

In our last session, we discovered “many infallible proofs” for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord. If Jesus Christ has not risen from the dead, then the apostle Paul is a false witness, and the faith of believers is worthless. Even more horrific, believers are still in their sins if Jesus Christ has not been raised. We left off with verse 19, **Then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in the Christ, we are of all men most miserable.**

Now, beginning in verse 20-28, Paul is going to lay out the case that the resurrection is certain.

Verse 20—

But now, there is no reason to be miserable since **Christ is risen from the dead**. Paul is clear in his statement. He has already proven the fact of the resurrection. Now he claims that Christ has **become the firstfruits of them that slept**. We’ve seen all along the Jewishness of this letter. Here Paul uses a Jewish illustration of **firstfruits**, which refers to the Jewish feast of firstfruits. That feast portrayed the fact that the land and all its products were a gift of Jehovah to Israel. It was the only feast done on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:9-11; Deuteronomy 26:1-11). Christ is the firstfruits of all the dead.

Verse 21,22—

By man came death. That is Adam, **by man came also the resurrection of the dead**. We all were separated from God, and **all die** due to Adam’s sin. We all suffer death and spiritual separation from God. But Jesus, who was fully man and fully God, was resurrected and led the way for everyone to be **made alive**.

Verse 23, 24,25—

What we have here in these three verses is the progression of the resurrection. Paul says (vs. 23) **but every man in his own order**:

1. **Christ the firstfruits** (vs. 23). It was Christ who was the first to be resurrected incorruptible and in glory and power (vss. 42,43).
2. **Afterward** (that is after Christ), **they that are Christ’s at his coming**. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” There is some disagreement this verse (vs. 23) refers to the Rapture due to the use of the phrase **at his coming**. The Greek word for **coming** is *Parousia*. The argument is that the word *Parousia* is not used in the clear passage on the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. There it says we *meet the Lord in the air*. The Thessalonians passage does not say Jesus is **coming to get his church at the Rapture**. Instead, we meet the Lord in the air. But wouldn’t Christ have to *come* into the clouds for us to meet him there?
3. Another resurrection occurs at the end of the 1,000-year kingdom when **he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power**. Daniel 12:1,2.

(Vs. 25) Christ **must reign** in his kingdom, **till he hath put all enemies under his feet**. How will Christ have enemies at the end of the millennium? Satan will be bound during that 1,000 year Kingdom period, but will be loosed out of his prison (Revelation 20:7). And Satan, the adversary, will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

But Satan will not be the last enemy to be destroyed.

Verse 26—

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. There will be no more death (Revelation 21:4).

Verse 27—

Therefore, God **hath put all things under his** (Christ’s) **feet**. Notice that with the phrase, **all things** there is an **exception?** Jesus Christ is the exception. He cannot be placed under his own feet because he is the Son of God.

Here’s the point—since the fall of Adam in the garden, Satan has had dominion over this earth, his current rule is over all of God’s created order. The reason for Jesus Christ dying on the cross was to restore the dominion man had lost to Satan and for God to have his glory and honor restored. Jesus Christ, through God the Father, will subdue all things—they will become his footstool (Psalm 110:1).

The reason Jesus Christ came was to be “Lord both of the dead and the living.” Romans 14:9.

And what is the result of the resurrection and Christ's subduing of all things? **That God may be all in all.** (vs. 28). In other words, his honor and glory will be restored, and no longer will Satan have dominion.

Now Paul moves back to a direct discussion about the resurrection.

Verse 29—

This has been a difficult verse for many. False doctrines have arisen because of a misinterpretation of this verse. Cults, like the Mormons, have created an entire doctrine of baptizing for the dead from this verse. And if you read it without any kind of interpretive eyes, you will have the wrong interpretation too.

Here's what's going on. Back in verse 12, there were some saying; there *is no resurrection of the dead*. So now these same people think they should be baptized for the dead. Paul's point is, *Why are you being baptized for the dead when you don't even believe there is a resurrection. What's the purpose? Paul is NOT giving any instructions for baptizing for the dead. It is just a statement he is making; what is the use of being baptized, if it is only to remain dead.* Which proves his comment in verse 19, *we are of all men most miserable*. That theology or doctrine would undoubtedly cause one to be miserable.

Verse 30—

He gives another example. If there is no resurrection, then **why stand we in jeopardy every hour?** There is no use for us to suffer for a lie.

Verse 31—

I have to admit I don't quite get what Paul is saying here. The word **protest** means to affirm by an oath. There is some confusion if the word **your** should be translated **our**. If that is the case, then Paul could be saying, "We, the apostles, rejoice in Christ Jesus and his resurrection, and we die daily for him." It is the resurrection that gave Paul and others the confidence to face dangers.

Verse 32, 33—

Fought with beasts is only used here. Did Paul fight literal **beasts** in Ephesus? The plain sense is that he did. Or, is he using a metaphor?

Bishop Ignatius of Antioch (around AD 100) wrote in his epistle to the Romans: "From Syria even to Rome, I fight with beasts ... being bound to ten leopards, I mean, a band of soldiers, who, even when they receive benefits, show themselves the worse."¹

Evil communications probably refers back to verse 12, where *say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead*. Therefore, *let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die*.

Verse 34—

This *evil communication* is **sin**. Those claiming that there is no resurrection may think they are spiritual, but **they have not the knowledge of God. Shame** on them!

¹ Lightfoot, Joseph Barber, and J. R. Harmer. *The Apostolic Fathers*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1891. Print.