

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XXXV: Believing In Christ's Resurrection As Key To The Christian Faith

(1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. When we Christians claim that Jesus bodily rose from the dead the third day after He died on the cross, we assert a great miracle occurred, and that makes some think we hold to an unbelievable "fairy-tale happy ending" which spoils "the matchless story of Jesus," Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 217.
- B. However, Christ's resurrection is a cornerstone belief in the Christian Gospel, making resurrection a key part of our faith as Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, so we view that argument for our insight and edification:

II. Believing In Christ's Resurrection As Key To The Christian Faith, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

- A. One of the problems Paul addressed in the Corinthian Church was the claim by some in that body that "there is no resurrection of the dead," 1 Corinthians 15:12 KJV.
- B. Yet, Paul noted that belief in the resurrection was a key part of the Christian salvation Gospel, 1 Cor. 15:1-10:
 - 1. To address this denial of the resurrection, Paul wrote that he was then making known to his readers the Gospel which had been preached to them, which Gospel they had received, in which they stood as to their Christian faith, and through which they were saved, if they held fast to the word preached to them, unless they had believed in vain, 1 Corinthians 15:1-2. [Paul did not mean that their exercise of faith was itself futile, but that if that the Gospel they believed was false, they had believed in vain, B. K. C., N. T., p. 542.]
 - 2. Paul then reported that he had delivered as of "first importance" (NIV, ESV) what he had also received of the Lord Himself (1 Cor. 15:3a with Gal. 1:11-12) the Gospel of salvation, 1 Corinthians 15:3a.
 - 3. That Gospel from Jesus Christ was composed of the following essential truths, a cornerstone one being the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:3b-10:
 - a. First, Christ died for our sins according to the Old Testament Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3b. Passages like Isaiah 53:5, 10a predicted that Messiah would be made a sin offering in behalf of man's sins.
 - b. Second, Christ was buried, indicating proof of His physical death, 1 Corinthians 15:4a. This burial event was also predicted in Isaiah 53:9.
 - c. Third, Christ was raised from the dead on the third day according to the Old Testament Scriptures, v. 4b. Isaiah 53:10b predicts Messiah's days would be prolonged after He had made Himself a sin offering, what could only occur were He to be raised from the dead following His death as a sin offering!
 - d. Fourth, Christ appeared after His death to a variety of believers in a variety of circumstances, validating the reality of His bodily resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:5-10: (1) He appeared to Peter, and then (2) to the twelve disciples, 1 Cor. 15:5. The dramatic change in these men from their first meeting together behind closed doors out of fear of the Jews (John 20:19) to proclaiming Christ's resurrection before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-13) testifies to the firm belief these men came to have that Jesus had risen from the dead. (3) Christ then appeared to more than five hundred believers at one time, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote this epistle though some had since then passed away, 1 Cor. 15:6. This was a potent evidence for the resurrection: Paul made this claim to readers who denied belief in the resurrection, and they could have traveled to Israel and tested Paul's claim to see if at least 251 of the original 500 were still willing to say they all had seen the risen Lord together at the same time! Then, (4) Christ was seen of James, Jesus' once unbelieving half-brother (Ryrie S. B., KJV, ftn. to 1 Cor. 15:7 with John 7:5), and (5) then of all the apostles, 1 Cor. 15:7. (6) Last, Paul saw the risen Lord well after the others did, 1 Cor. 15:8. Paul's testimony is strong in that it came from one who once persecuted the church for its claims of Christ's resurrection, leading Paul to admit he was the least of the apostles and not fit to be called one because of his past persecution record, 1 Cor. 15:9. However, by God's grace, Paul had labored for Christ and the Gospel more abundantly than all the other witnesses, revealing the great work of God to disciple him and to make his testimony of Christ's resurrection even more powerful, 1 Cor. 15:10.
 - 3. Thus, whether through Paul or other witnesses of the resurrection, Christ had been preached as having died, having been buried and having risen the third day in accord with Scripture and these witnesses, and the Corinthian readers of Paul's epistle had believed it for salvation, 1 Corinthians 15:11.

Lesson: Christ's bodily resurrection is true and a pillar of Christian belief according to Scripture and witnesses.

Application: May we not doubt Christ's resurrection, but believe it as essential to our whole Christian faith.