

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XXXVII: Believing In Christ's Resurrection For Its Theological Necessity

(1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

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" that spoils "the matchless story of Jesus," Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 217.
- B. However, Christ's resurrection is **theologically** necessary or the Christian faith catastrophically fails, so we view the **theological** argument Paul provided in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 for our insight and edification:

II. Believing In Christ's Resurrection For Its Theological Necessity, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

- A. Having shown the logically catastrophic effects on the Christian faith of denying the resurrection in general and Christ's resurrection in particular, Paul affirmed that Christ is truly risen from the dead, 1 Cor. 15:20a.
- B. Indeed, He fulfilled the Old Testament figure of the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14) on His day of resurrection the third day after the Passover (Lev. 23:11 with v. 4-8), becoming the Firstfruits of all believers who are later resurrected in His likeness, 1 Corinthians 15:20b with 1 John 3:2.
- C. However, the resurrection of Christ as the Firstfruits of all believers **theologically** has **GREAT** ramifications regarding our beliefs on **creation versus evolution**, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22:
 1. Paul asserted that by man came death, and that the resurrection of the dead came also by man, explaining this assertion by claiming that as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all who are believers be made alive, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Corinthians 15:22.
 2. However, any form of evolution, even "theistic" evolution, where God allegedly used evolutionary processes to create, holds that death had to **precede Adam's fall into sin**, that evolutionary processes necessarily demand death to occur for evolution to occur as it fulfills the evolutionary function known as the "survival of the fittest," David H. Lane, "Theological Problems With Theistic Evolution," Bibliotheca Sacra 150 (April-June 1994): 155-74. [David H. Lane is a biologist in Wellington, New Zealand.]
 3. However, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 claimed that that death came **solely** by Adam's **sin**, meaning death is **not** an innate part of God's original creative order, but a foreign invader of an initially deathless creation, that evolution with its "survival of the fittest" mechanism is not a factual part of creation!
- D. The difference between evolution and Paul's teaching affects "doctrines central to Christianity," Ibid., p. 174:
 1. If one adopts any form of evolution, he denies that sin is the sole cause for physical death because he holds that death was an innate part of God's natural creative order before Adam fell into sin.
 2. If that be so, then Christ's death for sin does nothing to overcome death for man since death is not the sole product of sin, and that leaves man doomed to die and not be resurrected regardless if he trusts in Christ.
 3. However, Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 is that Christ's death for sin followed by His resurrection provides the sure hope for the resurrection of believers, for since **death is caused solely by sin**, Christ's atonement for sin will give the believer full and final victory over death via the resurrection!
- E. Based on the pure creation mode of his theology, Paul named other blessed events in 1 Corinthians 15:23-28:
 1. Christ, being the Firstfruits of the resurrection, is the Promise of the resurrection for Christians at the rapture, 1 Corinthians 15:23. [Paul did not here give a record of all the resurrections of believers, for he dealt in the context only with the resurrection of believers in the Church, Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 543.]
 2. Later, the end comes when Christ delivers up His Kingdom to the Father, and He has put down all rule and authority, even death itself, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. Again, Paul is not giving a detailed schedule of all future events, but only a concise summary to deal with Christians and their victory over death, Ibid.
 3. In the end, all things, including the last enemy, death itself, will be overcome, being subjected to God the Father, the Son Himself being subject to the Father Who had sent Him into the world to gain victory over sin and death, and the Father will be all in all, the Ultimate Conqueror over sin and death, 1 Cor. 15:27-28.

Lesson: *Theologically, Christ's resurrection must necessarily signal His victory over sin and its consequence in death, meaning we cannot hold to any form of evolution that treats death not as solely caused by sin, for accepting evolution and death before and independent of man's sin leaves man hopelessly a victim of death and not a conqueror of the grave regardless of Christ's atonement for sin.*

Application: *May we view Christ's resurrection after His victory over sin as theologically necessary for our faith.*