

1 Cor 15:1-11

1 Moreover (But), brethren, I declare (want to make known to you) to you the gospel (good news) which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain (without a cause).

3 For I delivered to you first of all (in importance and chronology) that which I also received (which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified): that Christ died for our sins according to the (Old Testament) Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

In the next few verses Paul lists 6 instances in which Jesus appeared to eye witnesses.

5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

- The Greek word for “see” is the word “óptomai”.
- We get our English word optometrist from this Greek word
- and it refers to the physical eye and what it sees.

In the next few verses

- Paul does not refer to material evidences for the resurrection.

Instead, he turns to eye witness accounts:

Jesus was seen by:

5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

Cephas was, Peter!

- He’s the one that made lots of mistakes.

When we think of Peter we usually think of:

Peter denying Jesus,

- he denied Him with an oath.

Peter wanted to defend Jesus

- he cuts the ear off of one of the servants
- of the high priest,

Jesus once called him the rock

- another time he's told, "get behind me Satan."

Jesus once told Peter he'd deny Him 3 times,

- He also told the disciples
- that they would all stumble because of Him.

Peter responded, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."

Peter said in Matt 26:35

"Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"

And so said all the disciples.

Peter wept bitterly after the rooster crowed for the third time.

If anyone needed to know after the resurrection that Jesus was alive and well, it was Peter.

Also in verse 5,

- Paul mentions the 12.

This appearance is described in Jn 20 then again in Luke 24.

But there were actually only 10 present,

- Judas and Thomas were both absent.

When Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Salome

- went to anoint the body of Jesus
- they found He wasn't there.

Instead, there was a young man clothed in a long white robe and he said to them, Mk 16:6 Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 But go, tell His disciples — and Peter — that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

Look at verse 7 again, go tell the disciples - and Peter.

Jesus wasn't saying,

- Peter denied me,

- so he's no longer considered a disciple.

No! He wanted to be sure that Peter was aware that He'd risen.

The Lord knew Peter was grieving,

- so He in His compassion wanted Peter to know,
- Hey Peter, I'm alive!

Jesus in His compassion

- went to Peter prior to going to the 12.

It seems that Jesus restored him privately

- then later He restored him publicly when
- He asked Peter 3 times if he loved Him.
- Jesus then tells him, feed My sheep.

1 Cor 15:6

After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

Paul was telling the Corinthians,

- "hey, most of these people are still alive today,
- if you've got any doubts, go talk to them!

But then he says that some had already fallen asleep.

Two weeks ago we read that Jesus died for our sins and he rose on the third day.

When the scriptures speak of the believers,

- it says they fell asleep.

But when the scriptures speak of Jesus dying

- it says that He died,

I believe the reason for this is

- if the scriptures said that Jesus fell asleep,
- then the unbelievers could say
- that He only slept,
- therefore, they would dismiss the resurrection.

There is a clear distinction between falling asleep and being dead.

Death to the non-believer and to the believer is different.

When a non-believer dies

- in many cases people have no hope.

To the believer, when a loved one dies,

- we have hope that
- they are in the presence of the Lord,

1 Thess. 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

James was a pretty common name back then. The scriptures mention a few guys named James.

One was the son of Zebedee and was known as one of the two sons of thunder

It was this same James along with his brother John who once angered their fellow disciples by asking if they could sit on Jesus' right and left hands in glory, (Matt 20:20, Mk 10:35-45).

Then there was James the son of Alphaeus

- who was also one of the 12.

Then there was James the Less

- who was the brother of Joses
- and the son of Mary, (not Jesus' mother).

The Greek word for "Less" as in "James the less" is the word "mikros" which is where we get our English word "micro".

It's possible that "James the less" was

- smaller (in size) or
- he may have been less as in (less known).

Then there was James the father of Judas Iscariot.

And finally there was James the brother of Jesus.

James that is spoken of here in verse 7 was probably the brother of Jesus.

James didn't become a believer until after the resurrection.

James and his brothers thought Jesus was out of His mind.

8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Paul was saying that he was an eye witness!

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

As Paul neared the end of his life he called himself chief among sinners.

- He realized more and more what a wretched man he was.

When he wrote Romans 7:24 he said, O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

It's almost as if Paul were making up for what he'd done previously, but it was God's grace he says.

Fable of the woodpecker:

Paul never made the mistake of looking back and taking credit for what God did. Instead he said, by the grace of God I am what I am.

A Jeweler takes metal and forms it into something beautiful.

Paul admittedly acknowledged in verses 8-9 that

- he was not worthy to be called an apostle.

Paul went so far as to try to destroy the church of God, then he had the honor of being called an apostle.

Later he said in Ephesians,  
Eph 3:9

8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Have you ever paused for a moment to consider God's grace in your life?

Grace according to Nelson's dictionary is favor or kindness shown without regard to the worth or merit of the one who receives it and in spite of what that same person deserves.

What we deserve is death! What God gives us is grace.

Paul was not boasting that he worked harder,

- but I believe he realized that he traveled
- and did a lot in ministry.

Paul decided to be busy for the Lord,

- there is no greater reward at the end of our journey on this earth.

11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

1 Cor 15:12-19

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

The Corinthians believed in the resurrection however,

- in verse 12 Paul asks,
- how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

This made no sense

- so Paul is going to clear up some confusion

In this section alone Paul uses the term "IF" 7 times.

Paul states in verse 13, But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

There were many theories going around back then.

- One was that Jesus didn't actually die.
- Some non-believers and false teachers
- trying to get around the death of Jesus
- went so far as to say that
- He was not human but divine.

In Romans 1 Paul not only cited the humanity of Jesus

- but the deity of Jesus as well.

Rom 1:1-4

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, (speaks of His humanity) 4 and declared to be the Son of God (deity) with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

This passage speaks of the incarnation of Jesus.

Jesus in the book of Revelation confirmed His death and resurrection. He said in Rev 1:17-18

"Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

If Jesus did not die and rise from the dead,

- we're meeting for nothing.

However, our purpose for meeting is so that

- we can celebrate together,

1 Cor 15:14

14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

There would be no reason for me or anyone else to stand up here and teach.

There would be no reason for and of our ministries.

Then Paul says that our faith would be empty.

There are many passages we could use to define faith.

The history of the word meant to "to unite" and "to bind."

However, when used by Jesus, more times than not He used the Greek word "Pistis" meaning "reliance" or "trust."

If we could not rely on or trust what Jesus said,

- then there would be no reason
- for us to have faith in Him
- or in any of the scriptures for that matter.