

Week 14: Life with a Resurrection Lens - 1 Cor 15:20-58

Pre-Work

- This could easily be one of the most important videos you can watch. This video builds off of our lesson from the last two weeks and solidifies what's at stake in the lesson to come. In the bible, "eternal life" does include life that lasts forever, but there is SO MUCH MORE invested in the phrase:

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/eternal-life/>

- Please read 1 Corinthians 15:21-58 in the translation of your choice. With the last 2 weeks of classes in mind, does this section of 1 Corinthians have new implications for you?

Class Notes

- Last week: some in the church at Corinth were denying future bodily resurrection, preferring to believe in an afterlife of disembodied existence forever. Paul and Sosthenes et al equate this with denying the resurrection of Jesus, and an emptying of the purpose of the gospel.

20 But the fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

- The future of someone who is “in Christ” now is the same resurrection that Christ won and experienced. He was the first - the rest of us will join Him on the Last Day.

21 For since by a man death *came*, by a Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. **23** But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming,

- God brought about the certainty of the future resurrection of the dead by becoming human in the Person of His Son, because since by a human came death, by a human life must also come.
- First Jesus’ resurrection, then all of us at the *parousia*

24 then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to *our* God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. **25** For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

- **The end of the present age of death**, (the Kingdom of God has already invaded this age) is accompanied by Jesus presenting the kingdom spread by the gospel to the Father. This happens when the corrupt spiritual powers have been abolished by the Matthew 5-7 way of living.
- Why wait until then? The rule of Jesus (cruciform life) must spread until all enemies are “under His feet”

26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

- Death will remain a reality until the *parousia*

27 FOR HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is clear that this excludes the *Father* who put all things in subjection to Him.

- “All things in subjection under his feet” is an allusion to Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:6
- Paul clarifies that the Father is the one who subjects all things to the Son, over against those who would teach that the “God of the New Testament” overcomes the “God of the Old Testament”

28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

- The Son is functionally subordinate to the Father, not in being.
- This is pre-work for the doctrine of the Trinity; how can God be both Father and Son but also different persons in relationship? This relationship is how God will be all in all, even over rebellious creation.

29 For otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? **30** Why are we also in danger every hour?

- If bodily resurrection on the last day is not true, then why are some baptized for the sake of believers who have died (baptized to be reunited with them?). To be reunited as disembodied spirits does not seem viable to Paul or the Apostles. Why suffer daily danger as believers if there is no bodily resurrection, and if Jesus wasn’t actually raised?

31 I affirm, brothers *and sisters*, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, that I die daily.

- Paul’s ongoing litany of suffering for the gospel (anchored by the resurrection) is compared to a daily death. In Ephesus at the time of this writing, life was apparently extremely difficult for Paul.

32 If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what good is it to me? If the dead are not raised, LET’S EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.

- From human motives/according to man - What motivation do I have to live in constant danger and suffering if there is no resurrection?
- Quotes from Isaiah 22:13 in the context of Yahweh calling on His people to repent/turn towards Him but they chose to live it up since “life is short”

33 Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” **34** Sober up morally and stop sinning, for some have no knowledge of God. I say *this* to your shame.

- By their denying the resurrection, Paul is comparing the Corinthian believers with the unrepentant people of Isaiah 22, exposing them to the indiscriminate immorality of the present age. “If our bodies disappear forever, who cares what we do with them?”

35 But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”

- Paul insists on a continuity between our present bodies and our future resurrected bodies, but to Greco-Roman ears this raises serious problems concerning things about their present bodies they don’t like. So...what kind of bodies?

36 You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;

- “Fool” in the Hebrew Bible sense - one who fails to account for God in their thinking
- If you plant an acorn, you lose the acorn. The seed must die for there to be new life, but if you want new life, the death of your acorn is the way to get it.

37 and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

- You don’t sow an acorn to get another acorn, but an oak tree.

38 But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

- God Himself knows what sort of body will come from our “acorns”

39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one *flesh* of mankind, another flesh of animals, another flesh of birds, and another of fish. **40** There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the *glory* of the earthly is another. **41** There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

- By analogy, even in our present age we see lots of different kinds of bodies, including the bodies in the sky, with luminescent glory. But even the celestial bodies, which many worship and which are images of spiritual beings, still have a bodily nature.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; **43** it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; **44** it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

- Our resurrected bodies will not be “non-physical”, they will be “trans-physical”, not without characteristics of creation, but imbued with the characteristics of new creation. “Spiritual” is not dis-embodied, but God-breathed...a new kind of body.

45 So also it is written: “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING PERSON.” The last Adam *was* a life-giving spirit. **46** However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. **47** The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second Man is from heaven. **48** As is the earthy one, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly One, so also are those who are heavenly. **49** Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

- This is an explicit explanation of the merger of heaven and earth in our bodies

50 Now I say this, brothers *and sisters*, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

- Our bodies as they are, are unsuitable for this merger. Thus the transformation of resurrection.

51 Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

- The ones who are alive at the “last trumpet” will also undergo this transformation. Paul is not teaching a timeline on end times/rapture/second coming, but explaining how everyone, dead or not, will need transformed bodies and undergo resurrection.

53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. **54** But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: “DEATH HAS BEEN

SWALLOWED UP in victory. **55** WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR VICTORY? WHERE, O DEATH, IS YOUR STING?" **56** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; **57** but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The corrupt old creation will be consumed by the incorrupt new creation, both universally and in our bodies.
- Quotes Isaiah 25 and Hosea 13 as a taunt towards death itself; even through Paul's suffering and persecution and eventual execution by "Death", the ultimate weapon of sin and the enemy, it has been transformed into an agent of new life through the certainty of our future Resurrection.
- The Law/Instruction empowered sin (because we failed to follow it), and thus became the fuel for the engine of death.
- But Jesus' victory *through* death undid the entire law-sin-death mechanism and turned it upside down. Jesus' death overcame sin and fulfilled the law. Enter: the Kingdom of God.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers *and sisters*, be firm, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not *in vain* in the Lord.

- Because of this, we are not just holding our tickets to heaven in reserve so we can get into a disembodied forever. We are not careless about how we live or use our bodies. We are not huddled behind the walls of the church waiting to be taken out of here. We are firm in our faith, which means we do excellent work for the gospel. It's not "hevel".

"Our present existence in Christ, and our present labors, are not in vain. Standing beneath them is the sure word of Christ's own triumph over death, which guarantees that we shall likewise conquer. Victory in the present begins when one can, with Paul, sing the taunt of death even now, in light of Christ's resurrection, knowing that death's doom is "already/not yet." Because "death could not hold its prey, Jesus our Savior," neither will it be able to hold its further prey when the final eschatological trumpet is blown that summons the Christian dead unto the resurrection and immortality. What a hope is this. No wonder Paul concluded on a note of exhortation that we may confidently continue on our way in the Lord."~Gordon Fee, 1 Corinthians

Reflections