

Title: The Last Enemy  
Text: 1 Corinthians 15.20-28  
Theme: The power of the resurrection  
Occasion: Resurrection Day 2025  
Prop Stmtnt" The resurrection of Christ secures an eternal hope for every follower of Christ.

When my father was diagnosed with cancer, he was initially told that it was terminal. When another doctor told him that he could treat it, my dad took that to mean that he could be healed and the doctor did not correct my dad's perception. I understand that people who live with hope are easier to be around, but false hope is not hope. One day I asked the doctor if my dad's case was indeed terminal. He said yes. I then asked him why he said that he could treat him. He said that he could treat him but could not cure him. There is a difference between treating and curing. If I have a diagnosis, I want the truth as much as can be known. I want to know what I am facing so I can make decisions.

That is how we should approach the topic of resurrection. If we die and that's it and there is nothing after death, then ok then. Some people may want to keep attending church for sentimental reasons, but not me. I would be done and I would be mortified that I would have believed a lie and perpetuated a lie. The issue of the resurrection absolutely critical. Is it true? Does it stand up to scrutiny?

Corinth is about 35 miles west of Athens, Greece. The apostle Paul invested much time in Corinth and established a congregation of believers there. Disagreements and problems arose so some members of the church wrote a letter to Paul when he was in Ephesus with a list of questions. One of the issues raised had to do with the reality of the resurrection. Is it true that when followers of Christ die there will be a day when their bodies are resurrected? Is the resurrection a reality? Is this a real hope or is this, you know, just a nice story that makes people feel good? This was one of the questions Paul was asked and the letter of 1 Corinthians is his response to those questions. In chapter 15 he addresses the question of the resurrection.

Have you ever played those maze games where you try to draw a line from the opening to the end? (pic) Beginning in v.12, Paul takes us down the wrong path and explores the consequences of this life without the reality of the resurrection. When he gets to the end of the road (v.19) where he investigates the possibility of "no resurrection" it is like we not only come to a dead end, but we come to the edge of an abyss, where our questions and thoughts are like the pieces of loose gravel that fall over into the darkness below without making a sound because there is no bottom to this pit. Life now, without life to come, is unthinkable and would make this life now, unbearable. Then we read v.20.

Read Text:

Symbolic logic studies logical relationships and arguments by the use of symbols. A simple example would be: if  $A = B$  and  $B = C$  then  $A = C$ . In verses 12-19, Paul explores the logical

consequences of the idea that there is no resurrection. He uses “if” 6 times in those verses. He shows the futility and hopelessness of that view. He rejects that idea and then boldly declares (20a) the fact of the resurrection of Christ. He can do that because of the multiple eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ that he spoke to, but also because Christ appeared to him and spoke to him at his conversion on the Damascus Road. This is not conjecture for Paul, this is personal reality. The fact of the resurrection of Christ has logical consequences.

**1. The fact of the resurrection has consequences. (20)**

The resurrection of Christ sets a chain of events into motion. That is what “firstfruits” means. The first fruit on the vine or tree conveys three related ideas: 1) There is more to come. 2) A firstfruit represents the whole batch that is yet to come and 3) a firstfruit gives you a pattern of what to expect. By the way, the firstfruits were usually considered to be the best. Paul identifies the resurrection of Christ as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (20). This means that his resurrection is not the end, but the beginning of way more to come. This begins a new era. This inaugurates a new order. The resurrection of Christ makes it clear that there is a new sheriff in town and he is cleaning house. The resurrection of Christ provides a pattern of what we are to expect. Let’s explore now why the reality of Christ’s resurrection completely changes the game. Instead of using “if” (as Paul did in the previous paragraph, Paul builds his argument in this paragraph with the preposition “for.”

**2. Adam and Christ are Similar. (21-22)**

**A. Each one represents their people.**

*For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Adam was the legal representative for his people, which is all people. The decision, on the part of Adam to disobey God impacted every human being to be born. Adam is the representative for his people and Christ is the representative for his people. Like Adam, Christ was tempted directly by Satan. And Christ’s decision to perfectly obey the Father and fulfill all righteousness impacts every human being who is born in Him. Because Christ is the 2<sup>nd</sup> or last Adam, what he did affected those who are in Him.

**B. The actions of each were credited upon their people.**

There is a solidarity that we have with our respective leader that brings with it everything from the head and visits that upon the people in its group. *For as in Adam all die.* This text points out the reality of this structure as well as the ramifications of this structure. When you initially look at this, it does not seem fair. Adam was our representative. When he sinned, he sinned in our place and we were counted as guilty. We want to say, Wait, I was not there. I did not do that. Actually, we were there in one sense and if we had been in Adam’s place we would have done

the same thing. The actions of Adam were credited to his people and the actions of Christ were credited to his.

*So also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Adam sinned – therefore all of his people were credited with sin and sinned just like Adam. Because of Adam’s sin, he died spiritually and eventually physically.

Christ was righteous and all those who are in Christ are credited with the righteousness of Christ. Because of Christ’s perfect life and sacrificial death, we get the benefits of that. All of his people, though they were born into sin and were guilty, are now forgiven and declared righteous, because the righteousness of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam is more powerful than the sin of the 1<sup>st</sup> Adam. Christ died in our place. That means that we are credited with having died with Christ and being identified with him so that we get credit for the work that Christ did. Christ was also resurrected, so even though we will die physically, our bodies will be resurrected, like the glorious and perfect body of Jesus Christ.

Johnny often does the baptizing. You hear him say, “Buried with him (Christ) in the likeness of his death, raised with him in the likeness of his resurrection.” Meaning, this ordinance of baptism by immersion following your profession of faith in Christ, was commanded, defined and instituted by Christ to illustrate this new reality. Every person who trusts in Christ is now “in Christ.” Everyone in Adam gets credit for what Adam did, which is sin and sin brings death. Everyone in Christ gets credit for what Christ did, which was pay for sin by death (immersion) and rise again as evidence that his death broke the power of death.

### **C. Each one was guilty.**

In this Christ and Adam are both similar and different. Adam was guilty of his own sin, while Christ was considered guilty of all the sins that were placed upon Him. Christ was considered guilty but not because of his own sin.

## **3. Adam and Christ are Different. (21-22)**

### **A. Adam represents the people of the old order.**

*For as in Adam all die.* Adam is the head of and representative of the old order. We are all born into the old order. In the old order, everyone dies because everyone sins. The old order is death. The old order is marked by doctors, lawyers, hospitals, funeral homes, cemeteries, glasses, insurance, physical therapy, medication, rehab centers and nursing homes. The old order is isolation, loneliness, bitter words, contract negotiations, and broken promises. The old order is starving children, aborting babies, lying politicians, drug addiction, gambling addiction, porn, drunkenness, strip clubs, casinos, anger and murder. The old order is bad guys finishing first, thieves who don’t get caught, and liars who are believed. The old order is the bondage of sin that refuses to be broken and guilt that refuses to budge and fear that refuses to die. The old

order is dreams that don't live and nightmares that don't die. In the old order, death reigns! Death is more than the loss of life. Death is the loss of God from our lives. When Adam sinned, he was barred from Eden. He was separated from God. When Adam lost God, he became a separated person. He lost what it meant to be fully human because he was separated from God, and from what he was created to be, from Eve, and even from the earth that now worked against him. Death reigned and its ugliness affected everything.

**B. Christ represents the people of the new order.**

*So also in Christ shall all be made alive.* What is part of His amazing grace, is that the last Adam (Christ) submitted himself to the order of the 1<sup>st</sup> Adam. Jesus became part of the old order and Christ bore Adam's curse (our curse) and bore it all upon Himself, so that we could share in the last Adam's victory. As such, Christ is the head of and representative of the new order. Those who are born again are adopted into the family of God are now part of the new order in which everyone who is in the new order lives again to never die again. The new order is life. The new order is the recovery of that which was lost. The new order is wholeness, truth, light, integrity, purity, freedom, joy, worship, and eternity. Every day is all day without night. There is no separation, no bondage, no guilt, and no fear. The future is the eternal present and nothing can harm you. You are known even as you know. You know that are loved perfectly even as you love perfectly. You are strong, complete and fully alive. Every sense is perfectly tuned by God to see, hear, taste, feel and smell His perfections. Every muscle and nerve respond with complete perfection to His Worthiness. The new order is eternal life that is completely perfect.

**C. Adam's people are his by nature.**

You are in Adam automatically. You do not get to choose your parents. You are born into this life in the old order with Adam as the head of your union. The contract that he got at the bargaining table with Satan in the garden is what you are stuck with. It is ours by nature and confirmed by our choices. We are of Adam. But we don't have to stay that way. There is an adoption offered to you by faith alone, in Christ alone.

**D. Christ's people are his people only by faith.**

All of the benefits associated with Christ's death, resurrection, return and reign are yours only if you are in Christ. (23c) Only those who belong to him are resurrected to eternal life. Those who do not belong to Christ are still in the old order and absolutely have no eternal hope.

**4. The end is the beginning. (23-28)**

The end is the beginning. The death and resurrection of Christ put a sword into the heart of the old order and set in motion the new one. The resurrection of Christ announced the dawn of a new era. A new age has come. The eternal plan of God hidden for generations, is now going public. And it all fits together. In verses 23-28, Paul utilizes military type language to help us understand this. He says, "each in his own order". Here is the order: resurrection, return and

reign. He returns to the idea of firstfruits because more is coming. The resurrection is God going public with his plan to restore this world back to its rightful owner and back to its rightful order. Christ rose again from the dead, ascended in order to return and take over. Have you ever seen these stories how a son finds his dad's favorite car from his dad's younger years, buys it, restores it and then surprises him with it? I love those. This is what Jesus is doing with the world, except it is not a secret. It is the plan. In order for Christ to reign as the undisputed ruler he must destroy all dominion, authority, power. He puts all his enemies under his feet (great military picture), and destroys death itself. He does this so that He can turn it all back to the Father. (v.24) "*then comes the end*" Christ takes back what is rightfully his, what has been entrusted to Him by the Father and He gives it back to the Father, back in its original design, just like new! Christ is the one chosen by the Eternal Counsel of God to carry out God's purposes in this universe. Then, when the King of kings and Lord of lords has re-established His complete and total kingdom, he turns it back over to the Father. So that, God may be all in all. This is the eternal plan and eternal reality.

When Christ rose again, he cracked the foundations of the old order. The towers of Mordor are crumbling. The walls of Babylon are caving in. The dominion, authority and power of this world system is doomed. It tries to whitewash the gray color of death. The old order is doomed and damned. Get out! If you don't get out it will take you with it. There is a way out. There is only one way out. That way is Christ. You have to be in Christ and you can only be in Christ by trusting completely in what Christ has done. Get out of Adam and get into Christ. You can only do this by personally believing in Jesus and in his death on the cross was the full and final payment for your sin.

I was at a gym, completing my workout, when I heard over the sound system that they were going to be testing the fire alarm system so when the alarm went off, people should ignore it. A few minutes later, I was getting out of the shower, when the screeching foghorn alarm started blaring and a voice told everyone to go to the closest exit and vacate the building immediately. Another guy, who apparently did not know that this was a test, stuck his head out from his shower with a look of dreadful panic on his face. He said, "We gotta get out of here, like now?" All he had was a towel and it was cold outside. I said, "Yea, you need to go now." Actually, I did not say that, but I sure wanted to. I assured him that he was not in danger. There was no fire, they were just testing the system. He was obviously relieved. Beloved, this world is going down. The end of v.24 makes that clear. Christ is going to dismantle every rule, authority and power. The entire world system is going to collapse. This text is part of the foghorn alarm that is warning you to get out and get to safety. This is not a test, this is real and it is forever. Your only hope is Christ.

Everything that God does fits into the plan that God designed. This eternal plan will not be stopped, will not be changed and will not be thwarted. The resurrection of Christ guarantees the resurrection of every follower of Christ and guarantees our happy participation in His Kingdom. It is all part of his eternal plan, guaranteed by the empty tomb.