

# First Corinthians 15

## **Introduction:**

1. This is one of the most glorious chapters in the Bible! Out of 1189 chapters, that makes it very precious to believers!
2. If this chapter is one of your favorites, you have not erred; your heart is in the right place – seeking eternal life above.
3. There are more great mysteries of the gospel revealed in this chapter than likely in any other single chapter of the Bible.
4. Here is the gospel – the good news given to the apostles to carry into the world – Jesus has delivered us from death!
5. The gospel brings life and immortality to light; it does not bring life and immortality (II Tim 1:10)! Immortality? Yes!
6. This is the chapter you want to read after visiting a cemetery, attending a funeral, or going to a hospice or rest home.
7. The Lord Jesus Christ has conquered death, and He will open all graves and call the bodies of all men out of them.
8. Jesus Christ proved His victory over death by forecasting His burial and resurrection and then rising again with power.
9. This chapter stands alone, as chapter 14 is entirely about spiritual gifts, and chapter 16 is about giving and exhortations.
10. Paul must deal in this chapter with false teachers at Corinth denying the resurrection, which was very difficult for all pagans and many Jews to accept (Matthew 22:23; Acts 17:32; 23:6-8; 24:21; 26:6-8; 28:20; II Timothy 2:17-18).

## **Outline of Chapter 15:**

1. Introduction to the resurrection controversy (1-12)
2. Various arguments proving the resurrection (13-34)
3. Detailed instruction about the resurrection (35-57)
4. Conclusive response to the resurrection (58)

### 15:1 **Paul turned to his new subject – the gospel that he had taught, and they had received.**

- A. Having ended teaching on spiritual gifts, he then took up the resurrection with “moreover.”
- B. What is the gospel? The word means good news or glad tidings (Acts 13:32; Rom 10:15).
- C. What is the gospel? The wonderful information about Jesus Christ and salvation by Him.
- D. The gospel is information to be declared, for it is certain and sure (Acts 13:32; Luke 1:1-4).
- E. The gospel is to be earnestly contended for by those who believe it (Gal 1:6-9; Jude 1:3).
- F. Paul preached this gospel to them, for it is what Jesus Christ had given Paul (Gal 1:10-24).
- G. Paul labored in the city of Corinth 18 months, preaching the gospel to them (Acts 18:1-11).
- H. They had received the gospel by believing it and being baptized unto Christ (Acts 18:1-11).
- I. Paul reminded them their existence as a Christian church was based on faith in the gospel.
- J. We must never forget the fundamental essentials of the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, for it is these great mysteries of the gospel that have united us as saints together in this church.

### 15:2 **Gospel salvation to hope and joy is dependent on remembering what you were taught.**

- A. The salvation here is the practical salvation of assurance, hope, and peace in the gospel.
  1. This is the subjective salvation of knowing you are God’s elect and bound for heaven.
  2. This is the same salvation Timothy could secure for himself and his hearers (I Tim 4:16).
  3. This is not the gift of eternal life to be lost by senility or false doctrine (II Timothy 2:19).
  4. The hope of eternal life, which unbelievers do not have, can be lost (15:19; I Thes 4:13).
  5. If you take any other position on this verse, you can lose your salvation by memory loss, by forgetting things you have been taught, or by false teachers misleading you.
- B. The good news of the gospel is only as valuable as your retention of its glad tidings for you.

### 15:3 **The primary emphasis in Paul’s preaching were facts of Christ’s death and resurrection.**

- A. The words “first of all” do not refer to the Corinthians, but to Paul’s order and emphasis.
- B. He had taught earlier in this epistle that Jesus Christ crucified was his great emphasis (2:2).
- C. The gospel he preached did not originate with Paul: he simply relayed what he had received.
- D. The principal message of the gospel was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- E. Though these primary aspects of the gospel are simple, they must be according to Scripture.
- F. We have no right to preach anything about these events, unless we can surely substantiate it.

- 15:4 **The primary emphasis in Paul's preaching were facts of Christ's death and resurrection.**
- A. The burial of Jesus Christ is important to prove His death and indicate a true resurrection.
  - B. The resurrection of Christ had many witnesses and is a chief fact of the precious gospel.
  - C. Both the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be taught according to the Scriptures.
    1. Jesus was buried on a Wednesday night before 6:00 P.M. and rose Saturday at that time.
    2. He was in the grave and ground exactly as He had prophesied – three days and nights.
- 15:5 **The message that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead was based on eyewitness accounts.**
- A. Peter was one of the first to see our risen Lord Jesus, after Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:7,9).
    1. This church highly esteemed Peter, to whom Paul had earlier alluded (1:12; 3:22).
    2. The two from Emmaus arrived at the upper room to hear of Peter's visit (Luke 24:34).
  - B. Was it twelve that saw Jesus? Or was it eleven (Matt 27:5)? Or was it ten (John 20:24)?
    1. It is our duty to identify the sense of verses, not merely the sound (Neh 8:8). The text does not say there were twelve that saw Jesus. Can you read and comprehend that?
    2. The text uses "the twelve," which refers to that specific and well-known body of twelve chosen apostles, even if only 10 of them were present at the time.
    3. If the Bible tells us there was twelve of some thing, we believe there were exactly twelve.
    4. This care in determining the sense is important in such things as the ten toes of the Roman beast and the seven heads and mountains of that great city (Dan 7:7; Rev 13:1).
    5. How many schools are in the Big Ten Conference? Eleven since 1990 with Penn State!
    6. How many tribes of Israel are recorded? Fourteen, with Levi, Joseph, and his two sons!
- 15:6 **There was an encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ by over 500 brethren at one time.**
- A. To have 500 eyewitnesses of the risen Lord Jesus is statistically far superior to just twelve.
  - B. To have these eyewitnesses at the same time allowed for certain corroboration of the facts.
  - C. While some eyewitnesses had died, the majority of them were still alive for confirmation.
  - D. Witnesses could confirm the truth; the truth was not opposed by any witnesses!
  - E. Here is one of the precious references by the Spirit to the death of saints as merely sleeping.
- 15:7 **The risen Lord Jesus was seen by James, our Lord's brother, and then by all the apostles.**
- A. These are not all the sightings of the Lord Jesus Christ, but a number of valuable ones.
  - B. Cephas and James are listed specifically, because they were pillars in the church (Gal 2:9).
  - C. James of Zebedee was dead by this time, so Paul would not have referenced him (Acts 12:2).
  - D. Was it all the apostles? Or was it all the living apostles? Judas Iscariot was dead!
  - E. This could easily have been at His ascension, where the eleven received final instructions.
- 15:8 **Our brother Paul saw the Lord Jesus with private viewings, as an exceptional apostle.**
- A. He saw the Lord Jesus Christ, for he had already affirmed it earlier in this very epistle (9:1).
  - B. Paul saw Jesus on the Damascus road, when he was struck down (Acts 9:17; 22:14; 26:16).
  - C. Paul saw Jesus by visions and revelation when he went to heaven for a visit (II Cor 12:1-6).
  - D. Paul saw Jesus by personal appearance and instruction in Arabia (Galatians 1:12 cp 1:17).
  - E. As a child might be born well past the due date, Paul saw Jesus separate from the apostles.
- 15:9 **Paul identified the reason for a later showing of Christ due to his persecution of the church.**
- A. In certain respects, Paul was least of the apostles, though he shortly boasted of labors (15:10).
    1. He was not chosen early in the ministry of Jesus to spend over three years with Him.
    2. He spent many years in furious zeal and violent activities against the churches of Christ.
    3. Due to this great animosity against Christ and His disciples, he was inferior to the others.

- B. But when it pleased God to reveal Jesus to Paul and make him a preacher, He obeyed the heavenly vision with great zeal (Gal 1:15-16; Acts 26:19).
- C. Though Paul had persecuted those holding the resurrection, now he preached it with them.

- 15:10 **In spite of his past, the grace of God and Paul's diligence combined to make a great apostle.**
- A. God mercifully saved Paul from his rebellion and violent opposition to Jesus (I Tim 1:15-16).
  - B. Yet, Paul did not squander any of that grace, as many other saints (II Cor 6:1; Heb 12:15).
  - C. But he did not take full credit himself, for He knew that it was God's grace that turned him.
  - D. However, he did labor more abundantly than all the other apostles, which were before him.
  - E. A man who truly knows he was a great sinner and totally dependent on God's grace saving him will burn himself out in serving the Lord like Paul did.
- 15:11 **Returning to his verification of Christ's resurrection, he declared a unified apostolic gospel.**
- A. Whether it was the original apostles, other disciples, or Paul, they preached a risen Christ.
  - B. And when the message of the resurrected Christ reached Corinth, they believed that message.
  - C. They had been converted, baptized, and formed into a church, believing in His resurrection.
- 15:12 **Paul confronted the church for allowing heretical teachers to oppose the apostolic gospel.**
- A. Consider that this epistle was read to the church, as Paul exposed some teachers (Col 4:16).
  - B. He rebuked the church for allowing heretical notions against the apostolic gospel of Christ.
  - C. Observe how he introduced the subject gently with a testimony that was filled with historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ before he gets to a confrontational rebuke.
  - D. The fundamental measure of New Testament teaching is to make it match the apostles.
  - E. For any other gospel or spirit is not of God (II Cor 11:3-4; Gal 1:16-17; I John 4:1-6).
- 15:13 **Paul used a hypothetical consideration of the consequences of denying the resurrection.**
- A. Here is Paul using deductive reasoning: If there is no resurrection, then Jesus did not rise.
  - B. If these false teachers, possibly Sadducees, were going to deny the resurrection of the body, they were denying Jesus Christ's resurrection as well, which was fundamental to their faith.
- 15:14 **Denying the resurrection of Christ made Paul's preaching and their believing vain.**
- A. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, Paul's preaching was a sham, for he emphasized it!
  - B. If Jesus had not risen, their believing and baptisms were a sham, for the gospel included it.
  - C. The relationship between preacher and hearer would be totally corrupted (Romans 1:12).
- 15:15 **Denying the resurrection made the apostles liars, for they declared Christ's resurrection.**
- A. There were serious consequences to this heresy at Corinth, and Paul made them face them.
  - B. The apostles had as their principal message the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
  - C. Arguing deductively, Paul declared that denying the resurrection denied Christ's resurrection.
- 15:16 **Paul again used hypothetical consideration of the consequences of denying the resurrection.**
- A. Here is Paul using deductive reasoning: If there is no resurrection, then Jesus did not rise.
  - B. If these false teachers, possibly Sadducees, were going to deny the resurrection of the body, they were denying Jesus Christ's resurrection as well, which was fundamental to their faith.

- 15:17 **Denying the doctrine of the resurrection meant they were still in sin and a vain religion.**  
A. Paul pursued his hypothetical reasoning from the deduction Christ had not risen (15:16).  
B. If Jesus Christ had not been raised from the dead, their religion and salvation were shams.  
C. The resurrection proved that Jesus had defeated sin and its punishment (Rom 4:25; 8:34).  
D. If He had not risen, Scripture was false, sin had beaten Him, and they were still condemned.
- 15:18 **Denying the doctrine of the resurrection meant that their dead members were lost forever.**  
A. One of the blessings of Christianity is the hope for dead relatives who have died in Christ.  
B. Here is one of the Bible examples of referring to the death of saints as merely falling asleep.  
C. There are consequences to heresy – and the consequence here was to damn dead members.
- 15:19 **Giving away the hope of the resurrection ruins Christianity as far as a sensible religion.**  
A. Christianity is a life of self-denial, which is pain for nothing, if there is no future expectation.  
B. If we deprive ourselves of the sensual pleasures of sin, we do so for the reward of heaven.  
C. There is brief pleasure in sin, which we deny for hope of future pleasure (Heb 11:24-26).  
D. There is persecution to follow Jesus Christ, which is only compensated for by heaven itself.  
E. Paul reasoned in himself to endure present affliction for future blessings (II Cor 4:8-18).
- 15:20 **Jesus Christ conquered death by His own resurrection, which proves His people will follow.**  
A. Paul had proved the resurrection of Jesus Christ by many historical proofs already (15:1-11).  
B. He ended hypothetical references to their heretical ideas and stated the resurrection as a fact.  
C. Jesus Christ did not come into the world for Himself (Matt 1:21), so He will raise His people.  
D. If He successfully defeated death by raising Himself, it is certain proof His people will rise.  
E. The firstfruits were an offering of the initial yield in harvest, confirming what was coming.
- 15:21 **The doctrine of representation in Adam and Christ is one of the proofs of resurrection.**  
A. Death came on men by one's sin – Adam – which was counted against us (Rom 5:12-14).  
B. The resurrection to life comes by one – Christ – which will surely come to all His elect.  
C. We did not request death, seek death, or earn death: it was given by legal representation.  
D. We do desire life, seek life, and cannot earn life: and it shall be given by representation.
- 15:22 **Adam and Jesus Christ have important roles as representative for their respective people.**  
A. All that are in Adam, by natural generation, shall suffer the consequence of his sin – death.  
B. All that are in Christ, by sovereign election, shall receive the benefits of His obedience – life.  
C. The two representatives do not represent the same peoples, for only some are in Jesus Christ.  
D. The death and life considered here are the death of the body and the resurrection of the body.  
E. The “as ... even so” construction is very powerful in making the representation comparable.  
F. Brother Paul gives a full comparison of the two representatives elsewhere (Romans 5:12-19).
- 15:23 **The order of the two representatives will be followed, and Christ's elect will be resurrected.**  
A. Adam, the first representative came long ago; he disobeyed, and we are born to die by Him.  
B. Jesus, the second representative came; He obeyed, and we shall surely follow Him in life.  
C. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and being our representative proved that we shall rise.  
D. Paul declared the timing of the resurrection – at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.  
3. Why didn't he make mention of the seven-year tribulation of hallucinating Futurists?  
4. When will He raise the dead bodies of those tribulation believers converted by Jews?

- 15:24 **The kingly reign of Jesus Christ is to destroy all enemies before submitting to God alone.**
- A. The end occurs at the Second Coming of Christ, when Jesus will end His conquests (15:23).
  - B. Right now He is reigning over His enemies, regenerating His elect, and interceding for them.
  - C. A day is coming in which we will be joint-heirs with Jesus of God's inheritance (Rom 8:17).
  - D. Jesus is now reigning as King over His church in the midst of His enemies (Psalm 110:1-4).
  - E. This event is not describing the end of Jesus as King, but rather a new era of His reign.
  - F. The tabernacle of David, including the Gentile elect, will be presented to God (Heb 2:13).
  - G. Isn't it amazing that Paul does not make any mention of any sort of millennial kingdom here?
  - H. The argument in this and the following verses is that Christ's reign presupposes a resurrection by virtue of the necessity for Him to destroy death.
  - I. The entire present dispensation and situation is waiting for Jesus Christ to show total supremacy over death by raising the dead.
- 15:25 **Jesus Christ is reigning for the certain and ultimate objective of vanquishing all enemies.**
- A. Paul had just pinpointed the resurrection at Christ's coming and total defeat of all enemies.
  - B. Jesus Christ is presently reigning, with the goal before Him of fulfilling prophecy (Ps 110:1).
  - C. Therefore, the present dispensation continues according to the plan of God with a sure end.
  - D. The reason the resurrection has not occurred yet is God's plan for crushing all His enemies.
  - E. There is a proper order for all things, and the saints on earth await His final victory over all.
- 15:26 **The defeat of death will be included in the destruction of enemies of Jesus Christ and God.**
- A. It will be the last enemy defeated, for it will be the essential product of the resurrection itself.
  - B. Death will be defeated when all dead saints will be resurrected bodily for everlasting life.
- 15:27 **God put all things under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, except for Himself, obviously.**
- A. Appealing to the prophecy of Psalm 8:6, Paul applied it to the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 2:7-9).
  - B. In order to keep proper authority relationships, Paul repeated Christ's subordination (11:3).
  - C. Though David nor Paul mention His subordination, we understand it by comparing Scripture.
- 15:28 **Jesus Christ will deliver up His defeated enemies and the kingdom to make God all in all.**
- A. Jesus Christ is subject to God now, but He will formally declare His subordination at the end.
  - B. The relationship in heaven will be Jesus and His joint-heir brethren under the rule of God.
  - C. Only the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is or ever will be subject to God as Lord.
    1. Verses like this do not teach inferior deity of the Lord Jesus, but rather His human nature.
    2. Jesus is the Godman – in His divine nature He is God; in His human nature He is man.
- 15:29 **Paul argued from the symbology of baptism by immersion for the resurrection of the dead.**
- A. Paul will use two practical arguments to appeal to these saints to hold fast to the resurrection.
    1. The first practical argument uses baptism's symbolism – burial and resurrection (15:29).
    2. The second practical argument uses implications from Paul's deadly vocation (15:30-32).
  - B. Only Baptists can rightly grasp this text, for it depends entirely upon baptism by immersion.
    1. Presbyterians and other baby-sprinklers from the Mother Whore are totally at a loss here.
    2. They concoct novel interpretations left and right to avoid the sure necessity of immersion.
    3. Matthew Henry gets credit for listing the most and denying that any are very meaningful!
  - C. Baptists should be able to see clearly and easily Paul is simply arguing for the resurrection.
    1. We know this verse cannot teach anything not taught elsewhere in Scripture (II Pet 1:20).
    2. What is the only context for this verse? The resurrection of dead bodies from their graves.
    3. Baptists compare Scriptures from numerous places that baptism is a burial and resurrection (Matt 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39; Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12; I Pet 3:21).

4. The middle clause proves that Paul was surely arguing for the resurrection from the dead in the first and third clauses.
  5. Paul's argument is simple – baptism is clearly violated by those rejecting the resurrection.
  6. Paul said, "Why are you Corinthians baptizing by immersion, if there is no resurrection?"
  7. If there is no resurrection, then baptism by immersion becomes only a symbol of burial.
  8. The only challenge is how we understand "for the dead" in the first and third clauses.
  9. The introductory word "else" has a sense of "in another case, otherwise, or if not" (OED).
  10. The words "what shall they do" are Paul's question about the present mode of immersion.
  11. "The dead" here are not specific dead or individual dead relatives but rather a collective noun for the dead bodies of saints (15:12,13,15,16,21,32,35,42,52).
  12. How will we baptize without the hope of a resurrection? Just immerse and drown them?
  13. Therefore, we understand an elliptical sense of the words "for the dead," such as for the resurrection of the dead, for the expectation of the dead, for the hope of the dead.
  14. Ellipsis is a common figure of speech, which must be used in other places (Prov 20:16; 22:1; Matt 11:18-19; 14:19; Acts 18:22; Rom 8:5; Gal 5:4; Gal 5:17; etc., etc.).
- D. The Mormons, followers of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, baptize for dead relatives.
1. They construct underground baptisteries and keep massive genealogical databases in their efforts to baptize by proxy the dead relatives that never heard of Joe Smith and company.
  2. Their absurd doctrine from this text breaks the first rule of Bible study – no prophecy of Scripture can give a single, solitary, unique, separate, or individual doctrine (II Pet 1:20).
  3. If they had simply remembered "in the mouth of two or three witnesses," they would have been saved going off the deep end (no pun intended) in baptizing for dead relatives.
  4. As in most all heresies pertaining to baptism, it began with the idea that baptism saves.

15:30 **Paul, Sosthenes, and the other apostles gladly faced great dangers due to the resurrection.**

- A. This begins Paul's second practical argument for the proof of the resurrection (15:30-32).
- B. If there is no resurrection of the dead, we are the biggest fools for taking on such great perils.
- C. Why would Paul and the other apostles face grave peril without hope of a resurrection?

15:31 **Paul argued that their rejoicing in the gospel was by his frequent encounters with death.**

- A. This is one of the obscure texts in which commentators speculate in many various directions.
- B. If we stay true to the immediate context and connection of the words, we can understand it.
  1. The immediate context is both before (15:30) and after (15:32) – Paul's danger of death.
  2. Paul protested against the Corinthians' rejoicing, in that he was daily in danger of death.
  3. The Corinthians rejoiced due to Paul's labors for them (II Cor 1:24; 2:1-3; Phil 1:25-26).
  4. Paul and most other believers were living those early days in great danger (Rom 8:36).
  5. Paul faced death often, and he wanted the Corinthians to see past their joy (II Cor 11:23).
  6. Though the Corinthians enjoyed their new religion, Paul had brought it with fear of death.
  7. Therefore, we may supply an ellipsis in this way, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord as the fruit of my labors, I die daily."

15:32 **Paul compared his ministerial dangers to gladiators, who were forced to Epicureanism.**

- A. "If after the manner of men" is Paul using a natural case for arguing (9:8; Ro 6:19; Gal 3:15).
  1. We must make a choice here as to whether Paul is speaking literally or metaphorically.
  2. We are continuing Paul's second practical argument based on deadly dangers (15:30-31).
  3. In the other places Paul used the words "after the manner of men," he was metaphorical.
  4. Paul began this line of reasoning with the hypothetical and/or conditional "if," rather than the certain and/or declarative "since" or "when."
  5. Neither Luke nor Paul tell us elsewhere about such a notable thing as fighting beasts.

6. Paul, as a Roman citizen, would likely have avoided such severe treatment by Romans.
  7. The sense is: if I was a gladiator without hope of a resurrection, I must be an Epicurean.
  8. The sense is: why would I face constant death like a gladiator, since I am not Epicurean?
  9. The sense is: deadly vocations assume resurrection or Epicureanism; I am not Epicurean.
  10. The sense is: what is the advantage of my deadly vocation, unless there is a resurrection?
- B. Even carnal men only risk death for hope of life after death, or they become Epicureans i.e. Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War II and the present suicide bombers of Islam.
- C. It is wonderful that Paul used Epicureanism as obviously fallacious and vain, for that is America's most popular religion in 2004 – the pursuit of pleasure above all else (II Tim 3:4).

15:33 **Allowing false doctrine to be discussed or taught will corrupt good manners in Christ.**

- A. The Corinthians had allowed false teachers to spread heresy against the resurrection (15:12).
- B. The corruption being considered is destroying faith and hope in a resurrection (II Tim 2:18).
- C. Paul warned against deception, because so many think that discussion of heresy or companionship with heretics cannot cause any great harm.
- D. The gospel did not allow false religious ideas to be discussed (Rom 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11).

15:34 **They needed to awake from doctrinal slumber and get the church agreeing in knowledge.**

- A. A carnal or ignorant Christian is described as one asleep (Rom 13:11; Ep 5:14; I Thes 5:6-7).
- B. It is the duty of saints to correct, instruct, and convert one another (Gal 6:1-2; Jas 5:19-20).
- C. In a sense, a church is only as strong as its weakest members, proportionate to their ability.
- D. It is a shame when church members are allowed to doze doctrinally and fall for error.

15:35 **Paul headed off scorners by raising their objections and answering them himself.**

- A. We know these are scornful questions Paul expected for two obvious reasons in the context.
  1. In spite of the multitude of arguments Paul had just made, scorners would not be content.
  2. He called this single scorner a "fool," whom he used to represent others like him (15:36).
  3. Instead of accepting and submitting to divine revelation, scorners must rationalize truth.
  4. Saints believe God, no matter how difficult to comprehend (Rom 4:17-21; Heb 11:1-3).
  5. Do you doubt God's revelation of creation when someone asks you about Adam's navel?
  6. This "enlightened" and "scientific" generation fulfils Paul's perilous times warning due to their infatuation and obsession with rationalizing everything (II Tim 3:1-7).
- B. Fools and scorners must be shut up, but they are not worth debating (Pr 26:4-5; Titus 1:9-11).
- C. Paul had informed the church just a little earlier he knew they had false teachers (15:12).

15:36 **Paul began his answer and rebuke of foolish skeptics by considering the planting of seeds.**

- A. Having raised the foolish questions in the previous verse, Paul now began his answer (15:35).
- B. Using the word "fool" is not always wrong: it is wrong without justifiable cause (Matt 5:22).
  1. Jesus called both His disciples and the Pharisees "fools" (Matt 23:17,19; Luke 24:25).
  2. While most foolish and unlearned questions are avoided (II Tim 2:23), Paul needed to shut the mouths of gainsayers, because the rest of the church was in the balance (Pr 26:5).
- C. Paul then proceeded to bring up farming as his first example of the result of burying a body.
  1. A seed must be buried in the ground in order for it to bring forth new life in a plant.
  2. The new life of a plant must begin by the death and burial of a seed in the earth.
  3. The seed corrupts in the moisture of the ground and germinates into new plant life!
  4. This simplistic illustration is to show that farming itself answered their skeptical doubts.

- 15:37 **There is a great transformation of the seed body buried and the plant body that rises.**  
A. While only a seed is placed under the ground, a very different and complete plant grows up.  
B. Paul answered: it is entirely unreasonable to think the body cannot change from what is buried, since basic planting expects a very different body to arise from the mere seed buried!
- 15:38 **God gave a unique plant body to every seed body that is buried under ground in planting.**  
A. Though only a small seed is planted in the ground, a uniquely glorious plant body comes up.  
B. Jesus described a mustard seed as very small but producing a very large tree (Matt 13:31-32).  
C. Paul answered: if God is able to give mere seeds such great bodies, He can also for men.
- 15:39 **Paul showed the difference between the various classes of animal life on planet earth.**  
A. His point is to answer skeptics, who could only think of decaying physical bodies (15:35).  
B. By comparing the different characteristics and capabilities of the various classes of animal bodies, Paul justified thinking that God was certainly able to make different kinds of bodies.
- 15:40 **There is a significant difference in glory between the terrestrial and celestial bodies.**  
A. For skeptics that could only think of our existing physical bodies, Paul reminded them of the difference in glory between a terrestrial (earthly) body and celestial (heavenly) body.  
B. As there are differences in glory between the class of things on earth and the class of things in heaven, so there is justification for resurrected bodies to be different than present bodies.
- 15:41 **The celestial bodies show a great variety from one another in degrees of glory.**  
A. God made the sun the greater light and the moon the lesser light in the beginning (Gen 1:16).  
B. The stars, due to being so much farther from earth, have different glory from sun and moon.  
C. The stars, due to being of various sizes and various differences from earth, differ in glory.  
D. Paul's point continued to be the variety of celestial bodies, which justifies resurrected bodies.  
E. There is not enough evidence in this verse, and it was not Paul's point, to show that the saints in heaven will have varying degrees of glory themselves. They may, but it is not proven here.
- 15:42 **The resurrection of the dead will greatly alter the body from corruption to incorruption.**  
A. As Paul contrasted many different bodies, the resurrection will greatly alter the human body.  
B. His primary point in answering skeptics is the great alteration and variety in existing bodies.  
1. A seed through burial generates a plant greatly superior and different from the seed.  
2. Whether on earth or in the sky, there are different bodies with different characteristics.  
C. The human body is sown in corruption; it is raised incorruptible. What a change in substance!  
1. A physical body is very corruptible, especially at burial when sown in the ground: it rots at a very rapid rate, creating dangerous toxins, and must be buried deep under ground.  
2. But the spiritual body is raised with a character and nature incapable of decay or rot.
- 15:43 **Paul continued his comparison between human bodies before and after the resurrection.**  
A. The human body is sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory. What a contrast in quality!  
1. A physical body is not very honorable, especially at burial when it is sown in the ground: it is loathsome, putrefying, stinks, and has nothing attractive or impressive about it at all.  
2. But the spiritual body we shall get will be glorious in appearance like our glorified Lord!  
B. The human body is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power. What a contrast in strength!  
1. A physical body is totally weak, especially when it is sown in the ground: a dying person often cannot raise their head, open their eyes, talk, move limbs, breathe, bathe, etc.  
2. But the spiritual body we shall receive will have great capabilities and eternal endurance!



- 15:44 **Paul concluded his analogies and comparisons by stating both a natural and spiritual body.**
- A. Like a seed that is planted and generates a new plant, so does the burial of a body (15:36-38).
  - B. A buried seed brings forth a very different thing than what was planted, so is the resurrection.
  - C. Paul carefully explained that there are two human bodies – a natural and a spiritual body.
  - D. For the skeptics who scoffed at our putrefying bodies inheriting heaven, Paul answered them.
  - E. While body and spirit are paradoxical, there is a spiritual body we have not witnessed before.
- 15:45 **There is a very great difference between our two representatives – Adam and Christ.**
- A. Paul quoted from Genesis 2:7 to establish the character and nature of Adam in Eden.
  - B. Paul added his own inspired description of the character and nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - C. While the first Adam was merely the recipient of life, the second Adam is the giver of life!
  - D. And it is by the second Adam that we shall be called into life from our graves (John 5:28-29).
- 15:46 **God in wisdom arranged for Adam to condemn us before Christ would redeem us.**
- A. Though Jesus Christ and the spiritual body are superior to Adam and the natural body, God gave them in the order we experience them to magnify Himself in salvation (Rom 9:22-24).
  - B. Therefore, we have the natural body first and look forward to obtaining our spiritual body.
  - C. The process of birth, life, death, resurrection, and a new body is by God's ordination.
  - D. As in other matters, like progressive revelation, God chose to develop our bodies upward.
- 15:47 **There are two representatives – Adam made of earth and Christ the Lord from heaven.**
- A. The first representative, Adam, who condemned the race, is of this sphere, and made of earth.
  - B. The second representative, Christ, who saved His people, is of another place and spiritual.
  - C. The earthy and natural man coming before the heavenly and spiritual man was God's choice.
- 15:48 **Adam is the father of the natural body, so we look like him; we shall soon look like Christ.**
- A. Adam was made from the dust of the earth, so we are like him in having bodies made of clay.
  - B. Our relationship to Adam by being his descendants give us bodily characteristics like his.
  - C. Our relationship to Jesus Christ by being his sons will give us bodily characteristics like His.
- 15:49 **We look like the first Adam now, but we will look like Jesus Christ after the resurrection.**
- A. The "as ... also" construction of this sentence requires a very comparable comparison.
  - B. We have a natural body of earth like Adam; then we will have a spiritual body like Christ.
  - C. Every ache, pain, and weakness from Adam will be replaced with perfection like the Lord.
- 15:50 **Paul began his conclusion by stating the incompatibility of the natural body with heaven.**
- A. Paul declared a fact about heaven: the natural body of man as it is cannot go or exist there.
  - B. The kingdom of God considered here is eternal heaven, not Christ's kingdom (Luke 16:16).
  - C. The incorruptible state of heaven is totally incompatible with corruptible human bodies.
  - D. Therefore, the human body must be altered in nature in order for it to ever enter heaven.
- 15:51 **The gospel reveals wonderful mysteries, and Paul told how we are made fit for heaven.**
- A. The gospel of Christ conveys secrets of the universe to saints (I Cor 2:6-16; I Tim 3:16).
  - B. Paul had just explained that human bodies could not enter heaven, so now he gives answer.
  - C. "We shall not all sleep" is Paul referring to those saints that will be alive at Christ's coming.
  - D. Though some will not experience death, all without exception will experience the change.
  - E. Death, properly viewed, is taking the first step in getting rid of a natural body for heaven.

- 15:52 **The resurrection and change of the saints will take place instantaneously at the last trump.**
- This is the same trumpet sound that Paul told the Thessalonians about (I Thessalonians 4:16).
  - There is no reason to look for another trumpet than the 7<sup>th</sup> of John's prophecy (Re 11:15-19).
  - The events John described are fully compatible with the Second Coming and resurrection.
  - The living and the dead shall be changed in a moment of time into their glorified bodies.
  - The great change will occur instantly, in a moment, like the twinkling, or winking, of an eye.
- 15:53 **Due to the incompatibility of the natural body with heaven, the saints must be changed.**
- Paul had written that flesh and blood and corruption could not inherit eternal heaven (15:50).
  - The saints' corruptible and mortal bodies must be incorruptible and immortal for heaven.
  - Paul looked forward to being clothed with his new hour, or body, from heaven (II Cor 5:1-4).
- 15:54 **Isaiah's prophecy will be fulfilled when saints are given immortality and incorruptibility.**
- The very moment of the resurrection is under consideration from previous verses (15:51-53).
  - At the very moment of the resurrection, the saints will be made immortal and incorruptible.
  - It will be at that event, at that moment, that Isaiah's prophecy will be fulfilled (Isaiah 25:8).
  - The mystery of the resurrection of the body had been taught by prophecies in the Scriptures.
  - Job knew the precious details of the resurrection quite well before 1000 B.C. (Job 19:25-27).
- 15:55 **Paul used words taken from Hosea to mock death and the grave in light of Jesus Christ.**
- In light of the total destruction of death at the resurrection, Paul mocked death and the grave.
  - These inspired rhetorical questions mocking death and the grave are taken from Hosea 13:14.
  - Death had a sting for 6000 years due to the sin of Adam, but it will end finally and totally.
  - The grave has won every battle but one for 6000 years, but it will finally and totally lose.
  - All men dead and in the grave will come forth in the resurrection (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- 15:56 **Paul explained the mystery of sin, death, and the law and their relationship to condemn us.**
- The pain of death in our lives is due to Adam's and our sins (Ezek 18:4; Romans 5:12; 6:23).
  - Here is another mystery revealed to God's elect – we know precisely the source of death.
  - Every hospital room, hospice, rest home, funeral home, and cemetery is a product of sin.
  - And the strength of sin – what makes sin so powerful in us – is God's law (Romans 7:7-13).
  - Every commandment God has given man has become another illustration of his sinfulness.
  - The next verse will tell us that Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and destroyed sin (Rom 8:1-4)!
- 15:57 **The summary explanation of the fantastic blessing of the resurrection is found in Christ.**
- The victory over sin and death and the grave is by God's great grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.
  - Death has defeated every man since the very beginning ... except our Lord Jesus Christ!
  - The blessed God contrived the plan, and the Lord Jesus Christ executed it (II Tim 1:9-10).
  - Corruption is all around us, within us, and upon us; but victory is certain for a child of grace!
  - These words should be the thankful cry of every child of God for the gift of eternal life.
  - Do not fear! "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom 8:28-39).
- 15:58 **Paul concluded his defense of the resurrection by exhorting to godliness in the light of it.**
- Consistent and dedicated Christianity will be worth its minor efforts with an eternal reward.
    - We should have a single mind in obedience and service to God with resurrection in mind.
    - "Therefore" drew a conclusion from all Paul taught about the resurrection of the body.
    - "Stedfast" is to be fastened steadily in one place, fixed or secure in position, unshaken.
    - Paul exhorted the saints in Corinth to be always abounding in the work of the Lord.
    - A proper view of the resurrection should bring forth great passion and much fruitbearing.

6. What has the Lord called you today that you resist in the light of this great coming event?
7. Life's minor afflictions cannot compare to the eternal weight of glory (II Cor 4:8 – 5:9).
8. Though you may not see much reward here, your labor in the Lord will be rewarded.
9. It has been said, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."
- B. The work of the Lord is whatever work God has given to each reader in his circumstances.
  1. This exhortation was given to the saints of the church in Corinth, not to its ministers.
  2. The work of the Lord is the life of discipleship and godliness to which God has called us.
  3. If you are married, then there are specific things God has called you to work at for Him.
  4. If you are an employee, then there are specific things God has called you to do for Him.
- C. The basis on which any man can know he will be in the resurrection is faithful good works.
  1. Paul left all things as dung and strove mightily to make the resurrection (Phil 3:7-11).
  2. It is by abounding fruit a person makes his calling and election sure (II Peter 1:8-11).
  3. Many will claim Jesus in that day, but He will only accept the obedient (Matt 7:21-23).
  4. By faithfulness in works as carnal as giving, we lay hold of eternal life (I Tim 6:17-19).
- D. There is little value in the intellectual understanding of the resurrection without fruitfulness.
- E. There is no room for carnal Christianity in the face of great blessing or horrible damnation.

### **Conclusion:**

1. We cannot forget the companion passage Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about this subject (I Thes 4:13-18).
2. This great theme, the hope of the believer, should be a regular topic of comforting conversation among us.
3. It is only the body that dies and is resurrected, for the soul goes immediately to the Lord (Luke 23:43).
4. The Christian religion is one of great hope in the face of the greatest enemies of man – death and the grave.
5. Death and burial are as positive events as planting a seed in the ground to bring forth a wonderful plant.
6. Does death scare you? Paul wrote, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom 8:28-39).
7. Read this chapter again slowly and look for all the facts and promises that are unknown to every natural man.
8. If you truly love this subject, you should get a good copy of Handel's "Messiah" and listen to it with a Bible.
9. If you are not certain of your place in the resurrection, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live for Him!

### **Additional study:**

1. The sermon outline, Death of the Righteous.
2. [The study material, "When Were You Saved?"](#)
3. [The sermon outline, Your Body Is the Lord's.](#)
4. [The study material, "Baptism for the Dead."](#)
5. [The sermon outline, "The Mysteries of Hidden Wisdom."](#)
6. [The study material, "Three Days and Three Nights."](#)
7. [Matthew Henry's Confusion with I Corinthians 15:29.](#)