

**Paul—Untimely Born****1 Corinthians 15:8–12**

Paul has been defending the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in this fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. He began by reminding the Corinthian believers what he preached and what they believed when they were saved. Their faith was based on believing in the Person of Jesus Christ as Lord, and believing in His death, burial, and resurrection. If Jesus Christ had not risen from the grave, then their whole basis of belief would have been false and they would have believed in vain.

It seems that there were many questions within the Corinthians assembly about the resurrection. Perhaps they were questioning why they believed it in the first place. Paul puts these uncertainties to rest by not only reminding them of why there had to be a resurrection, but also added important details about what will happen at our resurrection. Our faith is based on the supposition that the resurrection actually took place. If there were no resurrection, then all who believed Paul's gospel would have believed in vain because they were believing a lie. It is impossible for a person to be saved if they don't believe that Jesus Christ was resurrected because they are not trusting God's word. If there were no resurrection, then Peter, the Disciples, and Paul would be writing lies. Fortunately, we can believe Scripture because the evidence is overwhelming that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical fact. We don't blindly believe that the Bible is God's word, but know it is because it has proven itself many times over to be a reliable and cohesive group of books. We don't blindly believe, but believe because the evidence shows the Bible is trustworthy. Compare our faith in God's word with faith in science. One never changes while the other literally changes every day. One has never been proven wrong, while the other is continually contested as new information is discovered. One comes from the source of all truth, while the other relies upon human observation. Upon which one are you going to trust?

The truth of Jesus Christ resurrection is irrefutable if the evidence is honestly evaluated. The empty tomb was attested by eye witnesses, and by unbelieving Jews who tried to explain why the tomb was empty (Matthew 28:11–15). Peter and the disciples went from depressed and defeated to energized and emboldened. The Disciples were once again looking forward to the coming of the Millennial Kingdom with Christ ruling from Jerusalem (Acts 1:6). Paul went from destroying believers in Jesus Christ to being persecuted for the sake of Christ. Paul's entire message was based upon Christ's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:13–14; 2 Timothy 2:8). Finally, there is the testimony of over 500 eye witnesses who had seen Jesus Christ following His death (1 Corinthians 15:4–5; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:33).

**Paul—born out of due time** (verses 8–10)

Paul was a biblical oddity, and he was well aware of that. He knew he didn't fit in with Israel's prophetic program. Paul was the last person to see the risen Jesus Christ, and the last person to see the risen and glorified Jesus Christ. John is the only other person to see Jesus Christ in his resurrected glory following his ascension (Revelation 1:17). Although most believe John wrote Revelation in the 90s, there is good evidence that he wrote it much earlier (see <http://www.matthewmcgee.org/7church.html>). I believe Paul was the last writer of Scripture. Although an early dating is used by those who see prophecy being fulfilled in the AD 70 destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, dispensationally, after Paul was raised up as an apostle (around AD 35), Israel's program, along with fulfillment of Israel's prophecy, has been put on hold. Paul's writings closed out the last things God revealed to mankind. He was revealed the summing up of all things in heaven and earth (Ephesians 1:10). Once the Mystery was revealed to Paul, God had revealed everything we needed to know.

Paul characterizes himself as one who was born out of due time. Many think that Paul is saying he was called after Jesus Christ was resurrected, unlike the other apostles. Others see Paul comparing himself to

an aborted or premature baby suddenly forced out of the womb into the light with his experience of being unexpectedly confronted by the Lord and his resultant conversion. Others, in less dramatic fashion, understand him saying that he is unworthy to have been given the position of apostle. Most people miss the dispensational significance to his statement.

Born out of due time is an untimely birth. He was born when he shouldn't have been born. His "birth" was more than just being saved. Jesus Christ saved him for a special purpose, as the apostle to the Gentiles in the Dispensation of Grace. The phrase, "Out of due time," is translated from one Greek word meaning an unexpected birth. Paul was raised up by God in a surprising and unexpected manner. Before Paul was raised up, God was dealing with the nation of Israel according to prophecy. This was the focus of Jesus and His disciples. This is the message Peter preached to the nation of Israel on Pentecost (Acts 2:16; 3:24–25). Once Israel rejected the call to come into the Kingdom through the Father (by John the Baptist), the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit (through Stephen), God temporarily put His prophetic program on hold and raised up Paul. This change of program came suddenly and took many by surprise. Paul was given the office of apostle and given a new message to preach, one that was in accordance to the revelation of the Mystery (Romans 16:25–26). Instead of the nation of Israel having preeminence over all other nations, God put Jew and Gentile on the same level.

Many say that Paul should have been the 12th apostle chosen to replace Judas. However, Paul was not qualified to take this position. The qualified candidate needed to be with Jesus beginning with His baptism (Acts 1:21–22). At that time, Paul was with the other Pharisees who were trying to stamp out all believers in Jesus (Acts 8:3; 9:1). As a blasphemer, he would never be given another chance to be forgiven of his sins (Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10). Paul acknowledges his past by admitting he was a blasphemer (1 Timothy 1:20). Paul could not have been saved in the previous dispensation because he was a blasphemer against the Holy Spirit, giving approval to Stephen's death and leading the persecution against believers (Acts 8:1) But in the new Dispensation of Grace, Paul was given the opportunity to be saved. Being born out of due time was not about getting saved, but about him being called to be an apostle in the dispensation of Grace. Notice the difference of the phrases *in due time* (at the appointed time) and *out of due time* (at a non-appointed time). Of course, God had already pre-planned that Paul would be called to be an apostle but had not revealed that He was going to do that until Israel, and her prophetic program, was put aside.

#### **A common gospel?** (verse 11–12)

A common interpretation of verse 11 is that this shows that both Peter and Paul were preaching the same gospel. They understand that whether Peter was preaching to the Jews or Paul was preaching to the Gentiles, the same message was given out.

However, it is important to evaluate this verse in light of the context. Paul is specifically speaking of the resurrection throughout 1 Corinthians 15, following a summary of what he taught them concerning salvation in verses 1–4. Paul uses the rest of the chapter to explain and defend the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Verse 12 clarifies verse 11, that the focus is on the preaching of Jesus Christ's resurrection, not on the gospel of salvation. The resurrection is a common element between Peter's and Paul's preaching, for without the resurrection, neither Peter nor Paul would have any hope in the message of what they are preaching. Peter and Paul did not preach the same gospel as shown by Galatians 2:7–9. This passage is about what gospel is being preached, not about how they are dividing up people groups. Peter was told to go to the Gentiles by Jesus in Matthew 28:19–20, while Paul often preached to Jews (Acts 13:16; 14:1; 17:17; 19:10; 18:4).

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