

Week 13: Our Resurrection Faith - 1 Cor 15:1-19

Pre-Work

- The Story of Israel (Jacob) is part of a broader narrative that has already been well established. For a refresher on the first 11 chapters of Genesis, which function as a primer for how to read the rest of the Bible, please watch this video on Genesis 1-11 from The Bible Project.
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-1-11/>
- An important part of understanding biblical narrative (and oh but we have a lot of biblical narrative to go over for the next 19 weeks!) is “setting”. To the biblical authors, “setting” is not merely where the events of the narrative take place, but it is also an important canvas on which they can paint a picture that supports themes and ideas related to that setting in the future. Please watch this video from The Bible Project to understand the use of “Setting” in the Bible more clearly.
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/setting-biblical-narrative/>

Class Notes

- Resurrection recap

What follows is the first part of Paul's explanation of one major (and relevant to this letter) facet of "the gospel" (continues in verses 21-57)

1 Now I make known to you, brothers *and sisters*, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, **2** by which you also are saved, if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

- "Good news preached" - note that these 57 verses are more than a five sentence "elevator pitch". Note also that Paul doesn't claim that these verses contain *every aspect* of the euangelion.
- Preached, received, stand, hold firmly: Paul's interaction with them was communication; theirs is receiving, standing, holding firmly what he preached
- "Believed in vain"/emptiness/Ecclesiastes word - a belief that comes to nothing...what is at stake? In the minds of the NT authors, the true stake is more than one's individual rescue; it is our corporate participation in the rescue of all creation
- Therefore what follows (through v 57, this week and next) is *absolutely critical* to the mission of the church.

3 For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

- Paul did not make this stuff up; ultimately it comes from the Jesus Bible Study alluded to in Luke 24:27 and verses 44-47.
- Died for/because of our sins (major theme in the "Scriptures"/OT)
- Buried - huge implications/ back to the earth from which the human was formed/ body underwent the same journey as all humans
- Raised (not just as spirit, not just resuscitated, but in a New Creation body suited for the new heavens and new earth in the Age to Come)

- “On the third day according to the Scriptures” - Third day motif, not an explicit one liner in the OT

5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers *and sisters* at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; **7** then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; **8** and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. **9** For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit 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 did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. **11** Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

- Why no mention of the women?

1 Cor 1 11 *My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”*

- Everyone knows that the men were informed by the women, just as Paul was informed by Chloe’s people. The issue at hand is the division among following “male” leaders and teachers
- “Raised on the third day” was a message delivered by the women eyewitnesses/takes the primary role of Chloe delivering a message to Paul
- As for the men
 - “He”/ Christ Appearance to 1. Cephas/Peter and “the twelve” 2. 500 men and women 3. James and all the apostles (more than the twelve) 4. Last, a miscarried one, Paul
 - Changes the order of divisions in Ch 1 (who the Corinthians say they follow) 1. Paul, 2. Apollos (second “generation” believer) 3. Cephas/ Peter 4. Christ
- The Resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the faith, and the reason Jesus is preached; here Paul reminds them that there are many living witnesses to this fact - why claim the identity of one of the witnesses rather than the *fact* of Resurrection vindicating the cross/new creation?
- “As untimely born/least of all the apostles/persecuted the church” - Paul is reversing the honor/status code the Corinthians idolize. As the worst sinner, the last to get the memo, the least of the apostles, he is the “least” and therefore the one entrusted with the most in the Kingdom of God.

- Grace/undeserved favor is the means of status reversal, leading to good works (Eph 2:8-10)
- It doesn't matter *who* preached to you; what matters is that you believed. Believed what? Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, appearances

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?

- Having established Jesus' resurrection in an "Age to Come"/ New Creation body (more on that next week), which is the ignition of their faith...
- "Some say no resurrection of the dead" - Some in the church at Corinth do not believe in a future bodily resurrection of the dead
 - In the Greco-Roman world, physical reality often viewed as inherently impure
 - To the pagan world, Only disembodied existence has a chance at purity and/or bliss
 - To the pagans and those influenced by Platonism, biblical resurrection was despicable
 - To accommodate pagan bias, some Corinthian believers were ditching biblical resurrection in favor of an eternal disembodied existence "in heaven"/ eternalizing the intermediate state and making *that* the great hope

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised;

- If the biblical future resurrection into glorified bodies is not an actual thing, then Christ's resurrection into a glorified body is also not a thing

14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain. **15** Moreover, we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. **16** For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised;

- If there is no future resurrection (because we are back to the pagan idea of being in heaven as disembodied spirits forever), then Christ's resurrection didn't happen as we (Paul, the apostles, the 500, the women who started it all) preached, making us all liars.
- To belabor the point, if there is no future biblical resurrection, Christ did not rise.

17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. **18** Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

- If by “He rose” we mean symbolically, or as a disembodied spirit, or recovered from injury, or Lazarus-style resuscitation, then their faith is “worthless”. It’s just another “what gets me into disembodied bliss” religion, no reunion with the body, no redemption of creation, no “Life unto the age”.
- You are still in your sins - forgiveness of sins was technically accomplished on the cross but *vindicated* by the Resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is how God showed that sins were actually forgiven on the cross.
- Those who have died have perished - disembodied time in heaven is not the “eternal life” Jesus, Paul, and the New Testament authors preached. The biblical meaning of eternal life is not that. No resurrection is equivalent to perishing

19 If we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied.

- Why? Because sins are not forgiven, there is no reconciliation of heaven and earth, the human project will end in the dying of the world, and the most we can hope for is something like playing harps on clouds. *This is not the gospel*. We suffer for the sake of something that didn’t happen to Jesus and won’t happen to us. To Paul, this would be worthless and pitiful for us all.

“Those who deny the resurrection, then, are not simply tinkering with one negotiable element of Christian belief...They are cutting off the branch on which the gospel, and those who embrace it, are sitting. They are even accusing the apostles of ‘bearing false witness’ about God himself (verse 15). But, most importantly, they are declaring that no great event has yet happened through which the world has been changed. They are reducing Christianity to a form of spirituality, a new ‘religion’ to take its place alongside the others in the market-place of ancient pluralism. This danger is as present today as it was in the first century.” ~N. T. Wright, *1 Corinthians for Everyone*