infectious..." (Robertson/Plummer, 340).

b) The *last* of the apostles (8) is different from *least* of the apostles (9): "Pert. to being the lowest in status, least" (BDAG, 314).

c) Paul cannot say about himself, "**last, but not least.**" Because of his persecutions against the church, **last does mean least**. Some at Corinth were already denying his apostleship (cf. 9:1-2). He saves his strongest response to these charges for 2 Corinthians. Though he freely admits that he is the *least* of the apostles, the fact remains that he *is* one.

- d) Robertson and Plummer exclude the possibility that since “Paul” means “little,” this explains why he is “least” in this verse. They note that Paul, like his namesake, Saul the son of Kish (1 Sm. 9:21), was from the least of the tribes of Israel (p. 341).
- 8) **Worthy**, v. 9, means “*fit, appropriate, competent, qualified, able*, w. the connotation *worthy, good enough*” (BDAG, 472). Paul cannot think of his first meeting with Jesus without remembering his role as a persecutor.
- 9) Paul freely acknowledges **his debt to the Lord** who saved him, 10 (“grace” occurs three times in one verse). He never ceases to be amazed at the grace that not only saved the chief of sinners, but also made him an apostle.
- a) “In spite of his unfitness to bear the name, the grace of God has made him equal to it. The persecutor has been forgiven and the abortion adopted” (Robertson/Plummer, 341).
- 10) God’s gift to Paul was **not in vain**, *kenos*, 10 (also 14, 58; cf. v.2). Paul uses *vain* to say that God’s grace was not without purpose or result (BDAG, 539). He gives God all the credit, leaving none for himself. What else but the grace of God could have done so much with so little? Weinel says, “The Apostle’s satisfaction with his own labours ‘from a human point of view is as the joy of a child who gives his father a birthday present out of his father’s own money’” (via Robertson/Plummer, 342).
- 11) **Paul’s appeal** (11). After his short digression to glorify God for the things that He had done through the least apostle (9-10), he returns to his subject.
- a) “This brings the presentation of the grand testimony regarding the resurrection of Christ to its conclusion” (Lenski, 644).
- b) The message is true. This is what Paul and the other apostles (“we”) preach (present), and what the Corinthians unanimously believed (aorist).
- c) “Thus, ‘what they believed’ through his preaching when he was among them is the same gospel preached presently by him and by all the apostles. On the matter of their denial of the resurrection, therefore, they are following neither Apollos, nor Cephas, nor Christ; they are simply going off on their own” (Fee, 736).
- d) Now that Paul has proven the resurrection of Christ, he is ready to attack the false conclusions that some have affirmed in Corinth.
- 12) Farrar’s summary of this section, most of which is repeated below, underscores the power of Paul’s evidence.
- a) It is the most **complete summary**.
- b) It refers to **some incidents that are not mentioned** in the Gospels.
- c) It declares that the death and resurrection of Christ were **subjects of ancient prophecy**.
- d) It shows **the force of the evidence** on which the apostles relied and the number of living eye-witnesses to whom they could appeal.
- e) It is **the earliest written testimony** to the Resurrection; it was penned within twenty-five years of the event itself.

- f) It shows that the evidence for the Resurrection as a **literal, historical, objective fact**, was sufficient to convince the powerful intellect of a hostile contemporary observer (484).

C. **Consequences of the Corinthian position: “There is no resurrection” (12-19).**

1. **Christ is not raised, 13.**

- a. **“But if there is no resurrection of the dead....”** “Resurrection of the dead is without the article in the Greek, and is perfectly general, ‘resurrection of dead men’” (Morris, 210). **“Then Christ is not risen.”** The “two resurrections” (His and ours) stand or fall together.
- b. Apparently the Corinthians **admit the resurrection of Christ**, though they **deny its connection with the general resurrection**. Paul expects them to *reject* this first consequence (viz., that Christ is not raised). “Jesus did not come to earth, die on the cross, and rise from the dead for himself but for those whom he redeems” (Kistemaker, 541).
- c. **His resurrection disproves the “no resurrection” doctrine.** Grosheide says, “That error is impossible (*how say some*). But in spite of that he demonstrates at great length that faith in the resurrection of Christ actually *includes* faith in the resurrection of the body” (356).
- d. **The Corinthians cannot have it both ways.** If they embrace a “Sadduceean” position, they must also embrace its consequences. Either Christ is raised – therefore there is a resurrection, or there is no resurrection – therefore Christ is not raised.

2. **Preaching is vain, 14** (*kenos*; see 10), “*for it would be faith in a crucified man, not in the risen Christ*” (Farrar). The word occurs in Ac. 4:25 (Ps. 2:1) of those who imagine vain things (the overthrow of God and His anointed). “The word *...vain*, denotes a testimony the matter of which is an unreal event” (Godet, 773).

- a. Vain preaching puts the gospel on a par with Watchtower predictions that Jesus would return in Sept., 1975. The Corinthians must either abandon their position or accept its consequences. They know the preaching is true (11).
- b. The expression “*then our preaching is vain*” shows that preaching Christ includes preaching His resurrection (12), just as “preaching Christ” (Ac. 8:35) includes preaching His plan of salvation.

3. **False witnesses against God, 15.**

- a. *Found* (*heurisko*), find, discover (see BDAG, 412). The word implies that “they are ‘found out’ to be false witnesses” (Fee, 742). Cf. 1 Co. 4:2.
- b. *False witnesses* (Mt. 26:59-60). A false witness of God speaks lies, using God’s name to give credibility to his story.
- c. *Testified “of” God* (NKJV) is better rendered *against* God (*kata*). The choice here is not between *mistaken* and *unmistaken*, but between *truth* and *deception*. If Jesus stayed in the tomb, then the apostles lied.

- 1) If there is no resurrection, then the apostles who preached it must be condemned because of their false testimony “as to God,” accusing him of doing what he had never done. They were also false witnesses as to the Corinthians, having given them a vain faith as to forgiveness and eternal life, when in reality they were yet in

their sins, and doomed to receive the wages of sin which is death. They were also false witnesses as to the dead, for, instead of falling asleep in Jesus, the dead had perished (McGarvey/Pendleton, 148).

- 2) “Are the skeptics at Cor. prepared to affirm that the App. are liars?” (Findlay, 922).
- 3) “But why would they promulgate deception, be willing to suffer and die for it, and acknowledge that they must face the God of truth?” (Kistemaker, 543).
- d. Again Paul appeals to a **universal negative**, forcing the Corinthians, at the very least, to be consistent (15c-16).
4. Verse 16 repeats the thought of verse 13, but for a different purpose. Godet comments:
 - a. This verse seems to be a needless repetition of ver. 13. It is not so. Paul once more takes up the inference already drawn in ver. 13, in order to deduce from it a second conclusion parallel to that which he had expounded in vers. 14, 15. The denial of Christ’s resurrection, as it follows from the denial of the resurrection of the dead, implies the accusation of imposture against the apostle, vers. 13-15. But more than that: this same denial, following from the same premise, implies the nothingness of the Christian salvation, vers. 16-19 (774).
5. **Faith is vain**, 17 (*mataios*, “idle, empty, fruitless, useless, powerless, lacking truth” (BDAG, 621). “If ‘the message is empty,’ declaring a thing that is not, ‘the faith is also empty,’ building on the thing that is not” (Findlay, 923f). (Cf. Ro. 10:17.)
6. **Yet in sins**, 15-17. If He is still dead, so are we (Jn. 8:21, 24; Ro. 4:25). “Because a *dead* Redeemer could be *no* Redeemer” (Farrar, 486). *We* live because *He* lives.
 - a. Isaiah chides and challenges his people who trust in mediums: “..*Should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?*” (Is.8:19).
 - b. Paul does likewise (1 Co. 15:17). “If Christ has not been raised for our justification (Rom. iv.25), His death is made a nullity, for there is no redemptive power in it...for how can a dead Christ save others from death, which is the penalty of sin? And how can He secure for others a life beyond the grave which He Himself does not possess?” (Robertson/Plummer, 349).
7. **The dead perish**, 18. Godet says *apollumi* “cannot designate annihilation...it denotes a state of perdition in which the soul remains under the weight of Divine condemnation” (776). Some Israelites were “destroyed” by snakes (1 Co. 10:9), but they were not annihilated (v. 5).
 - a. The eternal consequence: saints died in hope, only to find themselves in condemnation. *Those who have fallen asleep* (18; 6, 20) *have perished* (cf. 1:18; 8:11; 2 Co. 2:15; 4:3).
 - b. “If Christ has not risen from the dead, then God condemns people to everlasting punishment because of their sins...” (Kistemaker, 545).
 - c. At the funeral of Ebon C. Ingersoll (Washington, June 2, 1879), his brother, Robert, an agnostic, tried to read a eulogy, but his eyes filled with tears. Finally he bowed his head upon the coffin in uncontrollable grief. Only after some delay, and the greatest efforts at self-mastery, Robert finished reading his address, which included these curious remarks:

- 1) Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of a wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing. He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath, 'I am better now.' Let us believe, in spite of doubts and dogmas and tears and fears, that these dear words are true of all the countless dead. (*Robert G. Ingersoll's 44 Complete Lectures*. M.A. Donohue & Co. Chicago; New York, n.d.)
8. **The living deserve pity**, 19. "According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pt. 1:3 (ESV). **Our hope lives because Jesus lives**. His resurrection makes the difference between hope and hopelessness. Our faith and hope live in God who raised Jesus from the dead (1 Pt. 1:21).
- "As His death both represented, and virtually effected, the death of the old man in Christians, so His rising both represented, and assured, as a pledge and means, their resurrection from the death of sin, when being regenerate, they were born again unto the life of Holiness" (F. C. Cook, 1 Pt. 1:3, 175).
 - If those who invest their lives in the Lord but then lose in every way, the **Hall of the Faithful** (Hb. 11) becomes the **Hall of the Foolish**.
 - "*monon* (only, rd) must not be joined with *elpikotes* (having hoped, rd). It is to be construed with *esmen*: 'we are only,' and thus it is virtually linked with *en tei zwei*...and underscores the contrast between this life and the future one" (Grosheide, 360). "Word order would indicate 'only hope' but the argument requires 'only in this life'" (Zerwick, 529).

D. **Christ is the firstfruits, 20-23.**

- Verse 12 states **the false premise** of those who deny the resurrection. In 20, Paul states **the true premise** and lays the foundation for his argument on firstfruits.
 - The words "**but now**" often point to a significant change in conditions (for better or worse). (Cf. Lk. 16:25; Ac. 17:30; Ro. 3:21; 6:22; 7:6; Ga. 4:9; Ep. 2:13; Phm. 11; Hb. 8:6; 1 Pt. 2:10, et al.).
 - "But now" in this passage signals the change from the disastrous consequences of the previous section to the blessed hope in the resurrection. Robertson and Plummer call the words a "joyous outburst" (351).
- Christ is risen **from the dead**, proving that "Paul is thinking of a bodily resurrection; for spiritually Christ never was among the dead" (Godet, 779).
- Christ has become the **firstfruits**. Spicq notes that, "All the NT usages of *aparche*, while referring to OT texts and theology, apply only to humans" (I, 152).
 - Israelites offered the first of their crops to God, and the first portion of the dough from which they prepared sacred loaves (Nu. 15:19-21; cf. Ro. 11:15-16).
 - Paul uses the term of persons who were consecrated to God before others (in time), "*first fruits of Christians*" (BDAG, 98). (See Ro. 16:5; 1 Co. 16:15.) These *first* converts in an area constitute "a unity with those who will be converted in the future and stirred up by their example" (Spicq I, 150).

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4. Christ the **firstfruits** guarantees **later fruits** (20, 23). He is **the pledge** of the coming harvest.
- a. “On the morrow after the Sabbath of the passover a sheaf of barley (the earliest grain to ripen) was waved as firstfruits before the Lord (Lev. 23:9-14). The firstfruits had to be thus presented before the harvest could be begun, and its presentation was an earnest of the ingathering. Now on this very day after the Sabbath Christ was raised as the firstfruits from the dead, and became the earnest of the general resurrection” (McGarvey/Pendleton, 149). Robertson and Plummer call Christ “the first sheaf of a vast harvest” (344).
 - b. Jesus is the first to rise from the dead, but He will not forget His people (cf. 23; Ro. 6:5). “But Christ never stands alone; He forms ‘a body’ with ‘many members’ (xii. 12); He is ‘firstborn among many brothers’ (Rom. viii. 29, Col. i. 18, John xv. 5, etc.). His rising shows that bodily resurrection is possible; nay, it is *inevitable* for those who are in Him (18, 20b, 23)...The Resurrection has begun” (Findlay, 925).
 - c. “Christ is not the firstfruits of those who have been raised but of those who have died. In fact, no human being has been raised physically from the dead. The sons of both the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite died in later years; so did the daughter of Jairus, the young man of Nain, and Lazarus. Only Christ has conquered death and is risen from the dead. All others must wait for their bodily resurrection until the appointed time” (Kistemaker, 548).
5. As Adam was **the firstfruits of death** (21-22), so Christ **the firstfruits of life**, 22 (resurrection). The actions of both men carry universal significance. This passage provokes almost as much controversy as verse 29.
- a. **How death comes:** All die in Adam (21a, 22a). “In the possession of a common nature with Adam all mankind are liable to death” (Lias, 171).
 - b. **How life comes:** All will be made alive in Christ. Paul has just used “life” with reference to earthly existence (19). *Made alive (zoopoieo)* can denote a restoration to the fullness of existence (i.e., a resurrection) without specifying the eternal destiny that each resurrected person may expect.
 - 1) If “in Christ” here **describes a relationship with Christ**, then Paul refers to Christians, limiting the scope of the second “all.” “‘In the Adam, in whom all are one by nature...in the Christ, in whom all are one by grace.’...*Pantes* (*all*, rd) in each clause is limited by its context: (1) = all that are in Adam, (2) = all that are in Christ” (Parry, 223f). This is the most common view of the passage.
 - 2) If “in Christ” here merely **connects all the dead to Christ** and His power over death, then Paul refers to all men, and the second “all” perfectly matches the first. (21b, 22b; Jn. 5:28-29). Jesus, the *firstborn* from the dead (Col. 1:18; Rv. 1:5) will raise “all.”
 - a) Robertson and Plummer believe that “‘in Adam’ and ‘in Christ’ is meant ‘in the person of,’ as having a community of nature with” (353).
 - b) Lias agrees: “By possession of a common nature with Christ all shall partake of that Resurrection to which He has already attained” (171).
 - c) “*all shall be made alive*. i.e. in the Christ all men without exception, both believers and unbelievers, shall be raised bodily” (Evans, 362).
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- d) “What man lost through the disobedience of Adam he gained through the obedience of Jesus Christ. He lost the fleshly or physical life in Adam. That life is restored to all men through Christ” (David Lipscomb/J. W. Shepherd, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 1935, p. 231; cf. McGarvey/Pendleton, 149).
- e) “The ‘all’ of this half of the verse corresponds to the ‘all’ of the first half of the verse. Inasmuch as the ‘all’ of the first half was ‘all-men,’ the ‘all’ of this half means the same” (Mike Willis, *A Commentary on Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1979, p. 549).
- 3) Lenski limits “all” in *both* verses to believers. “He discusses the bodily resurrection of believers only – of these alone; he states that all of us believers die now, and that at last all of us shall be raised... ‘All’ are dying; ‘all’ shall be made alive. The same persons are referred to. ‘All’ = all believers” (665f.). (Also Fee, 749f.)
6. **“Each one in his own order”**: (1) “*Christ the firstfruits*”; (2) “*afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming*,” 23. [See a shift of emphasis in the order discussed in 1 Th. 4:15-17.]
- Christ composes **the first “group”**; those who are Christ’s compose **the second**.
 - Though Paul focuses primarily on the resurrection of saints in this passage, other passages clearly teach the resurrection of the wicked (e.g., Jn. 5:28-29).
7. Some Roman Catholics appeal to this verse to support their doctrine of **the bodily assumption of Mary** (who was assumed body and soul into heaven).
- The Assumption is important to Catholics as the Virgin Mary’s heavenly birthday (the day that she was received into heaven). They regard her acceptance into heaven as the symbol of the promise Jesus made to all enduring Christians, assuring them of their own reception into paradise.
 - To brand this position as fanciful is an understatement. This text does not mention Mary. No other text mentions her assumed assumption.
- E. **Every Person Must Be Raised From The Dead Before God Can Be Glorified To The Fullest, 24-28.**
- “**Then comes the end**” (24) points to the conclusion of all earthly human history.
 - Two times in v. 24 Paul uses “*when*”: *Then comes the end . . .*
 - When He delivers the kingdom to God**...at “*the coming*” of Christ (23). *Paradidomi* means “hand over, give (over), deliver, entrust” (BDAG, 761f.).
 - This passage strikes a **blow against Premillennialism**.
 - “Because of its brevity, the clause *then comes the end* does not appear to support the teaching of an intermediate kingdom before the consummation of the age. Rather, it signifies that ‘after all this has happened, will the end or the consummation of Christ’s Messianic work come’” (Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 1979, pp. 557-58, via Kistemaker, 552).
 - “The words *the end* suggest not only ‘last in sequence’ but also the conclusion of Christ’s redemptive work for his people” (Kistemaker, 552).
 - Max King and others believe the events of this section occurred in A.D. 70. King says “*deliver up*” means “to raise it up or restore it to its rightful

- place.” Though his position contradicts the text, King asserts that Jesus begins His reign as established King in A.D. 70 (see McGuiggan, 193f).
- b. **When He puts an end to all rule...**(*arche*). Findlay holds that “the end” does not mean “the termination of *Christ’s sovereignty*, which in its largest sense began before the world (John i. 1-3, xvii. 5) and is its goal (Col. i. 16); but the termination of *the reign of sin and death* (Rom. v. 21; cf. John vi. 37ff.)” (927).
 - 1) “**Rule**” is the same word translated “*principalities*” in Ro. 8:38 where Paul affirms that no *ruler*, either earthly (Lk.12:11; Tit.3:1), or angelic or demonic (Ep.2:2; 6:12) could separate His people from the love of Christ.
 - 2) In 1 Corinthians 15:24, Paul’s argument advances to include the final destruction of all such principalities. “Put an end to” (*katargeo*) means “to cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence, *abolish, wipe out, set aside.*” (BDAG, 525). It occurs ten times in this epistle (e.g., 1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 13:8, and 15:26). Cf. Rv. 11:15.
3. Kistemaker calls attention to **the chiasmic arrangement** of this section:
 - a. **A** 24, Then comes the end
 - 1) **B** when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father,
 - a) **C** after he has abolished all rule, and all authority and power
 - 1] **D** 25, For he must rule until he has put all his enemies under his feet
 - a] **E** 26, the last enemy that will be abolished is death
 - 2] **D’** 27, For he has put all things under his feet
 - b) **C’** And when he says, “All things are put under him,” it is clear that the one who subjected all things to him is excepted.
 - 2) **B’** 28, And when all things are subjected to him, then even the Son himself shall be subjected to the one who subjected all things to him
 - b. **A’** so that God may be all in all (Kistemaker, 554).
 4. In 25, **Paul quotes Ps. 110** (the most quoted Psalm of the NT) to show that no power will escape; Christ *will* conquer every enemy.
 - a. **He reigns now in the midst of His enemies** (Ps. 110:2). “Christ’s universal reign begins when he rises victoriously from the grave in his state of exaltation and ends when he effectively eliminates the power of all his spiritual enemies” (Kistemaker, 553).
 - b. **His enemies will become the footstool of His feet** (Ps. 110:1; cf. Josh. 10:22-24). “His rule, then, like his prototype David, is to be fraught [sic] with enemies” (Bob Crawley, unpublished notes, 1 Co.)
 5. Part of Christ’s commission as the all-powerful Savior is to **subdue every enemy**. Before He can deliver the kingdom to God, Christ must destroy all opponents, 24-26.
 6. **The last enemy that He will destroy is death**, 26. This connects the destruction of enemies with the resurrection of the dead. The only way to destroy this last enemy is to raise the dead.

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- a. “Death is brought to nought when all his victims are restored to life”
(Robertson/Plummer, 356).
- b. Godet adds:
- 1) This judgment of death consists of two acts. Firstly, all beings who have become its prey must be rescued from it; this is what will be effected by the final and universal resurrection, which will bring to the light the *third rank* of the risen. In the second place, death must no longer have power to make new victims; this will be the result of the resurrection itself, which, by transforming our perishable into incorruptible bodies, will put them for ever beyond the reach of death (791).
7. In v. 26, ***that will be destroyed*** (NKJV) is present tense. Its destruction is already in progress (cf. a similar use of the present tense in 1 Jn. 2:17). “Those Corinthians who denied the resurrection also failed to realize Christ’s triumph over death, for he holds the keys of death and the grave (Rev. 1:18)” (Kistemaker, 554).
- a. As soon as Christ rose from the dead, ***Taps began to sound for Death.***
 - b. The destruction of death “is the Christian counter-position to the ‘there is no resurrection’ of Cor. philosophy; the *some* of ver. 12 say, ‘There is no resurrection’; P. replies, ‘There is to be *no death*’” (Findlay, 928, adapted).
8. ***“He has put all things under His feet”*** (27). “All things” is emphatic. Paul alludes to Psalm 8:6. Hebrews 2 quotes this psalm and applies it to Christ.
- a. **If Christ subdues all things, then death cannot escape His dominion.** Psalm 8 confirms this truth. “‘All things are subdued!’ is the joyful announcement by the *Son* that the grand promise recorded in the 8th Psalm is fulfilled” (Findlay, 929).
 - b. The expression ***under His feet*** may imply either a ***military setting*** (as in Josh. 10:22) or a ***royal setting***. (Kings sat enthroned above their subjects. As a subject bowed, his head often dropped lower than the emperor’s feet.)
 - 1) “This act of subjection to the Messiah is not the victory itself but the public indication of the victory” (Grosheide, 367).
 - 2) Lenski says, “Nothing exhibits sinful man’s loss of dominion as does ‘death’....Death received its own deathblow when Christ arose from the tomb. And at the end death shall be abolished forever. It is thus that Ps. 8 becomes truly Messianic....” (681).
9. The expression ***“it is evident”*** (27b) appeals to an undeniable fact: The Son does not subdue the Father. ***“All things” does not include God.***
10. God will not allow death to prevent His glorification to the fullest, 27-28.
- a. The Son of the King may share every attribute of His Father and enjoy an eternal rule as King, though He simultaneously submits to His Father (Col. 3:11; Ep. 1:23).
 - 1) “In one sense he is subject, in another sense he is equal. The son of a king may be the equal of his father in every attribute of his nature, though officially inferior. So the eternal Son of God may be coequal with the Father, though officially subordinate” (Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1857, via Kistemaker, 556).
 - b. ***“All in all” expresses God’s sovereignty***, His complete supremacy over everything – all will be in subjection to Him.
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- 1) “In a sense, this last clause is similar in meaning to that of the phrase *then comes the end* (v.24). When the Son delivers the kingdom to God, then the end has come; then the only sovereign ruler is God himself. He commissioned his Son and gave him authority, which God receives back when the Son completes his work. God, then, is the ultimate sovereign” (Kistemaker, 556).
- c. **The goal of Christ’s subjection is “that God may be all in all.”** Grosheide says:
- 1) There will be no opposition any more. God’s glory will then only be fully accomplished when all resistance has been frustrated by the mediatorship of Christ. Then God will be the One before whom *all* will kneel. God will be *in all*, i.e., with all, in the sense that He will rule them and possess them. There will be no room for anyone except God. *All in all* is to be taken absolutely (Col. 3:11). All people, both the ungodly and the pious, all devils will be compelled by the work of Christ to recognize God as the One and Only. Paul does not speak of God’s blessed nearness but rather, as appears from the repeated ‘to subject,’ of God’s dominion. The latter will be universal and universally accepted. This end manifests God’s absoluteness; higher than this Paul cannot go. But then it must also be considered as proof for the certainty of the subjection of death and of the resurrection of the body. Indirectly Paul also warns the Corinthians that they should not think it strange if they do not now witness any resurrections of the dead. That will have to wait, for not all Christ’s enemies are yet subjected to Him (1953, p. 370).
- d. Synonymous expressions shed light on this text.
- 1) Jn. 3:35: “*The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.*” Because He comes from heaven, Jesus is above all (31). “The term is not to be limited in any way” (Westcott, *The Bible Commentary*, Vol. VIII, p. 62).
 - 2) Ro. 9:5: “*...from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.*”
 - a) “The Messiah, ‘as concerning the flesh’ – that is, with regard to His human descent – came of a long line of Israelite ancestors; but as regards His eternal being, He is ‘God over all, blessed for ever’” (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, Tyndale, 1963, p. 186).
 - 3) Ep. 1:22-23: “*And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*”
 - a) “The words ‘who fills all in all’ mean that Christ fills *all* the universe *in all* respects; that is, the entire universe is not only dependent on him for the fulfillment of its every need but is also governed by him in the interest of the church....” (Wm. Hendriksen, *Ephesians*, p. 105-106).
 - 4) Dn. 7:9-10: the “**Ancient of Days**” sits on the fiery flaming throne, conducting court. After giving the Son of Man everlasting dominion, glory, and an eternal kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him, the court removes the dominion of the little horn who speaks pompous words and persecutes the saints of the “Most High” (25-26). The imagery of Dn. 7 bears a striking resemblance to 1 Co. 15:24-28.

11. The significance of God's sovereignty in this context is that **no one will be overlooked** in the resurrection. God must conquer every corner of the universe, leaving no foe to challenge His dominion.
12. It is one thing to say that **all will be raised**, but another to say that **all will be saved** (Jn. 5:28-29).
 - a. **Origen** cites verse 28 to prove **universalism**, basing his doctrine on the statement that "all things" will be put under Christ.
 - b. **Universalism ignores the context**. Paul discusses the condemnation, not the salvation, of the lost. God subdues and suppresses them *as enemies*. Consider the connotation of these words:
 - 1) *put an end to all rule* (24)
 - 2) *destroy* (26)
 - 3) *put all things under his feet* (27)
 - c. That God will be "*all in all*" (28) does not imply **salvation of the lost** (i.e., that they are "in" Him); it expresses **His universal sovereignty**.
 - d. The "*all things*" that will become subject to Him (28) parallels the "**enemies**" mentioned earlier (26-27). Just as God does not compel earthly enemies to yield to Him in salvation, neither will he compel His enemies at the Judgment to be saved. Mt. 23:37; Rv. 22:17.
 - e. The summary by McGarvey and Pendleton not only answers the universalism supposition, but also serves as a fitting conclusion to this section.
 - 1) The chain of Paul's logic is long, but it runs thus: no glorification until the mediatorial kingdom is turned over to God; no turning over of this kingdom until its work is complete; no completion of its work till all its enemies are destroyed; no destruction of all these enemies while death, a chief one, survives; no destruction of death save by the resurrection: therefore no full glorification of God without a resurrection. The logic would hold good for the doctrine of Universalism, were it not that there is a second death which is not looked upon as an enemy to the kingdom of God. (151)

F. *Baptism For The Dead, 29.*

1. In 1889, Frederic Louis Godet knew approximately **thirty explanations** for this verse (p. 811). 117 years later, the passage has been explained in at least **200 different ways** (NET Bible). Either Godet quit counting too soon, or commentators who followed him have been working overtime to produce new theories.
 - a. Robertson and Plummer believe the meaning of *those who are baptized for the dead* will remain doubtful (359).
 - b. Several say the passage has received almost as many interpretations as there have been commentators. "But finally we must admit that we simply do not know" (Fee, 767).
2. Some of the **more popular explanations** include:
 - a. **Vicarious baptism** to benefit those who died unbaptized.
 - b. **Baptism for the sake of the dead** -- i.e., in order to secure reunion with relatives who died in Christ.

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- c. **Baptism on account of the dead** -- i.e., because of the witness in life of Christians martyred for the faith, such faith leading to the conversion and subsequent baptism of others.
 - d. **Baptism to take the place of the dead** -- i.e., to make up their number and so, perhaps, to hasten the Second Advent by assisting the completion of one of its preconditions.
 - e. **Baptism over the dead** -- i.e., over their graves, to express solidarity with them.
 - f. **Ceremonial ablution because of defilement** through contact with a dead body.
 - g. **Prayer for the dead described fig. as baptism for them**, rather as “sacrifice” is sometimes spiritualized as prayer in the NT.
 - h. **Baptism to wash away mortal sins.**
 - i. **A baptism not of water, but of blood, by martyrdom**, Lk. 12:50; Mk. 10:38.
(See most of these listed in *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. I, 469-470.)
3. It is an understatement to acknowledge that every position on this passage enjoys its own particular set of problems.
 4. While we may never be able to know for sure **what this passage means**, we can no for sure **what it doesn't mean**. It does not authorize **proxy baptism** such as Mormonism practices
 - a. Former Mormon president James Talmadge said: “For the dead who have lived and died in ignorance of the requirements of salvation, as, in another sense, for the disobedient who later come to repentance, the plan of God provides for the vicarious administration of the essential ordinances to the living posterity on behalf of their dead progenitors. Of this saving labor Malachi prophesied in solemn plainness (Mal. 4:5, 6); and the glorious fulfillment has been witnessed in this modern age” (*The Vitality of Mormonism*, 71).
 - b. It is unwise to base a practice on a single passage so distinguished for its difficulties. The wise course harmonizes Scriptures, letting clear passages interpret unclear ones.
 - c. **No child of God can be saved for another person** (whether this person is alive or dead). Each must choose for himself to be saved (Mt. 23:37; Ac. 2:40; 2 Pt. 3:9; Rv. 22:17).
 - 1) Each must give an account of his own life (Ezk.18:20).
 - 2) We will be judged “*according to what we have done....*”(2 Co. 5:10).
 - d. It is unlikely that Paul resorts to using an argument based on a **practice that he rejects** in order to prove a **doctrine that he accepts**.
 - e. “Chrysostom reports that when a catechumen among the Marcionites died unbaptized, some one was hid under the bed of the deceased, and was asked whether he wished to be baptized himself, and for the dead. It is possible, however, that such customs arose on the background of Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 15:29” (Grosheide, 372).
 - f. Even if this passage teaches proxy “baptism for the dead” (as in Mormonism), it does not authorize a baptism into the Mormon Church, a group foreign to Scripture.
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- g. **Baptism for the dead cannot be found in *The Book of Mormon*.** Quite the opposite:
- 1) Alma 34:32-35 warns that those who procrastinate the day of their repentance until death enter their final state belonging to the devil.
- h. *Doctrine and Covenants* (128:1, 8, 14) authorizes the practice of baptizing the living for the dead.
- 1) David Whitmer, one of Mormonism's original three witnesses, claims that he received "revelation from God saying that Joseph Smith was led away by the Devil in introducing the D & C which brings in polygamy, celestial marriages, priesthood and baptism for the dead" (*All Believers in the Bible and the Book of Mormon*, via McGuiggan, 198).
5. When studying v. 29, we must keep these important factors in mind:
- a. **The general context.** This verse must be relevant to an argument for the resurrection of the dead.
 - b. **The connection of thought between vv. 29 and 30.** Here we have either two separate arguments for the resurrection or two parts of one argument.
 - c. **The congruity of the interpretation with apostolic thought and practice** or with some perversion of the same.
 - d. **Grammatical factors**, of which the chief is the sense of *huper ton nekron* (ZPEB, loc. cit., p. 470).
6. The English word "**for**" may have twenty-one shades of meanings. The original has *huper (ton nekron)*. The definitions of this preposition include: "*on behalf of, for, because of, by reason of, concerning*" (LSJ Gk-English Lexicon, p. 1957-1958f.). These definitions may convey the idea, "in view of."
7. Time and space limitations preclude a detailed discussion of each position on v. 29. The following quotations generally state what I believe harmonizes best with the context of this disputed passage. These quotes may help to clarify this particular position, but it would be presumptuous to think they answer every objection.
- a. **Albert Barnes:**
 - 1) According to this, it means that they had been baptized with the hope and expectation of a resurrection of the dead. They had received this as one of the leading doctrines of the gospel when they were baptized. It was a part of their full and firm belief that the dead would rise. The argument according to this interpretation is, that this was an essential article of the faith of a Christian; that it was embraced by all; that it constituted a part of their very profession; and that for any one to deny it, was to deny that which entered into the very foundation of the Christian faith. If they embraced a different doctrine, if they denied the doctrine of the resurrection, they struck a blow at the very nature of Christianity, and dashed all the hopes which had been cherished and expressed at their baptism. And what could they do? What would become of them? What would be the destiny of all who were thus baptized? Was it to be believed that all their hopes at baptism were vain, and that they would all perish? As such a belief could not be entertained, the apostle infers that, if they held to Christianity at all, they must hold to this doctrine as apart of their very profession. According to this view, the phrase 'for the dead' means, with reference to the dead; with direct allusion to the condition of the dead, and their hopes; with a belief that the dead will rise. It is evident that the passage is
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elliptical, and this seems to be as probable as any interpretation which has been suggested (*Barnes' Notes on the NT*, in loc.).

b. **A. T. Robertson:**

- 1) Commenting on *huper*: "A more general idea is that of 'about' or 'concerning.' Here *huper* encroaches on the province of *peri*...Perhaps 1 Cor. 15:29 comes in here also" (*Grammar*, 1934, p. 632).
- 2) "The Greek expositors took it to be about the dead (*huper* in sense of *peri* as often as in 2 Co 1:6) since baptism is a burial and a resurrection (Ro 6:2-6)" (*Word Pictures*, in loc., p. 192).

c. **J. W. McGarvey and P. Y. Pendleton:**

- 1) If the resurrection is not part of God's plan – if affairs are otherwise, and there is really no resurrection then what are converts to do, who, under the mistaken notion that there is a resurrection, are now constantly presenting themselves to be buried in baptism on account of the dead? If the dead are not raised, why then are these converts buried in baptism on their account, or with a view to them? Rom. 6:3-11 makes Paul's meaning in this passage very plain. The dead are a class of whom Christ is the head and firstfruits unto resurrection. By baptism we symbolically *unite* ourselves with that class, and so with Christ, and we do this because of the hope that we shall be raised with that class through the power of Christ (Rom. 6:5). But if the dead are not raised at all, then why should converts be united with them by a symbolic burial? Why should they be baptized on their account, or with reference to them? If there is no resurrection, baptism, which symbolizes it, is meaningless (151-152).

d. **T. S. Evans:**

- 1) ...i.e., *with a view to the resurrection of the dead?* The sense in full is: what course shall converts now pursue, who passing through the laver rise out of the water with hearts believing and mouths confessing that the dead shall rise? If your freethinkers close the very gate of God's Kingdom, as they do close it, when they deny the resurrection of dead men in the body if not in the soul and spirit also, what in that case are miserable catechumens to do? What course shall they pursue...? They will be at their wit's end, not knowing what to do. To this effect in substance are the comments of Chrysostom, Theophylact, Theodoret and of many early fathers. From the ancient expositors most of the modern differ. (*The Bible Commentary*, 364, Professor Evans includes several more useful comments in his "Additional Notes" [p. 373] that are not included here. McGarvey/Pendleton endorse his comments and notes in a volume they call *The Speaker's Commentary*, another title for *The Bible Commentary*)

e. **B. W. Johnson:**

- 1) I will try to make clear its meaning: (1) All the Corinthians were baptized (Ac 18:8). (2) Their baptism was a "planting" in the likeness of the burial of Christ, and in the "likeness of his resurrection" (Ro 6:4, 5). They were in, and raised from, a watery tomb. (3) Their baptism in the likeness of the death and resurrection of Christ was in hope of their own resurrection from the dead through Christ's resurrection. (*Huper Nekroon*, for, or on account of the dead, with the exception of resurrection from the dead.) But if Christ has not risen, and the dead rise not, this memorial and emblematic burial has no meaning. "Why, then, are they baptized for the dead?" that is, for the sake of their own resurrection from the dead. This interpretation harmonizes better with Paul's argument than any I have seen. (*People's N.T. With Notes*, 123).

8. **Summary: The practice (baptism) of the Corinthians expresses their view of the dead** (viz., the dead are raised; cf. Ro. 6:3-4); **the current belief of some**

Corinthians contradicts this view. They must be consistent. As Robertson and Plummer say, “If resurrection is absolutely a fiction, then baptism for the dead is an absurdity” (360).

- a. They must either change their practice to fit their belief, or their belief to fit their practice.
- b. “Whatever they may have proclaimed, the Corinthians’ actions demonstrated that they had hope for a bodily resurrection” (NET Bible, notes on v.29).

1) 30-32, Paul (and possibly his helpers) *stand in jeopardy every hour*.

- a) McGarvey and Pendleton note: “If it was idle folly in converts to be symbolically united with the dead, much more was it gross foolishness for the apostle to live thus continually on the verge of being literally, actually united with them. But the folly in both instances was made wisdom by the fact of a resurrection” (153).
- b) *I die daily* (31) does not merely repeat the thought of v. 30. Paul here discusses his attitude concerning his ever-present dangers. On any given day, he is ready to sacrifice his life for his Lord. Cf. Ac. 25:11; Ro. 8:36; 2 Co. 4:10-12.
- c) Paul boasts of the Corinthians, not because they prove his apostleship (9:1), but because his greatest joy on earth is saving souls (cf. 1 Th. 2:19-20; 3:8).
- d) Paul’s fighting with *beasts at Ephesus* probably signifies a figurative battle.
 - 1] When Paul records his many trials (2 Co. 11), he does not mention this encounter.
 - 2] Roman law did not sentence Roman citizens to fight animals in the arena. “It is quite unlikely that Paul could have engaged in a real struggle w. wild animals....The apostle could not have been sentenced ‘ad bestias’ without losing his Roman citizenship, which he still held at a later date, and which formed the basis of his appeal to the emperor” (BDAG, 455).
 - a] Unruly mobs usually do not inquire about a person’s citizenship or even about the laws of their own nation (cf. Ac. 7, Stephen; Ac. 16, Paul and Silas).
 - b] Paul, however, had powerful friends in Ephesus who showed great interest in his safety (Ac. 19:31), which probably gives the benefit of the passage to the figurative position.
 - 3] Acts does not record the incident (but we must tread lightly on the silence of Scripture. Acts gives only a short glimpse of Paul’s life).
 - a] As Paul writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, he plans to stay for some time (1 Co. 16:8). The “many” who oppose him (16:9) *may* be the “beasts” of our passage.

- b] Immediately after the riot in Ephesus, Paul left for Macedonia, Ac. 20:1. His fight with beasts, therefore, preceded the riot (Ac. 19).
- 4] Other passages use the beast metaphor to describe human cruelty or opposition (e.g., Ps. 22:12, 13, 16; Mt. 7:6; 2 Tim. 4:17; Tit. 1:12). Heraclitus is said to have called the Ephesians *beasts* (cf. Robertson/Plummer, 362).
- 5] As Ignatius traveled toward Rome, hoping to become a martyr, he wrote several churches. In his letter to the Romans, Ignatius notes, “From Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, by land and sea, by night and day, bound to ‘ten leopards,’ a detachment of soldiers, who when they are well treated, become even worse” (Lightfoot, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans* 5:1, part 2 vol.2, p. 209-210).
- a] Note: Ignatius makes two other references to fighting with wild animals [Eph. 1:2; Tral 10:1]; both use the word literally. The word also occurs in the Martyrdom of Polycarp [3:1].
- 6] Paul introduces v. 32 with the words, “*after the manner of men*” (NKJV), which, in this context, appear to mean “from merely human motives,” “urged on by the desire for earthly advantages,” or something similar.
- a] Robertson and Plummer explain, “Taking common human estimates as his standard, he would have asked, Is it worth the risk? Will it *pay*? And he would have said, No” (362).
- 2) **Verse 32 quotes Isa. 22:13.** If there is no resurrection, and every joy is limited to this life, the rich fool is wise to emphasize temporal pleasures (Lk. 12:16-21), and Paul is foolish to risk his life. “He means that such an Epicurean maxim, if never *excusable*, would at least be *natural*, if men could only look to life in the present” (Farrar, 489).
- 3) 32-34, why be baptized (29) if there is no resurrection? In contrast, however, living in view of eternity encourages holy conduct. “Paul sees in the resurrection a warrant of the restitution of human life in its fullness, after it has been broken by death” (Grosheide, 377).
- 4) **Belief determines behavior, and bad company influences belief (33).** One who expects to die like a dog usually lives like one. (Cf. Pro. 1:10-19; 2 Co. 6:14-16.) The city of Corinth must have provided many heathen friends who could indoctrinate the Christians in worldly philosophies (7:12; 10:27-30). Modern society offers the same abundance of dangers through universities, internet services, and radio and television stations.
- 5) “**Do not be deceived**” urges the Corinthians to abandon their wrong course; they must think wisely. (Cf. 6:9; 2 Co. 11:3; also Ga. 6:7-8.)
- 6) Some have argued that Paul’s quotation of a secular writer (Menander, *Thais*) shows that some extra-biblical writings are inspired. Actually, these sayings probably had become well known throughout society. Paul does not quote these sources because they are inspired, but because they are true (Tit. 1:13). Others include:
- a) Josh. 10:13; 1 Kg. 15:31.

- b) Caiaphas, Jn. 11:49.
 - c) Aratus, *Phaenomena* 5, Ac. 17:28
 - d) Thucydides, II 97, 4, Ac. 20:35
 - e) Euripides, *Bacchae* 794, and Julianus, Or. 8, 246b, Ac. 26:14
 - f) Epimenides, *De oraculis*, Tit. 1:12
- 7) **“Awake”** (34) means “come to your senses!”, “wake up!” We will *not* die like dogs. Chrysostom says that Paul addresses them as if they were drunk or mad.
- a) Only those who know God can be fully awake; all others walk in their sleep (Ro. 13:11; Ep. 5:14).
 - b) Paul shames those who have fallen behind in knowledge and proper conduct (cf. 6:5).
 - 1] “Instead of saying to them that they have not the knowledge of God, he says literally: that *they have the non-knowledge, agnosia, of God*. It is not merely a deficiency, the lack of a good thing, it is the possession of a real evil” (Godet, 825).
 - 2] “That these wise Cor. should be taxed with ‘ignorance,’ and ‘of God’ on the knowledge of whom they flattered themselves above all (viii. 1, 4), was humiliating indeed” (Findlay, 933).
9. In this section, Paul seems to argue as though **the no resurrection theory destroys the hope of his soul** (cf. vv. 30-32.) Even without a bodily resurrection, however, he would go to be with the Lord (a far better state, Ph. 1:21-23). In response to this question, consider:
- a. **Resurrection and immortality stand or fall together** (as does everything else, vv. 12-19). If the Corinthians reject the resurrection of the body, on what basis can they affirm the continued existence of the disembodied soul? Scripture? Scripture affirms the resurrection. The Corinthians should ask themselves what Paul later asks Agrippa: “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?” (Ac.26:8).
 - b. In view of the consequences (vv. 12-19), even if the soul continues to exist after its separation from the body, the circumstances of this existence are most undesirable (see especially 18-19; Mt. 10:28). **Eternal existence is not the same as eternal life.**
 - c. Jesus answers the Sadducees in basically the same way Paul answers the Corinthians (Mt. 22:29-32).
 - 1) **The Sadducees rejected the resurrection** (Mt. 22:23), **and angels** (Ac. 23:8). Josephus adds that they denied the possibility of rewards and punishments beyond the grave (Ant., xviii.16). While Jesus has their attention:
 - a) He exposes the root of their problem. **“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God”** (29).
 - b) He uses the *resurrection* to correct their false view of life after death and of angels.

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- 1] Matthew's account explains that, "*in the resurrection*" they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are *like* the angels of God in heaven (30).
 - 2] Luke's account says they cannot die (20:36). This eliminates the need for marriage and procreation, and answers the Sadducees' question about whose wife she will be. They are equal to angels, "being *sons of the resurrection*."
 - a] Jesus pictures the resurrection more as a mode of existence after death ("*in the resurrection*") than as an instantaneous event (rising up from the grave).
 - b] "*But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage*" (Lk. 20:35). They are "*sons of the resurrection*"(36).
 - 1} Morris says that attaining to *that age* is the same thing as attaining to *the resurrection from the dead*, "for the resurrection is the means of attaining to that age" (*The Gospel According To Luke*, Tyndale, 1976, p. 291).
 - 3] Mark's account does not say "in the resurrection," but uses a verb: "*For when they rise from the dead...*" (12:25). Mark and Luke follow this with a synonymous verb in the next verse (Mk. 12:26; Lk. 20:37). This views the resurrection as an event that links to a certain type of existence afterwards (here with an emphasis on what will *not* happen – marriages in heaven).
 - a] Jn. 5:28: all will be raised; 29, "*those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.*" Again, resurrection links to a continuing state.
 - b] 1 Th. 4:17b: "*And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*"
- 2) The Lord's expression, "***resurrection of the dead,***" is elastic enough to include the present living existence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (In their hypothetical situation [Mt. 22:28], the Sadducees use the word in the same way.)
- a] "*For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven*" (30). No one believes that the dead will try to arrange a marriage during the split second (1 Co. 15:52) in which the body exits the tombs.
 - b] "*But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living'*" (Mt. 22:31-32).
 - c] At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus promises Martha that Lazarus will "rise again" (Jn. 11:23). She knows that he will rise again "*in the resurrection at the last day*" (24). "*Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die he shall live'*" (25). Jesus connects the *resurrection* with eternal *living*.
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- 3) How does the present existence of the patriarchs (Mt. 22:32) prove the resurrection (23, 31)?
- a) “‘Man’ as God made him is an ‘embodied’ being. If ‘man’ is to survive as ‘man’ he must be *embodied*. So plain is this to Jesus and his opponents that all he has to do is to show that Abraham has survived death and lives unto God in order to establish the resurrection of the dead” (McGuiggan, *The Book of 1 Corinthians*, 1984, p. 265).
 - b) “The men with whom this immutable Jehovah...established an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7) were Israelites, not Greeks. According to the Greek (and afterward also the Roman) conception, the body is merely the prison-house of the soul...The Hebrew conception, product of special revelation, is entirely different. Here God deals with man as whole, not only with his soul or merely with his body” (Wm. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1973, p. 807).
 - c) Robertson and Plummer quote Plato and Cicero to prove their belief in a future life, but add that the “resurrection is beyond their view” (p. 365). The commentators then turn to the question of whether Paul confuses the resurrection of the body with the immortality of the soul:
 - 1] Only so far as those with whom he is arguing confused the two. According to current ideas, to deny the possibility of resurrection was coming very near to denying any real life beyond the grave. The body was commonly regarded as the security for the preservation of personality. If the body was never to be preserved, the survival of the soul would be precarious or worthless. Either the finite spirit would be absorbed in the Infinite Spirit, or its separate existence would be shadowy, insipid, and joyless (365).

II. Some Questions Raised By This Subject, 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

- A. After proving the resurrection, **Paul answers some objections** that opponents may raise.
 1. “From arguments proving the fact of the resurrection Paul turns his attention to the nature of the resurrection body” (Morris, 222). Undoubtedly, Paul hopes this additional information will strengthen and protect others at risk of becoming infected with false views on the resurrection.
 2. Our society’s current interest in the after-life and related subjects is not new (Job 14:1; 1 Th. 4:13-17).
- B. Socrates was reputedly the wisest man of his age. After the jury condemned him to death, he delivered a swan song, concluding with these words: “The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways – I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.” (*The Intellectual Revolution*, JACT, CUP, 1979, p. 134).
 1. Joseph Parker said, “After reading the doctrines of Plato, Socrates, or Aristotle, we feel that the specific difference between their words and Christ’s is the difference between an inquiry and a revelation” (*444 Surprising Quotes about the Bible*).

- C. On v. 35, Kistemaker comments: “the two questions reinforce each other, as the parallel columns clearly show:

how are	with what
the dead	kind of body
raised	do they come

The first line lists the interrogatives *how* and *what*; in the second line the expression *the dead* evokes questions about the *kind of body* a deceased person will have; and the third line features the synonyms *raised* and *come*” (566).

1. Paul’s answers imply that some were denying the resurrection because they could not understand how God could raise every body (though they continued to believe in Christ’s resurrection, cf. 35). This position makes about as much sense as moderns denying space travel but admitting the existence of rockets and airplanes. “They do not apprehend even their own operations, and how can they understand His?” (Robertson / Plummer, 369).
2. In this section (verses 36-49), the crucial lesson for doubters is this: **do not underestimate the power of God**. Paul must hope the Corinthians know enough about the Scriptures and the power of God to avoid the pitfalls of the Sadducees (Mk.12:24).
 - a. When **Sarah** laughs at the possibility that she, an old, barren woman could have a baby, one question wipes the smile off her face: “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” (Gn.18:14).
 - b. When **Moses** doubts the possibility of providing meat for the multitude in the wilderness, God asks, “*Is the Lord’s hand shortened?*” (Nu.11:23).
 - 1) [N.B.: Modern archeologists agree with Moses – there is no way for a multitude of people to survive in this barren wilderness. Moses, at least, learned better.]
 - c. When **the Israelites** believe the ten fearful spies, God asks Moses, “*How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?*” (Nu. 14:11).
 - d. Similar questions correct other doubts of God’s people in 2 K. 7:1-2; Je. 32:17, 26; Lk. 1:13, 18-20; 8:50, *et al.*
 - 1) A few such as Jonathan (1 Sm. 14:6), Shadrach and friends (Dn. 3:17), and Mary (Lk. 1:38) accepted seemingly impossible facts and assignments because of their great faith.
 - e. **The Corinthians (and we) should believe God** (Ep. 3:20). He enjoys a perfect record. Once we start doubting the promises of Scripture that we cannot understand, we force ourselves into a tight spot that pressures us to deny every part of it. The answer to all such doubts is, “***There is a God in heaven***” (Dn. 2:28). The God who can raise up children to Abraham from rocks can also raise up bodies from the grave (Mt. 3:9).

D. **Paul’s arguments** (36-41):

1. **Analogy from nature**, 36-38. The thing that doubting Corinthians consider impossible occurs regularly in nature. Every sprouting plant answers their objection. As Findlay says, “the actuality of the lower resurrection vindicates the conceivability of the higher” (934).

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- a. **Foolish one** (36) indicates a mindless condition. **Paraphrase:** “How foolish! Don’t you realize that a seed must first die before it yields a harvest?” Cf. John 12:20, 24.
- 1) After the seed is sown, it dies, dissolves, and yet continues as an ear. There is continuity between the thing sown and the thing produced. It is *made alive* (1 Co. 15:36, 22) by the power of God (38).
 - 2) Our earthly bodies die, dissolve, and yet continue. There is continuity between the thing sown and the thing produced. There is a God who can change our bodies as He regularly changes seed.
- b. In 37, Paul asks, “**What do you sow?**” In sowing, does a farmer place an ear of corn in a hole? He does not plant the fruit that will be, or else planting is pointless). What is buried does not exactly match what is harvested. There is a difference between the seed (a bare [naked] grain) and the ear.
- 1) Jesus illustrates this point in a parable (Mt. 13:31-32). A man plants a (naked) mustard seed (31). It grows into a large tree (32). Only a seed entered the ground; where did all the leaves and branches come from?
 - 2) **A dead body also is “naked” at death** (2 Co. 5:1-5), but what rises is glorious. Paul argues the certainty of the physical resurrection and transformation, the confidence that death brings sight, and the conviction that death brings us into the presence of Christ (2 Co. 5:1-8).
 - 3) **Every garden reveals the remarkable power and ingenuity of the Creator who changes death into life.** This annual evidence of His divine power defies the skepticism of the Corinthians. If God can bring life out of a dead seed, what prevents Him from bringing life out of a dead body?
 - a) “The grain of wheat gives to the eye no more promise of the body to spring from it than a grain of sand” (Findlay, 934).
 - b) Anyone who plants a seed “knows that though the body thus produced bear small outward resemblance to the single grain planted, yet it is the product of the grain’s germinal life, and on examination can be absolutely demonstrated to be such. Moreover, by doing this same thing with corn, oats and other grain he finds that each produces a body of its own kind, adapted by the wisdom of God to its needs. With all this before him, how foolish in man to deny that God can cause the dead body to rise in a higher and nobler form, and that he can also cause each man to have a resurrected body true to his individuality, so that Smith shall no more rise in the likeness of Jones than corn come up after the similitude of oats. But the analogy taught by nature is true in another respect; *i. e.*, the body produced by the seed is greater and more excellent than the seed” (McGarvey / Pendleton, 154-155).
 - 4) **The resurrection body is not a different body** from the one that is sown (a form of reincarnation) as some claim. Watchtower literature affirms that we are not raised in the same physical body of flesh and blood in which we die (*Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 1395).
 - a) **The resurrection body does experience change, but it does *not* change into a non-physical body.** The seed enters the ground and
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produces more seeds of the same kind; it does not produce immaterial seeds.

- b) In the same way Paul can say, “**you do not sow the body that shall be**” (i.e., a body that is immortal and cannot die). It is immortal, but not immaterial (cf. v. 53). In this sense, **what is sown is what is reaped** (37-38). It is one thing to affirm **a change *in* the resurrection body**; it is quite another to affirm **a change *of* this body** (51).
 - c) **Though the Lord’s resurrection body was *transformed* and glorified, it was the same body of flesh and bones** that He inhabited before His resurrection (Lk. 24:39). His body still bore the marks of the crucifixion (Lk. 24:39; Jn. 20:27); it could be touched (Mt. 28:9; Jn. 20:27). Our resurrection bodies will be like His (Ph. 3:21).
- c. **God gives each plant its own body**, 38. Those who have never seen a watermelon would never guess what kind of body the seed produces. One who says, “I can’t understand the mystery of the resurrection, therefore I don’t believe it” should also abandon his belief in the harvest for the same reason.
2. **A variety of earthly flesh proves the same point**, 39.
- a. Fee says, “In the present series, even though Paul uses the word ‘flesh’ for the first group, he uses the word ‘body’ to describe both the heavenly and earthly ‘bodies.’ The series seem to begin with ‘earthly bodies’ (v. 39), followed by ‘heavenly bodies’ (v. 41), with v. 40 standing as the middle term that expressly ties the two together. All together they form a nearly perfect chiasm:
 - A Not all ‘flesh’ is the same; [earthly bodies]
 - B People have one kind;
Animals another;
Birds another;
Fish another.
 - C There are heavenly bodies [B]
There are earthly bodies [B]
 - C’ The splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one kind;
The splendor of the earthly bodies is of another.
 - B’ The sun has one kind of splendor;
The moon another kind of splendor;
The stars another kind of splendor;
 - A’ And star differs from star in splendor. [heavenly bodies]” (783).
 - b. **Man, cattle, birds, and fish all differ in form and substance.** God gives each the flesh that matches its role in creation. (If a fish had human skin, it would “come out all wrinkled.”)
 - c. “In Gen. i. 20-27 fishes are mentioned before fowls, and we have an ascending scale, fishes, birds, beasts, man; here we have a descending one” (Robertson / Plummer, 370).
 - d. It will be as easy for God to **raise the dead and recover their dissolved bodies** as it was to **form many different kinds of flesh and plants in the first place.** We cannot explain either. Each new scientific discovery merely mocks the depth of mankind’s collective ignorance.

- 1) “There may be as many as 500,000,000 organisms in a single drop of water. Powerful microscopes reveal additional worlds we had never before dreamed of. Atoms, which we used to think were the smallest bit of matter, are now divided and subdivided. We have discovered a world below us as immense and complex as the universe above us” (*Matthew*, LeRoy Lawson, Standard Bible Studies, 1986, p. 89).
 - e. “How is resurrection possible after the body has been dissolved in the grave? Answer: The difficulty is the other way: resurrection would be impossible without such dissolution, for it is dissolution that frees the principle of new life” (Robertson / Plummer, 375).
3. **A variety of heavenly bodies proves the same point, 40-41.**
- a. Our present bodies are not made to live in space. Astronauts require life-support systems, and those who spend weeks in a weightless environment require months of recuperation after returning to earth. It is doubtful, however, that this passage refers to heavenly bodies of human beings. Celestial bodies are inanimate objects of creation (v.41).
 - b. Earth doesn’t look like Mercury, Venus, Saturn, etc. Even the individual stars vary in glory (41). For God, it is as easy to give us a resurrection body as it is to create an innumerable variety of stars, planets, and even galaxies.
 - 1) “The God who made these myriads of differences in one and the same universe can be credited with inexhaustible power. It is monstrous to suppose that He cannot fit a body to spirit...He has found a fit body for fish, fowl, cattle, and mortal man: why not for immortal man?” (Robertson / Plummer, 371).
 - c. “Open your eyes, then, the apostle means to say, and as you see so many different glories shining in the havens, you will cease to ask, as if God’s power were limited: ‘With what body shall they come?’” (Godet, 837).
 - d. Mormons believe the reference to “**celestial bodies**” and “**terrestrial bodies**” in verses 40-42 teaches that all people will inhabit one of three kingdoms of glory in the next life (the **Celestial Kingdom**, the **Terrestrial Kingdom**, or the **Telestial Kingdom**). Their faithfulness in this life determines which kingdom will receive them.
 - 1) It strains the passage to the breaking point to find three kingdoms of glory. The word “telestial” never even occurs in the N.T.
 - 2) The context discusses **resurrection bodies** (v.35), not kingdoms in glory. Paul compares the heavenly body (eternal, perfect, and powerful) with the earthly body (temporal, imperfect, and weak). See a similar comparison in 2 Co. 4:16-5:4.

E. The application (42-49):

1. Whatever is labeled *corruption* is perishable, subject to decay (42).
 - a. By continuing the analogy of seed that is sown (“the body is *sown*”), Paul implies the (1) **newness of the resurrected body** and (2) **the continuity of the old with the new**.
 - b. **Paul does not give details regarding the appearance of the resurrection body**, and nature itself discourages speculation (i.e., we cannot predict the appearance

of a plant based on the appearance of its seed). Burying a body is like *sowing* seed. As the seed produces an ear, the dead will have a body that resembles the Lord's (1 Jn. 3:1-3). This is all we need to know.

2. **"It is raised in incorruption"** (42). Whatever is labeled *incorruption* is permanent. The resurrection body will not decay, 42.
3. No matter how ornate the funeral, we have to **hurry the dishonorable body to the grave**. *"It is sown"* (occurs four times, vv. 42-44) *in corruption* (it is *perishable*; cf. v. 50). It is *lowly* (*"a body of humiliation,"* Ph. 3:21). We bury it out of our sight (Gn. 23:4, 8).
4. **"It is raised in glory"** (43). The chapter has already discussed God's glorification in the synonymous expression, *"all in all"* (27-28), and in His creation of the heavenly bodies (40-43). The resurrected Christian will bask in the light of His glory (Mt. 13:43). This future *glory* contrasts sharply with the present *dishonor*.
5. At our strongest moment in life, we are *weak* (only a step away from death, 1 Sm. 20:3). **The dead body is helpless**, completely under the power of death, deprived of all ability to act. **It is sown in weakness** (43).
6. **"It is raised in power"** (43). The wisest men of the ages have tried nearly everything to prevent death (sanitation; prevention through nutrition, exercise, and medical advances; cryogenics (e.g., Ted Williams), all to no avail. Death has won every battle (except one!). How much power does it take to raise just one person from the dead? Only God possesses power over death (John 10:17-18). Whenever Jesus demonstrated this power, people reacted with fear and awe (e.g., Luke 7:11-17).
7. **"It is sown a natural body"** (44). On *natural*, BDAG says: "Pert. to the life of the natural world and whatever belongs to it, in contrast to the realm of experience whose central characteristic is *pneuma, natural, unspiritual, worldly*" (1100). The body that is sown is the body that is raised.
8. **"It is raised a spiritual body"** (44). A *natural* body is suited for life *here*; a *spiritual* body is suited for life *there*. "Before his death, Jesus raised people from the dead...but their physical bodies remained mortal. After his resurrection, immortality for his people became a certainty" (Kistemaker, 576). Cf. Ph. 3:20-21.
 - a. Watchtower literature frequently stresses that "...Jesus appeared in physical form to his disciples after his resurrection...Jesus evidently materialized bodies on these occasions" (*Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 215).
 - b. A **spiritual body** is not the same as an **immaterial body**. A *spiritual* body (*pneumatikos*) is directed by the spirit; it is immortal. A *natural* body is under the dominion of the flesh. The Lord's resurrection body is not a *"spirit"* (Lk. 24:39).
 - c. Other passages in 1 Corinthians use the word **spiritual** to refer to **physical objects**:
 - 1) 1 Co. 2:15; 3:1; 14:37: **Spiritual people** accept supernatural revelation (the directions of the Spirit). Spiritual people are not invisible, immaterial beings (ghosts).
 - 2) 1 Co. 10:3: **Israel's food was spiritual** with reference to its supernatural source. They ate real, physical, material food.
 - 3) 1 Co. 10:4: **The drink and the Rock were spiritual** (of supernatural origin), though both were real, physical, material rocks (Ex. 17; Nu. 20).

<i>Earthly Body</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Resurrection Body</i>
Corruption	42	Incorruption
Dishonor	43	Glory
Weakness	44	Power
Natural	44	Spiritual

9. A comparison between **Adam and Christ** (45-47):

<i>Adam</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Christ</i>
Living soul	45	Life-giving Spirit
Natural	46	Spiritual
Earthly	47	Heavenly

- a. In Gn. 2:7, *living soul* translates the same word that describes **animal life** in Gn. 1 (vv. 20, 24); the word distinguishes them from plants. “By metonymy, *that which possesses life /soul*” (BDAG, 1099).
- 1) “*Nepes*, translated *being* (RSV) or *soul* (AV, RV), is often the equivalent of ‘life’, and often of ‘person’ or ‘self’, according as one emphasizes the aliveness of the creature or the creature who is alive” (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale OT Commentaries, 1967, p.61; cf. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 1942, p. 116f.).
 - 2) Adam “*had*” an immortal soul (Mt. 10:28), but Gn. 2:7 is not the passage to prove it. “We are Adam's by generation, and Christ's by regeneration. The life principle of Adam is soul, and he was formed of the earth: the life principle of Christ is spiritual” (McGarvey / Pendleton, 156f.).
- b. “From the one we received only ‘a natural body’...because at his creation he came to be only ‘a living soul’...The first Adam left us on this low level and necessitated the coming of the last Adam because sin and death entered the world” (Lanski, 720).

10. Watchtower advocates, among others, assume that because Christ became a “**life-giving spirit**” after His resurrection, He had **no physical resurrection body** (*Aid to Bible Understanding*, 1395).

- a. “*Life-giving spirit*” (45) does not deny the resurrection body of Jesus; it refers to the divine origin of His resurrection. His physical body was raised by the power of God (Ro. 1:4) [Compare notes on 44].
- 1) “The first lived, the last gives life (one breathed, and lived – the other is the very spirit [breath] of life)” (Bob Crawley, op. cit.). Christ not only lives, but also gives life (Jn. 5:21, 26; 1 Co. 15:22, 45).
 - a) “*zoopoieo*, make alive, give life to” (BDAG, 431). Peter also uses the word of Christ who was “put to death in the flesh but made alive by the spirit” (1 Pt. 3:18). “Made alive” here denotes His resurrection, the opposite of “put to death.”
 - b) Morris notes that “just as throughout this life we have habitually borne the form of Adam, so in the life to come we shall bear that of our Lord” (231).
 - 2) **Christ became a life-giving spirit** by His resurrection.

- b. “*soma pneumatikon* [*spiritual body*, rd] is the same as *s. epouranion* [*heavenly body*, rd], the organism being defined in the one case by the life in it, in the other by its sphere of operation” (Parry, 238).
11. **The natural precedes the spiritual**, 46. The natural body is sown first, then the spiritual body is raised. “In the order of creation we enter into *natural* life first; it is only after that that we may enter into the *spiritual*” (Morris, 229).
12. “Adam did not descend from a primate transformed into a human; he is God’s unique creation” (Kistemaker, 577).
- a. Because God formed Adam from dust, he is earthy (47). “In vv. 47-49, again in the language of Gen. 2:7, the contrast between Adam and Christ is made in terms of the nature of their humanity: One by virtue of creation is ‘of earth,’ the other by virtue of resurrection is ‘of heaven’ (v.47)” (Fee, 788).
- b. Verse 47 does not discuss the origin of Christ (i.e., He comes from heaven). “Paul’s concern here, as in v. 45, is not with Christ’s origins, but with his present (heavenly) *somatic* existence as the ground of believers’ similar heavenly existence at their resurrection....Believers are said to share both kinds of existence, that of Adam through their humanity, that of Christ through their resurrection” (Fee, 792-793).
- c. Remember that Paul is answering the question, “With what kind of body do they come?” (ESV) (35b).
13. **Deductions (48-49): Since we “took after” Adam, we must also “take after” Christ.**
- a. “The key word in this passage is *image*, which occurs twice. Throughout the history of the human race, all Adam’s descendants have borne and continue to bear his image. To illustrate, Seth was born when Adam had lived 130 years; he was born in Adam’s likeness and image (Gen. 5:3)” (Kistemaker, 578).
- b. We obtain our likeness to Christ in the fullest sense only through the resurrection of the body (1 Jn. 3:2-3).
- 1) Findlay says, “In a word, P. holds the Christian resurrection to be grounded in the person and mission of Christ, as He is on the one hand the Son of God and mediatorial Head of His kingdom (24-28), and on the other hand the Second Adam and Firstborn of a spiritual humanity (22f., 45-49)” (940).
- c. **What kind of a body will we have in the resurrection?**
- 1) “A body similar to that of the Risen Lord, i.e. a body as suitable to the spiritual condition of the new life as a material body is to the present psychical condition” (Robertson / Plummer, 375).

III. The Death Of Death, 50-58.

A. The summary:

1. The absolute necessity of **transformation** to enter the heavenly mode of existence, vv. 50, 53.
2. Both **the living and the dead** must be so transformed, vv. 51-52.
3. The resurrection/transformation that will occur **at the Lord’s coming** (v.52) will signal the **final defeat of death**, vv. 54-55.

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4. Christ's **present victory** over sin and the law, vv. 56-57.
 5. **Concluding exhortation** to work in hope, v.58 (Fee, 797, adapted).
- B. The facts: *flesh and blood*..., 50.
1. "The expression designates man as material (not as sinful), man as he belongs to the earth and has a body that can be seen by others... This man whose only connection is with this earth *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*" (Grosheide, 391).
 2. The idiom *flesh and blood* (synecdoche) occurs five times in the N.T. (Mt. 16:17; Ga. 1:16; Ep. 6:12; Hb. 2:14; and 1 Co. 15:50). Only the context of each passage determines the emphasis given to one or more of these implied connotations:
 - a. **Ignorance**
 - b. **Weakness**
 - c. **Dependence upon God**
 3. In 1 Co. 15:50, one could make a defense for all three connotations. The emphasis, however, seems to lie on **the weakness of our current state**, or on **our dependence upon God** for the fulfillment of a better hope, or both.
 4. A transitory, **perishable body** cannot possess an eternal, **imperishable kingdom** (1 Pt. 1:4). "Flesh and blood. Our mortal nature and human organism; our 'earthly house of this tabernacle' (2 Cor. v.1)" (Farrar, 491).
 5. **Corruption** (see v. 42) denotes what is perishable, subject to corruption. Note the parallel construction in v. 51:
 - a. flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God
 - b. corruption does not inherit incorruption
 6. **Flesh and blood** is "human nature under present conditions, of the embodiment of the human life to fit its earthly sphere, cf. Heb. ii. 14 (a remarkable inverse parallel)" (Parry, 241).
 - a. 1 Pt. 1:24 conveys a similar thought: "*All flesh is as grass....*" "Here *all flesh* is a metaphor for humanity – human beings as both frail and temporary" (NET Bible).
 - b. "From the outset, then, the idea of mortality and creatureliness seems to be especially bound up with the phrase" (Rudolf Meyer, *Theo. Dict. NT*, Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, eds., vol. VII, 1976, p. 116.)
 - c. "What the apostle means is, that it will not be by being clothed with a body of such a nature that the believer will be able to participate in the perfect state of things which is called the kingdom of God. Such a body would be a curtain which would veil from us the face of God, too weak an instrument to bear such emotions, too dull an agent to execute the works to be done in this new state" (Godet, 861-862).
 7. Because flesh and blood bodies cannot exist in heaven, The Watchtower Organization assumes that Jesus must have experienced a "**spiritual**" resurrection (*Aid to Bible Understanding*, 1395).
 - a. Paul speaks of **corruptible flesh** (v.50). He does not deny that the resurrection body will have flesh, but that it will have **perishable flesh**. There is a difference.
 - b. Jesus certainly had a **physical resurrection body** (Lk. 24:37, 39; Ac. 2:31, etc.).
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8. To **inherit** the *kingdom of God* denotes **citizenship** in His eternal kingdom (6:10).
 - a. “Paul is saying that the mortal body in its existing state cannot enter God’s presence. Only at the transformation, when God fulfills his promise to all the saints, will the redeemed inherit the kingdom of God. The concept *inherit*, then, is synonymous with the resurrection of the dead” (Kistemaker, 581). 1 Pt. 1:4.
- C. **The secret**, 51. Paul had gone to Corinth proclaiming the mystery of God (2:1, 7; 4:1).
1. Morris says, “the difficulty is the opposite of that in 1 Thes. iv. 13ff. There Paul assured his readers that those who die before the Parousia will be at no disadvantage. They will rise first. Here the difficulty is with the living, for Paul has just said that ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God’” (233).
 2. Not all will die, but **all will be changed**. *All* is emphatic. In verses 52-53, Paul provides the commentary on the *change* that must occur (cf. Ph.3:21). Fee explains, “The perishable body, either dead or alive, cannot inherit the imperishable life of the future” (799).
 3. Two things are certain – death and taxes – but **death will die**.
- D. **The change**, 52. This verse provides the commentary for the preceding verse.
1. **Moment** (*atomos*) “Uncut...then of someth. that is viewed as such a unit that it cannot be cut, esp. because of smallness (e.g., particle of matter, uncompounded word), *indivisible...in a moment*” (BDAG, 149). Moderns might use the word “nanosecond.” The planted seed requires time to sprout, but the resurrection is instantaneous.
 2. **Twinkling** (*hripe*), “*rapid movement*, e.g., of the eyes; the ‘casting’ of a glance takes an extremely short time...*in the twinkling of an eye*” (*Ibid.*, 906).
 3. **At the last trumpet**. The coming of Christ will not be a quiet, secret event observed by only a few, but will initiate one of the noisiest events in history (cf. 1 Th. 4:16).
 - a. “The *salpigx* was the war-trumpet, used for signals and commands” (Findlay, 492).
 - b. Paul has already argued that a trumpet was to be heard and understood (1 Co.14:8).
 4. **The dead will be raised incorruptible**. “immortally arrayed” (2 Co. 5:1-6).
 5. **We shall be changed**. “The dead shall be changed by resurrection, the living by transition, into a glorified body” (Farrar, 492). See v. 53.
 - a. The first person “**we**” does not imply that Paul knew when Christ would come, or that he (Paul) would be alive at that time.
 - 1) Paul was prepared to die at any moment (31). In 1 Co. 6:14 and 2 Co. 4:14, he placed himself with those who would be raised from the dead.
 - 2) Though he lived in view of the imminent coming of Christ, he expected an apostasy to occur first (2 Th. 2:1-3).
 - b. “In the parallel passage of Thessalonians (iv. 15) he explains himself more clearly: ‘We,’ says he, ‘that are alive, and are left unto the coming of the Lord.’” (Godet, 867).
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E. **The necessity.** What is corruptible (perishable; “this perishable nature,” Zerwick, 531) must put on incorruption; what is mortal (“mortal nature,” *Ibid.*) must put on immortality. This heavenly body never dies, 53.

1. **Corruptible** (*phthartos*) means “subject to decay/destruction (BDAG, 1053). Grudem says the word is “always used in the New Testament of things which will decay or wear out” (Tyndale NT Commentaries, *1 Peter*, 2000, p. 84). It describes the athlete’s perishable wreath (1 Co. 9:25). Man himself is perishable, especially in contrast with God (Ro. 1:23).
2. **This corruptible must put on incorruption**, *aphtharsia*, “the state of not being subject to decay/dissolution/interruption, *incorruptibility, immortality*” (BDAG, 155).
3. **This mortal must put on immortality** (“be clothed with an immortal body,” BDAG, 23).
 - a. *Athanasia* is deathlessness; the heavenly inheritance is incorruptible (1 Pt. 1:4).
 - b. Our corruptible bodies, now subject to death and decay (Jn. 11:39), could not enjoy this eternal inheritance. What is mortal will be swallowed up by life (2 Co. 5:3-4).

F. **The reason. Death must die to fulfill Scripture** (54-56): *Death is swallowed up in victory* (the ultimate “gulp”; cf. Rv. 20:14; 21:4). “At this climax P. breaks into a song of triumph over Death, in the strain of Hosea’s rapturous anticipation of Israel’s resurrection from national death” (Findlay, 942).

1. **Verse 54 quotes Isa. 25:8.** As surely as Christ has risen, we shall rise, 20-23.
 2. **Verse 55 quotes Ho. 13:14 (LXX)**, but changes *dike* (penalty) to *nikos* (victory), and replaces “grave” with “death” in the second line. (Cf. Fee, 804.) Paul never uses the word “Hades.”
 - a. Because our great Enemy, now defeated, no longer poses a threat, **the passage taunts Death.**
 - 1) “Where is that victory of yours, hitherto so universal and so feared?” (Robertson / Plummer, 378).
 - 2) ““Take that, death,’ he exults, ‘for when mortality is clothed with immortality, you have lost both your victory and your sting’” (Fee, 803).
 - b. **Death lost the war;** it never had a chance (Ac. 2:24).
 - 1) John Donne’s sonnet, c. 1609, imitates Paul’s victory cry:
 - a) *Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.*
.....
*One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.*
- 2) *Death*, the last enemy (15:26) is **swallowed up** (54). Uninspired works convey the same idea:
 - a) An unusual book title: *The Death of Death in The Death of Christ* (Dave Hunt).

- b) An old song: “When I tread the verge of Jordan, Bid my anxious fears subside; Death of death, and hell’s destruction, Land me safe on Canaan’s side” (*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*, Wm. Williams, 18th Century).
- 1] Because some song editors could not make sense of these words, they substituted, “*bear me through the swelling current.*”
 - 2] The original version echoes the teaching of Rv. 20:14 and 1 Co. 15. (See J. Ramsey Michaels, IVP NT Commentary Series, *Revelation*, 1997, p. 232.)
- c. **Death loses its sting**, 55. The passage **personifies death** as a scorpion, a hornet, infernal locusts (Rv. 9:10), a poisonous snake, the sting of a bee, a wasp, etc.
- 1) We must not lose sight of Paul’s purpose, which is not primarily to focus on **the peace** that believers enjoy in death, but on **the power** of God to raise us from the dead.
 - 2) **Law → Sin → Death**, 56. “Death maintains itself in sin...He who sins dies and experiences the power of death” (Grosheide, 394). It is only because of sin that death wields its power, and it is only because law exists that sin exists (Ro. 4:15).
 - a) Divine threats against our transgressions of His law produce the fear of death. “Sin is the deadly poison that has led to death” (Fee, 805).
 - b) If there is **no sin**, there is **no fear** of death (cf. Ph. 1:21-23). Christ died for our sins (v.3). If there is **no resurrection**, we **remain in our sins** (v.17). Because there is a **resurrection**, we must **give up sin** (v.34). Morris: “It is not *death* in itself that is the harmful thing. It is *death* that is ‘the wages of sin’ (Rom. vi. 23)” (234f.).
 - c) If there were **no law**, there could be **no sin** (Ro. 4:15). “If sin is the sting whereby death seeks to kill us, it is the law which makes this sting penetrate deeply enough to reach the springs of life and change them into springs of death. The throne of death thus rests on two bases: sin, which calls for condemnation, and the law which pronounces it” (Godet, 874). “Death loses its sting when sin is forgiven and destroyed by overcoming law (cf. Rom. 8:2-4)” (Bob Crawley, op. cit.).
 - 3) Jesus offers us **forgiveness** (ultimate victory) through His victory. Someone said, “Sin buried its sting into the side of Jesus and became a tame and harmless thing.” “Christ by His obedience had law on His side and conquered death, because death was not His due” (Robertson / Plummer, 379).
 - a) He removes the sin, and thus the fear of death (Hb. 2:14-15). “The believer’s ‘victory’ lies in deliverance through Christ’s propitiatory death...from the condemnation of the Law, and thereby from ‘the power of Sin,’ and thereby from the bitterness of Death” (Findlay, 943).
 - b) For the Christian, **death can still hiss**, but **it cannot harm**.
 - c) The fourth stanza of *Abide With Me* alludes to this verse:
 - 1] I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death’s sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!

G. **The victory** ... and the credit, 57. The wonderful passion of these concepts culminates in a doxology.

1. Paul emphasizes the words “**to God.**” *He* bestows the victory (present tense).
2. Because Jesus rose from the dead, the victory comes “**through our Lord Jesus Christ.**” The victory includes the defeat of death by the resurrection and the forgiveness of sin through Christ’s atonement (cf. Farrar, 492).
3. “Christ gave man the victory over the law, for he nailed it to his cross (Col. 2:14); he gave him victory over sin, for he made atonement for sin (Heb. 7:27); and he gave him victory over death by his resurrection, which is the earnest of the general resurrection. Wonderful threefold victory!” (McGarvey / Pendleton, 158).

H. **The effects**, 58. How should the death of death affect Christians?

1. **Therefore** introduces Paul’s concluding remarks. God will raise us (chapter 15); He is faithful (1:9). Jesus is raised! Now we await *our* turn.
2. **Steadfast** refers to personal fidelity. This exhortation attacks one of our greatest dangers (Ga. 6:9; Col. 1:23). Starting the marathon is easy enough; finishing is the difficult part.
3. **Immovable**, a synonym of *steadfast*, refers to faithfulness against opposition by others. In light of God’s gracious gift, Christians who abide in the fortress of faith need not fear any enemy.
4. **Always abounding** demands more than the bare minimum. It runs over, offering more than is required (cf. Jn.6:12-13).
5. **In the work of the Lord.** “Let there be less speculation and more work” (Robertson / Plummer, 379).
6. **Your labor is not in vain** (*kenos*) provides a motivation to continue our work. (See the word in vv. 10, 14. Paul makes this point in a different way in vv. 17-19 and 32.)
 - a. **“Labor”** (*kopos*) is “burdensome, toil” (BDAG, 558). The gain is worth the pain. “The ‘toil’ is ‘empty’ which is spent on illusion” (Findlay, 944).
 - b. “Paul concludes on the same note with which he began in vv. 1-2. There he was concerned, because of the denial of the resurrection by some, whether his own ‘labor’ – namely for their own existence in Christ – was in vain. Now, after the strong evidence for the resurrection presented throughout, he concludes with such faith as the ground for their continued labor: ‘because you know that your (own) labor in the Lord is not in vain.’ Thus the entire chapter is tied together” (Fee, 808).
7. Application: if we look forward to this splendid glory, then we should show it by:
 - a. **Knowing the Scriptures.**
 - 1) The Corinthians who denied the resurrection prove that **feeding on wrong information can produce fatal results**. Keeping company with the wrong crowd can turn us away from the truth, but the opposite is also true. “Iron sharpens iron” (Pro. 27:17). Keeping company with the right crowd can increase our knowledge of the Scriptures and encourage us to stay focused on the right goal (Hb. 10:24-25).

- 2) **Our belief determines our behavior.** Catullus, the Latin poet, wrote, “Let us live and let us love, and let us value the tales of austere old men at a single halfpenny. Suns can set and then return again, but for us, when once our brief light sets, there is but one perpetual night through which we must sleep.” If only eternal sleep awaits the dead, no possible motivation exists that may induce Catullus to change his way of life. If judgment awaits the dead, then motivation abounds (Ac. 17:30-31; 1 Jn. 3:1-3).

b. **Doing our duty.**

- 1) It is easy to understand why worldly people lapse into a life of sin and neglect of spiritual things. If this life ends their existence, it is the only enjoyment they can expect.
- 2) Adolf Deissmann published a second century A. D. papyrus written by an Egyptian named Irene. She wrote to express her sympathy for a couple whose son had died. She mentions her own loss of Didymas and that she has faithfully fulfilled her duties, and then, rather awkwardly, ends her letter: “But, nevertheless, against such things one can do nothing. Therefore comfort one another.” Deissmann cannot resist saying, “Poor Irene!” (*Light From the Ancient East*, Baker Book House, 1978, pp.176-177). If not for the resurrection of Christ, we would be just as poor (1 Th. 4:13-18; 1 Co. 15:19, 30-34).

c. **Living in joyful expectation.**

- 1) As Christians, we experience problems in this world (John 16:20-24), but we cannot put our full weight on our present circumstances (1 Co. 7:29-31). Like the Patriarchs, we look for a City (Hb. 11:13-16; 13:14).
- 2) “No human words ever written have brought such comfort to millions of mourners as the words of this chapter” (Farrar, 482).

IV. **Modern Duplications Of The Corinthian Error.**

A. **Atheists and secular infidels.**

1. Ludwig Feuerbach, the great German philosopher (popularly known for his famous saying, “you are what you eat”), said:
 - a. Man, at least in a state of ordinary well-being, has the wish not to die. This wish is originally identical with the instinct of self-preservation. Whatever lives seeks to maintain itself, to continue alive, and consequently not to die. Subsequently, when reflection and feeling are developed under the urgency of life, especially of social and political life, this primary negative wish becomes the positive wish for a life, and that a better life, after death. But this wish involves the further wish for the certainty of its fulfilment. Reason can afford no such certainty. It has therefore been said that all proofs of immortality are insufficient, and even that unassisted reason is not capable of apprehending it, still less of proving it. And with justice; for reason furnishes only general proofs; it cannot give the certainty of any personal immortality, and it is precisely this certainty which is desired. Such a certainty requires an immediate personal assurance, a practical demonstration. This can only be given to me by the fact of a dead person, whose death has been previously certified, rising again from the grave; and he must be no indifferent person, but, on the contrary, the type and representative of all others, so that his resurrection also may be the type, the guarantee of theirs. The resurrection of Christ is therefore the satisfied desire of man for an immediate certainty of his personal existence after death, – personal immortality as a sensible, indubitable fact (*Essence of Christianity: PART I, The True or Anthropological Essence of Religion, Chapter XIV. The Mystery of the Resurrection and of the Miraculous Conception, 1841*).

2. In *Life of Jesus*, Renan says of Mary Magdalene: “The passion of a hallucinated woman gave to the world a risen God!” (Schaff I, 179).

B. Many Jews have embraced atheism.

1. Sadducees professed belief in God, but denied the resurrection (Mt.22:23-33). They did not represent the majority of Jews (Ac. 23:8).
2. Belief in the resurrection has always been fundamental for “orthodox” Jews. “All Israelites have their part in the world to come...but the following (Israelites) have no part therein – he who denies that the Resurrection is a doctrine the foundation of which is in the Bible, he who denies the divine origin of the *Torah*, and (he who is) an Epicurean” (Sanh., xi. 1, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 450).
3. Several O.T. passages discuss this subject:
 - a. Ex. 3:6 = Mt. 22:23-33. (See notes on verse 34.)
 - b. Ec. 12:1-7. Many have claimed that Jesus might have cited this direct statement to establish proof for the resurrection to the Sadducees, except for one thing: they recognized only the Pentateuch. This claim may be unfounded. Leon Morris says: “They are often said to have acknowledged as sacred scripture only the Pentateuch, but no evidence is cited for this and it seems highly improbable” (Luke, Tyndale, p. 290). Perhaps it is more accurate to say the Sadducees did not truly believe *any* of the Old Testament.
 - c. Although Ezekiel 37 does not refer to the literal resurrection of the dead, the vision of dry bones has meaning only for those who believe in the resurrection. (Cf. also Dn. 12:2.)

C. Kistemaker summarizes a modern theological approach to the resurrection.

1. The Roman soldier who pierced Jesus’ side and saw blood and water gush forth knew that Jesus had died. Jesus’ broken body was beyond restoration and had to be buried. Thus, from a medical point of view the resurrection of Jesus’ body is unthinkable, for nobody has ever returned from the grave. Some theologians have tried to meet this medical objection by giving a modern interpretation to the word *resurrection*. They explain the term spiritually and say that the resurrection is not an objective event of Jesus coming forth from the tomb outside Jerusalem. They say that no one was present to witness Jesus leaving the burial place, for the guards became like dead men (Matt. 28: 2-4). And they conclude that the story of his resurrection, which cannot be verified by observation, is not part of history.
 These theologians interpret the resurrection as a subjective experience that occurs in the hearts of believers. They allege that when believers listen to and obey the Word of God, the resurrection takes place in their hearts (Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SCM, 1970*; Donald W. Viney, “Grave Doubts About the Resurrection,” *Encounter* 50 (1989): 127, via Kistemaker, 541-542).

D. Liberal theologians. John Shelby Spong, notorious Episcopalian “Bishop,” denies the bodily resurrection of Jesus and derives his code of ethics from modern human experience.

1. In his book, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalists*, he states: “Is not the primary message of the Easter narratives that even the barrier of death must not deter us in our quest for life and love?” (146).
2. Spong says the resurrection on the third day contradicts the “three days and three nights period of Mt. 12:40. Spong’s efforts fall short of the mark and prove only that he is a careless and shallow “scholar.” The Lord’s *contemporary* enemies understood the Lord’s time reference and apparently saw no discrepancy in it (Mt. 27:63-64).

E. **The Jesus Seminar.** Robert Funk, the founder of this group, died in Sept., 2005. His obituary included this statement: “The Jesus Seminar concluded in 1995 that Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead. The scholars also agreed that there probably was no tomb and that Jesus' body probably was disposed of by his executioners, not his followers” (*The Boston Globe*, Sept. 9, 2005). Other members of this group assert that dogs ate the body of Jesus. As long as people grant them the privilege of proving their assertions with a “probably,” their work comes easy.

1. Some members of the Seminar, including Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, throw a few scraps of compromise to appease conservative scholars “who think we only care about tearing down Christian faith” (Funk). They concede that “the religious significance of Jesus’ resurrection did not depend on historical fact” (*Ibid.*). This should make us feel better.
2. 100 years ago, McGarvey answered many such arguments (e.g., *Jonah*, 130f.; 153-155; *Isaiah*, 151f.; *Parallel Cases*, 204-206; *Miracles*, 353-357 in *Short Essays in Biblical Criticism*). He issues a warning that is still relevant: “It is quite common with young scholars, when they begin to get hold of important ideas, to imagine themselves original discoverers, and they begin to pity a world which knew so little before they were born” (*Ibid.*, 442). Every generation must fight the same battles.

F. **The Watchtower Society.** See notes on pages 141, 159, 162-163, 165.

G. **A few “evangelical” scholars.** Norman Geisler introduces his book, *The Battle For The Resurrection* (pp. xix, xx) with these words:

1. There is a Trojan horse inside the evangelical camp. A new battle has broken out, and the enemy is on the inside, not the outside. In fact, the enemy has secretly placed dynamite at the evangelical foundation which supports the whole superstructure of Christian truth...Once it was only liberals who denied the physical, material resurrection; now some evangelicals have joined them.
2. Geisler compares the new tactics with the old: “Traditionally, the historicity of the resurrection was denied; now it is the materiality of the resurrection body that is denied” (*Ibid.*, xx).
3. Geisler compares the orthodox and unorthodox views (*Ibid.*, 25):

Orthodox View	Unorthodox View
The Same Body (Numerically Identical)	A Different Body (Numerically Distinct)
A Material Body	An Immaterial Body
In the Flesh	Not in the Flesh
In History (In Space and Time)	Not in History (Not in Space and Time)

4. “The empty tomb in itself does not prove the resurrection of Christ any more than a missing body in a morgue proves someone has resurrected” (*Ibid.*, 37).
5. “It is not merely a resuscitated body, which is mortal and dies again” (*Ibid.*, 41).
6. The Apostles’ Creed affirms, “I believe in the...resurrection of the flesh” (*Ibid.*, 51). Based on this and other ancient writings, “J. A. Schep wrote: ‘We may say, therefore, that the entire early Church, in the West and in the East alike, publicly confessed belief in the resurrection of the flesh’” (*The Nature of the Resurrection Body*, 1964, quoted by Geisler, p. 51).

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7. Geisler cites the testimony of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Rufinus, Epiphanius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and a number of Confessions, unanimous in their agreement: the resurrection body was the same physical body that Jesus had before He died on the cross (*Ibid.*, 51-62).
 8. Murray Harris, however disagrees with the “orthodox” view, affirming that, “*The new body is qualitatively and numerically distinct from the old body*” (*Raised Immortal*, p. 127; via Geisler, *Ibid.*, 64).
 - a. Harris believes that the resurrection body underwent a “radical transformation” and was “changed into a spiritual mode of being” (*Ibid.*, 97). He believes the appearances of Christ were *real*, but this does not prove that the resurrection body was *material* (*Ibid.*, 99). Geisler replies, “without an immortal material body, this view differs little from the Greek concept of an immortal spiritual entity” (*Ibid.*, 105).
 - b. Harris asserts that the ascension of Christ is only “a parable acted out for the benefit of the disciples as a visual and historical confirmation of a spiritual reality” (*Ibid.*, 99).
 - c. Harris further argues that “believers receive their resurrection bodies at death, even though their physical bodies are still in the grave” (*Ibid.*, 98).
 9. Geisler briefly examines other irregular “Evangelical” views on the resurrection held by George Eldon Ladd and Glenn Hinson, but devotes most of his attention to Murray Harris’s views.
 10. In chapter 7, Geisler catalogs the various arguments that “Evangelicals” present to disprove the physical nature of the resurrection body (pp. 108-128). They are summarized, along with a short paraphrase of *his responses*, unless otherwise noted, in brackets [] as follows:
 - a. ***It is a “spiritual body”*** (1 Co. 15:44). [But “spiritual” denotes immortal, not immaterial. The “spiritual man” is not invisible and immaterial (1 Co. 2:15).]
 - b. ***Christ’s ability to appear shows that His body was essentially immaterial and invisible.*** [His ability to appear could just as easily prove that His body was essentially material and visible.]
 - c. ***Resurrection appearances are called visions*** (Lk. 24:23; Ac. 26:19). [But Paul affirms that he saw Jesus (1 Co. 15:8; 9:1), an essential requirement for an apostle (Ac. 1:22).]
 - d. ***Jesus could get inside closed rooms.*** [Before His death, He could walk on water. Jn. 20:19 does not actually say how Jesus entered the room. Surely Jesus could do as much as angels (Ac. 12:10).]
 - e. ***Jesus appeared and disappeared instantaneously*** (Lk. 24:36). [So did Philip (Ac. 8:39).]
 - f. ***The elements of the physical body decay.*** [Living bodies produce three billion cells every day and discard billions of old ones; our bodies change every seven years, but this does not make us immaterial.]
 - g. ***God will destroy the stomach and foods (1 Co. 6:13), therefore the resurrection body will not have the anatomy or physiology of the earthly body.*** [Paul refers to death, not the nature of the resurrection body. Jesus ate in His resurrection body (Lk. 24:30; Jn. 21:12; Ac. 1:4).]
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- h. ***Flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God*** (1 Co. 15:50). [The next phrase shows that Paul speaks of *corruptible* flesh. In addition, the resurrection body of Jesus had *flesh and bones* (Lk. 24:39).]
 - i. ***Jesus appeared in a different form*** (Mk.16:12). [This passage summarizes Lk. 24:13-32. Verse 16 says “their eyes were restrained so that they did not know Him.” When their eyes were open, they did see Him (v. 31).]
 - j. ***Jesus was raised in the Spirit*** (1 Pt. 3:18), therefore the resurrection body was not flesh but “spirit” or immaterial. [Even if “spirit” refers to Jesus’ spirit (not the Holy Spirit), it would not prove that He had no human body, any more than a reference to His body would mean He had no spirit.] (This verse may be translated “by the Spirit” [NKJV; NIV]. The context refers to the resurrection [cf. v. 21]. Zerwick interprets *pneumati* “in the spiritual sphere: the act of God in the resurrection” [op. cit., 711]. rd)
 - k. ***We will be like angels in the resurrection*** (Mt. 22:30). [The context discusses the subject of heavenly marriage, not the nature of the resurrection body (cf. v. 28).]
 - l. ***Life-giving spirit means that Jesus’ body became immaterial*** (1 Co. 15:45). [This passage simply declares the divine origin of the resurrection body. When v. 47 states that Adam was of the earth, *made* of dust, but this does not mean that he had no spirit.]
11. Though Geisler often repeats himself, his book provides valuable evidence for the physical resurrection of Christ. Since denominational errors too often find their way into the thinking of Christians, we should be prepared for this threat.

Conclusion:

- I. Comparing early post-biblical writings with the gospel reveals **the integrity and veracity of N.T. literature**. E.g., 1 Clement writes the Corinthians (A.D. 95), spending an entire chapter discussing the phoenix (bird) as proof of the resurrection (1 Clem. 25). He calls the phoenix a “wonderful sign,” using the same word that describes the people’s reaction when Christ heals the paralytic (Lk. 5:26).
 - A. The phoenix lives exactly 500 years, and then dies. From his corpse another young bird appears. When he is strong enough, he carries his father’s bones to the altar of the sun at Heliopolis, Egypt. When the Egyptian priests check the records, they determine that 500 years have passed since this last happened. There is just one problem: it is a hoax.
 - B. The earliest writer known to have mentioned the phoenix is Hesiod (*Fragm. 50*). Herodotus (ii. 73) embellishes the story, acknowledging certain Egyptian priests as his source, but adds that he does not believe it.
 - C. The Romans learned the story from the Greeks. In 97 B.C., Manilius, a Roman senator, discussed the phoenix. Other famous Romans joined the discussion in writing, including Ovid (*Metamorphoses* xv. 392), Claudian, who devoted a poem to it, Lactantius, *et al.* The Roman people, in general, seem to have believed it.
 - D. Tacitus did not doubt the existence of the phoenix, though he suspected that some had exaggerated the story in some points.
 - E. Celsus offers the strangest twist. When trying to **disprove** Christianity, he cites the phoenix to show the greater piety of the lower animals as compared with man (Origen c. *Cels.* iv. 98). Celsus and Clement appeal to the same fictitious bird to prove contradictory claims.

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- F. In light of the preceding evidence, it appears that Clement cannot be charged with more gullibility than other writers of his day, but this is the point. In spite of his good intentions, **Clement does not write inspired literature**. This one story reveals the fatal weakness in his work. Why didn't *Paul* appeal to the phoenix to prove the resurrection of Christ? **The Lord makes no mistakes** (1 Co. 14:37). (For historical references see Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* II, 83-85)
- II. In 1 Clement 24, Clement uses the word resurrection (*anastasis*) six times. This is the word that Paul uses in 1 Co. 15:12-13, 21, 42.
- A. Clement imitates Paul's line of reasoning in 1 Co. 15:36-41, showing that all the works of the Master (our *despot*) continually demonstrate the coming resurrection.
- B. Day and night also point out a resurrection, just as does the sowing of seed.
- III. In chapter 25, Clement commits his phoenix blunder.
- IV. In chapter 26, he appeals to the power of the Creator. Do we think the resurrection will be a great and marvelous thing for God to raise His faithful servants, "since He shows us the greatness of His promise through a bird"?
- A. Clement tries to prove something that is true by appealing to something that is false. His reliance on contemporary wisdom (the attitude that created problems in Corinth in the first place, 1 Co. 1:19- 27; 3:19) brings Clement down to the level of the people he seeks to instruct.
- B. Just because everyone believes something is true does not make it true. "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Ro. 3:4).

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Appendix

Were The Witnesses of the Resurrection Qualified to Examine Miracles Objectively? Or Were They So Gullible That They Believed Everything They Heard?

- I. The ancient world had its share of naïve people, but the modern world does too.
 - A. Arthur Conan Doyle became obsessed with séances, mostly in an attempt to communicate with his son who died in WWI. Though he was a medical doctor and an accomplished writer, paranormal fakes deceived him. Sherlock never cracked this case. Generally, scientists have been unable to expose psychic charlatans.
 - B. On the other hand, Eric Weiss (Harry Houdini) easily detected and exposed fraudulent claims. Though he never received a degree in science, his knowledge of magic enabled him to expose psychics.
- II. There were gullible people in the ancient world.
 - A. Herodotus repeats a story about a former slave named Salmoxis who gains great wealth and moves to Thrace where he wines and dines the local citizens in his great hall. He persuades them that neither he nor his guests nor their descendants will die. Meanwhile, he builds an underground chamber. One day he suddenly vanishes, and remains hidden in his chamber for three years. In the fourth year he reappears, convincing them that he is immortal. Though Herodotus sometimes believes such unlikely stories, he expresses some misgivings about this one (Herodotus, Loeb Classical Library, IV. Nos. 94-96).
 - B. Peter and the other apostles reject such myths, believing and teaching only what they know to be true (2 Pt. 1:16-21):
 1. The apostles do not **follow after myths** (16). They *know* the facts about Christ.
 2. They are **eyewitnesses** of His majesty (16).
 3. They are **“earwitnesses”** of His majesty (17).
 - a. The Father Himself, with an audible voice, identifies Jesus as His Son (18).
 - b. The transfiguration event meets and surpasses the challenge of Bertrand Russell. When asked, “What kind of evidence could convince you that God exists?” Russell says:
 - 1) I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then produced to happen, I might perhaps be convinced at least of the existence of some superhuman intelligence. I can imagine other evidence of the same sort which might convince me, but so far as I know, no such evidence exists. (Original Source Unknown)
 4. In view of these evidences for the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of Christ, the unbeliever should never scorn the supposed credulity of the believer (19-21).
 - C. Unlike the people of Thrace, the Bible reveals **great sophistication** on the part of those who witnessed miracles.
 1. “Our religion, then, rests on the credit due to these witnesses” (*The Testimony of the Evangelists*, Simon Greenleaf, via *The Law Above The Law*, John Warwick Montgomery, Appendix, p. 93).

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2. "...at this period (when Matthew collected taxes, rd), a considerable portion of the commerce of that part of the world was carried on by the Greeks, whose ingenuity and want of faith were proverbial" (*Ibid.*, 104).
 - a. "Matthew must have been familiar with a great variety of forms of fraud, imposture, cunning, and deception, and must have become habitually distrustful, scrutinizing, and cautious; and, of course, much less likely to have been deceived in regard to many of the facts in our Lord's ministry, extraordinary as they were, which fell under his observation" (*Ibid.*, 105).
 - b. "Matthew was trained, by his calling, to habits of severe investigation and suspicious scrutiny; and Luke's profession demanded an exactness of observation equally close and searching. The other two evangelists (Peter and John, rd), it has been well remarked, were as much too unlearned to forge the story of their Master's Life, as these were too learned and acute to be deceived by any imposture" (*Ibid.*, 122).
- D. Many passages in both Old and New Testament highlight the **guarded skepticism**, the **careful investigation**, and the **overall integrity** of witnesses to miraculous events. The biblical writers describe the extraordinary measures on the part of God to verify the events.
1. **Abraham** was not so naïve as to suppose that Sarah, though barren and past the age of childbearing, could naturally bear him a son (Gn. 15:1-6).
 - a. Though Abraham believed God, he accepted Sarah's plan to secure a child through Hagar (Gn. 16:1-4), thinking that in this way alone, God's promise would come true (Gn. 15:4: "*your very own son will be your heir*").
 - b. After the birth of Ishmael, God assured Abraham that *Sarah* would give birth (17:15-16). Abraham understood the *natural* impossibility of such a promise (17) and suggested that Ishmael was enough (18). The Lord reassured him that *Sarah* would give birth (19, 21).
 - c. When Sarah heard the good news, she laughed (18:9-15). This miracle seemed as incredible to Abraham and Sarah as it does to modern skeptics. These chosen people were anything but gullible.
 2. **The selection of Moses and the giving of the Law** provide so much evidence of God's extraordinary measures to confirm the supernatural origin of the old law that time and space limits preclude a detailed examination of the evidence. A careful study of Ex. 3-5, 14, 19-20 and Numbers 16-17, 21, *et al.*, reveals the remarkable efforts of God to remove any doubt that He, not Moses, gave Israel their law. The Israelites had to know that Moses was God's choice; none of these events, from the Exodus to the wandering, was Moses' idea. He did not campaign for the job, and would have resigned if possible.
 3. In spite of God's perfect proofs, most of the children of Israel disbelieve His promises and thus die in the wilderness (Nu. 13-14). Only a prejudiced and unreasonable mind could accuse these people of gullibility.
 4. **Gideon** knows that if someone is playing a trick on him, he may lose his life. He calls for a series of tests to verify the divine origin of his commission to fight the Midianites (Jg. 6-8).
 5. Not even **the Philistines** superstitiously accept the theory that God, not coincidence, lay behind their disastrous encounters with the ark (1 Sm. 4-6). The unnatural acts of untrained cows, pulling a cart, on their own, in a direction away from their calves,
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prove that God's hand has been at work in Philistia. The five Philistine lords watch the cows pull the ark back to the country where it belongs (16). Could moderns devise a better test?

6. On Mt. Carmel, **Elijah** goes the second and third mile to prove the power of the true God (1 K. 18). The confused Israelites do not know whether God or Baal is superior. The miraculous signs on Carmel, in effect, duplicate the signs on Sinai, reminding the people that there is only one God and that their destiny depends on Him, not Baal.
7. **Hezekiah** knows that a shadow going in reverse is a greater sign than a shadow going forward (2 K. 20:8-11).
8. Both **Nebuchadnezzar** and "**Darius**" acknowledge the superiority of the God of their captives (Dn. 2; 4:36-37; 6).
9. **Joseph** knows as well as any OBGYN what causes pregnancy (Mt. 1:18-20). Without this knowledge of natural laws, he has no reason to react so strongly to Mary's condition.
10. When **the disciples of Christ** see Him walking to them on the water, they conclude that it is a ghost (*phantasma*, Mt. 14:26). They know (1) the difference between a ghost and a material (physical) person, and (2) that men do not walk on water.
11. The Lord's disciples do not always recognize Him at first sight. In Mt. 28:17, some disciples cannot identify Him and thus doubt His identity – the opposite of the reaction we might expect from gullible people. Only after Jesus comes closer (18) can they know that He has been raised from the dead.
12. Jesus knows that **extraordinary claims** require **extraordinary proof** (Mk. 2:1-12). He proves what His audience *cannot see* (His ability to forgive sins) by what they *can see* (a miraculous healing).
 - a. "But Jesus set up the claim that he could forgive sins, and he wrought this miracle in proof of the claim. If the claim was a false one, then God permitted his power to be used in support of a false claim, which is inconceivable" (McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*, 355).
 - b. The reaction of the witnesses says it all: *We never saw anything like this!* Apparently they did not go to hear Jesus in anticipation of a miracle; even if they did, its power (a complete, instantaneous healing) shocked them.
13. **Jairus**, his family, and his guests understand the nature of death (Mk. 5:21-24, 35-43): it is one to a person, and the dead tend to stay dead. Their long experience with death has taught them to abandon any hope of recovery. They may ride camels, but they are anything but naïve about death. No wonder the guests laugh at the Lord's claim that the girl is only sleeping. They know she is dead. Their laughter merely confirms His miracle. It is as easy for Him to raise her from the dead as it is for us to wake someone from a nap.
14. **The blind man** (Jn. 9) has been too well known for too long to be a fraud, making his miraculous gift of sight all the more compelling. Even if the blind man's friends have been deceived, the Jews face a dilemma: either agree with the miracle, or plant fear and doubt in the heart of anyone who might be inclined to follow the Lord. They choose the latter.
15. Even **the enemies of Christ** admit the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn. 11-12).

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16. **Thomas** believes the other apostles are gullible (Jn. 20:24-25). He decides to put the matter to a test. He will believe only if Jesus allows him to examine His crucifixion wounds. When Jesus meets his challenge, the overwhelming nature of the evidence and the honesty of Thomas force him to confess, “*My Lord, and My God*” (Jn. 20:28).
 17. Ac.1:3, **infallible proofs** (*tekmerion*) denote “that which causes someth. to be known in a convincing and decisive manner, proof” (BDAG, 994).
 - a. Jesus Himself warned His disciples against deception (Mt. 24:4, 24).
 - b. The disciples did not get a glimpse of someone who looked like Jesus and thus determine to spread the news of His resurrection. He appeared to them over a forty day period.
 18. **The staunch enemies of Christ** admitted the miracles of His apostles (Ac. 4:16). Knowing that they preached the resurrected Christ, and that God would not confirm the signs of imposters, the enemies resorted to threats and intimidation to silence them. The steadfast endurance of the witnesses says more about the veracity of their testimony than it does about their mode of travel.
 - a. The object of the manifestations was not only to convince the apostles personally of the resurrection, but to make them witnesses of the resurrection and heralds of salvation to all the world (Schaff I, 175).
 - b. For two days they were trembling on the brink of despair. But on the third day, behold, the same disciples underwent a complete revolution from despondency to hope, from timidity to courage, from doubt to faith, and began to proclaim the gospel of the resurrection in the face of an unbelieving world and at the peril of their lives. This revolution was not isolated, but general among them; it was not the result of an easy credulity, but brought about in spite of doubt and hesitation (*Ibid.*, 173-174).
 19. If the resurrection of their Lord did not produce this change, truth compels the skeptics of the world to explain what did.
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