

Sunday, May 20, 2018—I Corinthians 15:23-28 The Eternal Purpose of the Resurrection

Introduction

- Last Sunday we studied the section beginning at verse 12 and ending with verse 22. In verses 12-19 we observed Paul’s logical argument regarding the reality of resurrection.
- In verse 20, we saw Paul’s emphatic affirmative statement that Christ is risen from the dead.
- Verse 21 makes clear that just as man (Adam) brought death man (Christ Jesus) also brought resurrection of the dead.
- Verse 22 carries it one step further and asserts that in Christ shall all me made alive.

I Corinthians 15:23

- **But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**
- This verse is part of the paragraph that began in verse 20.
- *But every man in his own order*—verse 22 ended with the statement, “even so in Christ shall all me made alive.” Verse 23 is pointing out that there is order to how resurrection is going to occur. In other words, people aren’t just going to be rising from the dead willy-nilly at any old time.
- *Christ the firstfruits*—this statement harkens back to verse 20. Christ is “the first fruits of them that slept.” So, in terms of order Christ was the first one to rise from the dead. Christ’s resurrection secures our resurrection. This was the entire point of the logical argument presented in verses 12 through 19. If Christ didn’t rise from the dead our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins.
- *afterward they that are Christ's at his coming*—“afterward” those who are Christ’s at his coming will also experience resurrection.
- Given the context, I think Paul is just speaking in a general sense in verse 23 regarding the fact that resurrection will accompany the return of Christ. Any resurrection that will occur in conjunction with Christ’s return is based upon Christ’s own resurrection from the dead.
 - I Corinthians 15:11—the focus here is on the fact that Peter and Paul were both preaching the reality of resurrection.
 - I Corinthians 15:12—some in Corinth were denying the reality of resurrection.

- I Thessalonians 4:13-18—when the Lord comes to catch away the body of Christ the dead in Christ will be raised.
- Revelation 20:4-5—when Christ returned bodily back to earth at the second coming believing Israel will be resurrected to inherit the kingdom.
- I Corinthians 15:23—it is the general principle and order of the matter that Paul is stating in verse 23. Resurrection is going to occur in an orderly manner at the given and appropriate time.
 - I Corinthians 15:51-52—it is not until later in the chapter that Paul deals specifically with the body of Christ.

I Corinthians 15:24-28

- *Then cometh the end*—it would be a mistake to view these verses as setting forth the exact timing of further events. That this cannot be their main purpose is evident from the fact that they leave out many eschatological events recorded in prophecy.
- Read verses 24-28 together—these verses are talking about the exaltation of Christ as the head over all things. This exaltation is only possible because of the fact stated in verse 20 i.e., “but now Christ is risen from the dead.”
 - Philippians 2:5-11—because of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection God the Father has exalted his son above all things.
- I Corinthians 15:20, 24-28—Christ’s resurrection (v. 20) leads to Christ’s exaltation (v. 24-27) which culminates in God the Father being “all in all” (v. 28).
 - Colossians 1:15-19—Christ was the firstborn from the dead that in all things in heaven and earth he might have the preeminence. Notice this is accomplished through Christ position of being “the firstborn from the dead” i.e., “the first fruits of them that slept.” Notice also that it pleased God the Father that all fulness should dwell in the person of his Son.
- I Corinthians 15:26—death is the enemy of man. Death was not part of God’s original plan for man. Death was brought about via Adam’s transgression.
 - I Corinthians 15:21-22
 - Romans 5:12, 17-19
- I Corinthians 15:26—even though we have been made alive in Christ the physical death rate is still one apiece. In conjunction with Christ’s being made head over all things in heaven and earth, one day death, the great enemy of man will be destroyed.

- Revelation 20:11-15
- I Corinthians 15:28—this state where all things are subdued under Christ, Christ is subject to the Father, and God the Father is “all in all” is elsewhere in Paul’s epistles called the dispensation of the fulness of time.
 - Ephesians 1:10
 - Ephesians 3:9-11
- I Corinthians 15:20-28—the point of this paragraph is twofold: 1) the resurrection matters to the individual justification of the Corinthians and 2) the resurrection is essential to the accomplishment of the eternal purpose of God.