

Christ's Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:5–8

Paul is writing to the believers in Corinth to put them on the right path. They had become sidetracked in their Christian walk and living carnal lives. Paul reminded them about the doctrine of salvation which he received from Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the Mystery. The Corinthians had received what Paul had preached and were standing in that doctrine, meaning that they were saved and secure in spite of living carnal lives. Their salvation was not dependent upon the manner in which they were living, otherwise salvation would have been received and maintained through works. It's a dangerous thing to confuse justification with sanctification. There are those who use works as a test of salvation. They reason if a person is saved that they will show (prove) that they are saved by their works. In Calvin's acronym, TULIP, the P stands for the perseverance of the saints. Covenant Theologians understand from 1 Corinthians 15:1–2 (and verses like Revelation 3:10) that the believer MUST persevere in the faith if they are to be ultimately saved. Those who fall away from holy living have proven that they were never saved. They maintain that proof of their salvation comes through works.

The big problem with this is that there is no way to determine whether or not a believer has done enough good works, or even if they have done the correct type of works to give them the assurance of salvation. In their theology, it is impossible for the believer to be fully assured of their salvation because the biblical requirements are not clearly defined. Those who adhere to this theology will continually be wondering if they have been elected unto salvation, or if they just thought they had been elected by God so that they could be saved. Of course, if they had been taught correctly, that election is about service not salvation, they would be alleviated of much of their consternation over their assurance by knowing works are not the pathway to assurance. Our assurance rests in accepting by faith what God told the Church, the Body of Christ, through the Apostle Paul. If He says our salvation depends solely upon our faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross, and we fully trust Him alone for our salvation, then we are absolutely, unconditionally, and eternally saved whether any special works are done or not.

Incorrect doctrine often comes from those who mix Israel's doctrine into doctrine meant for the Body of Christ. This mash up is most pronounced in Covenant Theology because it fails to divide truth (of what God gave to Israel) from truth (of what He gave to the Church, the Body of Christ). This should highlight the danger of not rightly dividing Scripture.

Resurrection defined

It is important to define what a resurrection is to understand 1 Corinthians 15. Many people confuse resurrection with raising from the dead. There are a handful or two of people who have been recorded in Scripture as having been raised from the dead. Lazarus is well known for having been raised back to life. All those who were raised from the dead ended up dying again.

A resurrection can also involve rising from the dead, but more importantly it includes having the body change into one that will not see death (Philippians 3:20–21). There are three resurrections spoken about in Scripture. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28–29; Acts 24:14), and there will be a separate resurrection of the members of the Church, the Body of Christ (Romans 6:5). The resurrection spoken about in the Old Testament and non-Pauline writings is focused on all people except members of the Church, the Body of Christ. The first resurrection will happen at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom when the Old Testament saints will join those saints who survived the Tribulation (Revelation 20:4–6; Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:28–30). It appears that there will be resurrected saints as well as saints who are waiting for their eternal bodies during the Millennial

Kingdom. Many people confuse this first resurrection with the resurrection of believers who are members of the church because they do not rightly divide Scripture.

The second resurrection will happen at the end of the Millennial Kingdom when unbelievers are brought before the Great White Throne and judged according to their works. All who come before Jesus Christ at this judgement will be found guilty and be condemned to the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:12–15).

There is a separate “Mystery” resurrection that was revealed to apostle Paul for the church. This resurrection is more often than not thought to be the same resurrection as what is called the first resurrection. However, the timeline of events of the two resurrections do not match up. For instance, we will be caught up to be with the Lord while the Lord will come down to set up His kingdom on the earth for their resurrection. Our meeting in the air will be to receive reward, but for them, the Lord will be coming in judgement (Revelation 19:11). There is nothing that needs to be fulfilled for our resurrection (the Rapture) to take place, but there are many things that need to be fulfilled before the Second Coming. These differences will be expanded upon in future lessons.

Eye witnesses (verses 5–8)

To verify that something happened eye witnesses are used. When there are over 500 eye witnesses, there is no chance that an event had been fabricated. This is true of Jesus Christ’s resurrection. Over 500 eye witnesses are listed as having seen Christ alive following His death on the cross prior to His ascension 40 days later (Acts 1:3).

On resurrection day, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning and found it empty. An angel told her that Jesus had risen and to tell the disciples (Matthew 28:5–7). She ran to tell Peter and John that they have taken away the Lord. They run to the tomb and Peter enters then leaves wondering what had happened (Luke 24:12; John 20:3–10). Mary went back to the tomb, weeping, where she was met by Jesus, whom she thought was the gardener (John 20:11–17). Jesus appeared to the other women who were at the tomb with Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:9). They report what they saw to the disciples (Matthew 28:8; Luke 24:9–10).

Jesus then appeared to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and He opens up their minds so they can understand what had just happened according to prophecy (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13–27). Later that same day, Jesus appeared to the disciples (excluding Thomas) in a locked room (Luke 24:36–37; John 20:19). They were told to touch Him to prove that they were not seeing a ghost. Jesus opened up their understanding of the events and gave them the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:44–John 20:22). Eight days later Jesus revisits the disciples, including Thomas (John 20:26–29).

Other appearances include meeting seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1–23); being with the eleven disciples when He gave them the so-called Great Commission (Matthew 28:6–20); seeing the disciples on the day of His ascension (Luke 24:50–51). Paul mentions that the risen Jesus Christ was seen by Peter, the disciples, 500 members of the Little Flock, and James the half-brother of Jesus. Paul also states that Jesus met with all the apostles, perhaps a reference to the apostles at the church at Jerusalem, a larger group than the original 12 disciples. Finally, Jesus Christ met personally with Paul. Paul was the last person who communicated directly with Jesus Christ.

All of these eye witnesses make it impossible for anyone to deny that a resurrection had occurred. This is why men theorize that Jesus never really died, or that it was another man who had actually died in His place. Since there are so many eye witnesses, skeptics find it necessary to discredit the whole account of the resurrection as nothing more than a well-crafted tale.

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