

CHRIST, THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE RESURRECTION

BIBLE TEXT: I Corinthians 15:1-58

LESSON 327 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Corinthians 15:1-58

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the 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 of Cephas, then of the twelve:

⁶ After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

⁷ After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet 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 which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

¹¹ Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

¹² Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

¹³ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

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

¹⁵ Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

¹⁸ Then they also which are fallen asleep

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Paul's Message to Corinth

The Books of First and Second Corinthians, called Epistles, are letters, which were written by Paul the Apostle to the church in the city of Corinth, Greece. Paul had spent more than a year and a half in this city preaching, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, at the time this church was founded. Corinth was the capital of the province and a branch of the seat of the Roman government. It was a very wicked city and its people indulged in many sins. As if death were the end of everything, they had adopted the Epicurean motto, "let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (I Corinthians 15:32).

It has been said that if men can but persuade themselves that they will die like beasts, they soon will live like beasts, too. The people in heathen Corinth needed to have it proved to them that death is not the end of everything, and Paul was the man chosen by God to bear this important message. However, not only to those people, but to millions today this message is still going out through God's Word. A great many people today live in sin and do not fear the wrath of God that shall some day come upon evildoers. "For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Death is not the end of everything, for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" (Hebrews 9:27).

"They That Are Christ's"

Paul pointed out the fact that Christ was the first to rise from the dead with a glorified body; therefore He is called "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18). Some day the godly who died in Christ shall rise from the grave, and then those who are alive and who are full overcomers "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thessalonians 4:16,17). Christ's own "flock" shall share His glory at His coming, but this is not to be confused with the "end" of the world, of final judgement. (**Revelation 20:11-15** ¹¹ **And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.** ¹² **And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.** ¹³ **And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.** ¹⁴ **And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** ¹⁵ **And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**) All shall rise again, but let us not think that all shall be save, for some shall rise "to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). There shall be a final resurrection of the unjust; however, in this chapter the final resurrection, or end of the world is not discussed. It is

in Christ are perished.

¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

²⁰ But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

²¹ For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

²³ But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

²⁴ Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

²⁵ For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

²⁶ The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

²⁷ For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

²⁸ And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

²⁹ Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

³⁰ And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

³¹ I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

³² If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

³³ Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

³⁴ Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

³⁵ But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

³⁶ *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

³⁷ And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*:

³⁸ But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

acknowledged, however, and referred to in the following words: "Then cometh the end" (I Corinthians 15:24).

No, not even those who went to their graves thinking they might "get by" the judgements of God without having been born again are mentioned here. Paul is speaking in this chapter of the glorious resurrection of them "that are Christ's." Christ died for our sins and was buried, and rose again the third day (I Corinthians 15:3,4); and there is no name given under Heaven whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). Let no one thing that good works alone will give him a share in that everlasting life; let no one hope to share in the glories of Heaven without having repented of his sins and having the Blood of Jesus atone for him.

"Sown in Weakness"

When God created Adam He made him from the dust of the earth — the name **Adam** means **red earth**. God said to him, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19). In this fifteenth chapter, Paul is proving to saints and sinners that Christ rose from the dead and that some day there shall be a resurrection of all who have gone to the grave and whose bodies may have returned to dust.

Paul compares this great fact with seed that is **sown** in the ground. What a delightful word to use instead of **buried**! Just as a seed that is sown in the ground dies and then a brand new plant or blade springs from that seed, so it is when a saint of God is laid away in the grave. His body goes back to dust, but when that last trumpet sounds, a new, immortal, glorified body will come out of the grave. What a glorious hope the Christian has! The new body can never die or become sick or weak. "It is sown in corruption . . . in dishonour . . . in weakness . . . a natural body"; but "It is raised in incorruption . . . in glory . . . in power . . . a spiritual body" (I Corinthians 15:42-44).

The Firstfruits and the Harvest

Under the Law, the people were expected to bring unto the Lord the firstfruits of their substance: the oxen, sheep, corn, wine, oil, and the fleece of the sheep (**Deuteronomy 18:3-4** ³ **And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.** ⁴ **The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.**). The firstfruits are just a sample or small portion of the rest of the harvest that is to follow. So Christ, the bringer of life, is the Firstfruits of the resurrected dead. Just as Adam was the bringer of death, so Christ is the bringer of life. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22).

Paul states that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3, 4). Everything came to pass that had been written by prophets of old concerning Jesus. So sure is God's Word that no truth concerning Christ's death, burial and resurrection, or His second coming, or any other passage of Scripture, should ever be questioned. In addition to the account of the resurrection given by the writers of the Gospels, the names of many eyewitnesses are mentioned in the Bible, which include Paul himself, although he says, "I am the least of the apostles, . . . I persecuted the church of God" (I Corinthians 15:9). It seems that he could hardly forgive himself at the thought of his past sins.

Unbelief

³⁹ All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is one kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds.

⁴⁰ *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another.

⁴¹ *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory.

⁴² So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

⁴³ It is sown in dishonour; 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

⁴⁵ And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.

⁴⁶ Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

⁴⁷ The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven.

⁴⁸ As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.

⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" (I Corinthians 15:35).

Paul answers this question by calling the people fools; and truly it is folly to deny a fact just because one does not know "how." Some people measure God's power by their own petty wisdom or ability and will not admit anything they cannot explain. Let us be among those who have not seen and yet have believed (**John 20:29** ²⁹ **Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.**).

The Prophet Ezekiel was once carried by the Spirit of the Lord into a valley, which was full of very dry bones. The Spirit asked him, "Can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3). Ezekiel answered and said, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest." We may read the story and learn that God put sinew and flesh and skin upon the bones, and then the wind came and breathed upon them and they lived – "an exceeding great army." This vision was given to prove to Ezekiel and to us, too, the power of God to do the thing, which seems absolutely impossible.

Our Hope

An exceedingly loud blast of the trumpet had been the voice, which preceded the voice of God when the Law was given to the people at Mount Sinai. "The voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder," and great fear struck the hearts of those who heard that trumpet (**Exodus 19:16-19** ¹⁶ **And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.** ¹⁷ **And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.** ¹⁸ **And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.** ¹⁹ **And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.**).

A last trumpet shall some day sound, and at the voice of that trumpet the bodies of the righteous dead shall come out of the graves and the bodies of the living saints shall be changed into immortal, glorified bodies (**1 Corinthians 15:52-53** ⁵² **In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** ⁵³ **For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**).

The men, women, boys, and girls who have been truly saved, sanctified, and baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, and who are living a life pleasing to God, are looking forward with joy to the time when Jesus shall come. No fear is to be found in the hearts of those who are ready to "meet the Lord in the air" and, together with the saints who have risen from the graves, shall "ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17). Should Jesus tarry and some who are alive today go to the grave, even that thought holds no dread for the overcomers, for death has lost its "sting." They shall rise again on the resurrection day. So "whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (I Thessalonians 5:10). A glorious, inspiring hope!

QUESTIONS

1. By whom was Christ seen after He rose from the dead?
2. What other proof have we that He did rise from the dead?
3. What is the meaning of "firstfruits"?
4. How does death compare with seed that is planted?
5. What will happen to the redeemed ones at the sound of the

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

trumpet?

6. What is it that is called "the sting of death"? Explain.
7. What awaits the Christian after death? What awaits the sinner?
8. What do you think would be our condition if Christ had not risen from the dead?
9. What is the all-important thing for us to do?