

# The Blessed Hope!

**“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” –(Titus 2:13)**

## *Diamond & Nugget #5*

The Apostle Paul called the “Rapture” a “Mystery”. **“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,”** –(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:51). Paul applied this to those who might have wondered if they had to die before they could be changed. “Behold” calls for emphatic attention to the declaration that would follow. “Mystery” speaks of a secret that is impossible for man to penetrate. Man can only know it as God has chosen to make it known. Man could never have discovered what will happen at the resurrection, but God has revealed it.

“We” is used generally. Paul lived as though Christ might come at any time, even though he did not know when He was coming, nor did he claim to. Some believers will not die, but whether among that group or not, dead or alive, “we shall all be changed.” In the verses that follow, Paul used three vivid phrases to describe this change that will take place. **“In a moment”** is **“that which cannot be cut or divided,”** the smallest possible. We get our word atom from it. It describes the instantaneousness of the event. “Twinkling” (*rhipe*) suggests the idea of throwing. It refers to the time it takes to cast a glance or flutter an eyelid.

**“At the last trump”** represents the solemn finality of this transformation. In the Scriptures and contemporary Judaism, the trumpet was often associated with both festivals and the events of the end time. The Christian dead shall be raised incorruptible. The necessity of change was reaffirmed as being due to our nature and condition. The human body, of which Paul was painfully conscious, must put on incorruption and immortality. It is bound to do so. But the power to make this happen comes from God. **“To put on”** (*endusasthai*) is the usual word for putting on clothing. This change is represented as an investiture with incorruption and immortality.

It is characteristic of Paul to see fulfillment of Scripture in all of this. **“When”** indicates time. When these things shall have taken place, then certain Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled. **“Corruption”** putting on **“incorruption”** and **“mortal”** putting on **“immortality”** are what must come to pass to fulfill the Old Testament. The quotation is from Isaiah 25:8 and there is a parallel with 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:24, 27.

The destruction of this last enemy, this **"king of terrors,"** indicates absolute victory for Christ and His followers. **"Swallowed"** (*katēpothē*) presents a dramatic figure and expresses complete destruction. Not only will death be destroyed so that it can do no more harm, all of its apparent victories in days and years past will be undone, reversed, destroyed. Those who are in Christ shall live in absolute victory!

Paul could contain himself no longer. He broke forth into a song of triumph over death. It is in the strain of Hosea's anticipation of Israel's resurrection from national death (see Hosea 13:14). The words of Hosea are freely adapted. **"Sting"** (*kentron*) gives us the picture of death as a creature with a deadly sting. The great harmfulness of death is pictured. But there is more than a question here. **"Where"** denotes an exclamation of victory, a challenge, that must be answered by **"Nowhere!"** Death holds no permanent victory. Believers are victors over death and its sting.

Sin gives death its power; it is its sting. It gives death its penal character, its humiliating form, and its bondage of corruption. To those who fall **"asleep"** in Jesus Christ, however, the sting of death has been removed because Christ has taken their sense of guilt and fear of judgment.

Sin in turn receives its power from the Law. In a few words Paul gave a condensation of his teaching concerning the relation between sin and the Law. The Law imposed on sinful man necessary but impossible requirements, promising salvation on fulfillment of impossible terms and death on nonfulfillment. This in effect extended sin and involved the sinner in hopeless guilt. When death is **"the wages of sin"** it has a deadly sting. When death, because of pardoned sin, ushers the believer into the immediate presence of the Lord it is gain, not loss. The believer can sing with the hymn writer, **"O the joy of sins forgiven"** because they have been washed away by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Paul ended his song of triumph by asserting the Source of our victory. The apostle finally linked his doctrine of the bodily resurrection and transformation of the believer to his basic teaching on justification and forgiveness of sins.

The use of the present participle may carry the idea that it is God's characteristic to give victory. This is daily victory. **"Victory"** is just one word, but it sums up all Paul had written in this chapter. It denotes enemies and a battle, but not ours. This great victory is being given to believers by God because of the Victor, **"our Lord Jesus Christ,"** who is the One through whom their victory comes.

The word **"therefore"** brings the matter to the point of conclusion and application. **"My beloved brethren"** not only showed Paul's concern for them, it also called on them to prove themselves brothers. They were urged negatively not to be flighty, movable, or unstable in their Christian beliefs and actions, but steadfast and unmovable. Positively, they were urged to be **"abounding"** or overflowing in the work of the Lord.

Believers should always be "**abounding**" in the Lord's work because their labor is not in vain. Labor "**in the Lord**" is not illusion, not profitless, but profitable, rewarding, promised success, which should spur those who are Christ's to greater work.

Paul assured us that we shall be given a spiritual or resurrection body. The image we have borne is evidence of the one we will bear.

Paul also quieted the minds of the living and exhorted the Corinthians to worthy accomplishment in Christ because of the fact and hope of the resurrection.

The Resurrection is mentioned 104 times in the New Testament. It is the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence of Christianity. It is our Rock of Gibraltar and the Waterloo of Infidelity, Liberalism, and Atheism. Men that have tried to disprove the resurrection have come to embrace it after studying the issue.

In the process, Paul made two important assertions. The first was that "**flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.**" "Flesh and blood" denotes first substance (flesh), then the life-giving principle (blood) of the physical body.

The natural body is unsuited for the kingdom of God. It must be changed. "**Inherit**" (*klēronomēsai*) points to the rights and possessions of believers, as yet unrealized.

The second assertion, built on the first, was that corruption (perishableness) cannot inherit incorruption (imperishableness). There must be a necessary change.

Strong's Concordance states: *μυστήριον mystērion*, moos-tay'-ree-on; from a derivative of *μύω mýō* (to shut the mouth); a secret or "mystery" (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites):—mystery.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15 is one of the more powerful chapters of Paul's epistles, and that speaks a lot since Paul's words are powerful enough for our daily edification. The central theme of chapter 15 is the resurrection of the dead.

In dealing with this subject the apostle first proves the fact of Christ's resurrection (v. 1–11). From this he deduces, first, the possibility, and then the certainty of the resurrection of his people (verses 12–34). He afterwards teaches the nature of the resurrection, so far as to show that the doctrine is not liable to the objections which had been brought against it (verses 35–58).

The resurrection of Christ as securing the resurrection of His people (vv. 1–34).

Certain false teachers in Corinth denied the resurrection of the dead; this is clear not only from the course of argument adopted here but from the explicit statement in verse 12. In 2 Timothy 2:17–18, Paul speaks of Hymenaeus and Philaenus as teaching that the resurrection has already happened, and it is probable that the people in Corinth also refused to acknowledge any other than a spiritual resurrection.

After reminding the Corinthians that the doctrine of the resurrection was a primary principle of the Gospel which he had preached to them, and on which their salvation depended (verses 1–3), he proceeds to assert and prove the fact that Christ rose from the dead on the third day. This event had been predicted in the Old Testament. Its actual occurrence is proved by his resurrection appearances:

1. After his resurrection he appeared first to Peter and then to the twelve disciples.
2. He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom were still alive.
3. He appeared separately to James.
4. Then he appeared again to all the apostles.
5. Finally he appeared to Paul himself.

This is but a handful of more than a dozen recorded references of the Lord Jesus Christ appearing in the flesh post-Crucifixion. There never was a historical event established on surer evidence than that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ -(verses 4–8). This fact, therefore, was included in the preaching of all the apostles, and in the faith of all Christians -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:11). But if this is so, how can the doctrine of the resurrection be denied by anyone who claims to be a Christian? To deny the resurrection of the dead is to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to subvert the Gospel -(verses 12–14), and also to make the apostles false witnesses -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:15). If Jesus Christ is not risen, our faith is futile, we are still in our sins, those dead in Christ are perished, and all the hopes of Christians are destroyed -(verses 16–19). But if Jesus Christ is risen, then His people also will rise, because He rose as a pledge of their resurrection. As Adam was the cause of death, so Christ is the cause of life; Adam secured the death of all who are in him (verses 20–22).

Although the resurrection of Jesus Christ secures the resurrection of His people, the two events are not contemporaneous. Jesus Christ rose first; His people are to rise when He comes the second time. Then is to be the final consummation, when Jesus Christ as Mediator hands over His providential kingdom to the Father, after all His enemies are subdued -(verses 23–24). It is necessary for Christ's dominion over the universe, to which He was exalted after His resurrection, should continue until His great work of subduing or restraining evil was accomplished. When that is done, then the Son (the God-man, the incarnate Logos) will be subject to the Father, and God as God, and not as Mediator, will reign supreme -(verses 25–28).

Besides the arguments already urged, there are two other considerations which prove the truth or importance of the doctrine of the resurrection. The first is 'baptism on behalf of the dead' (whatever that means, Scripture does not explain the meaning) prevailing in Corinth, assumed the truth of the doctrine -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:29). The other is the intimate connection between this doctrine and that of a future state is such that if the one is denied, the other cannot, in a Christian sense, be maintained. If there is no resurrection, there is for Christians no here-after, and that may act on the principle, **'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'** -(verses 30–32). The apostle concludes this

part of the subject by warning his readers against the corrupting influence of bad company. From this it is probable that the denial of the doctrine had already produced the evil effects referred to among those who rejected it -(verses 33–34).

There are other important points made by Paul in this chapter, and so let's not overlook their importance. They are substantive in the larger narrative in which Paul leads up to his discussion of the "Mystery" of the Rapture.

**15:1–2.** If, as the people in Corinth taught, there is no resurrection, Paul says, our faith is vain -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:14); it is an empty, worthless thing. So here he says, the Gospel secures salvation, unless faith is of no account.

**15:3.** Of first importance. Among the first or principal things. The death of Christ for our sins and his resurrection were therefore the great facts on which Paul insisted as the foundation of the Gospel. That Christ died for our sins. That is, as a sacrifice or propitiation for our sins.

**15:6.** Some have died. Death to the believer is a sleep for his body; a period of rest to be followed by a glorious day.

**15:14.** Our proclamation has been in vain. That is, it is empty, void of all truth, reality, and power. And your faith has been in vain. These consequences are inevitable, for if the apostles preached a risen and living Saviour, and made His power to save depend on the fact of His resurrection, of course, their whole preaching was false and worthless if Jesus Christ was still in the grave.

**15:19.** We have hoped in Jesus Christ. The Greek expresses not what we do but what we are: 'We are hopers.' This passage does not teach that Christians are more miserable in this life than other people. This is contrary to experience. Christians are unspeakably happier than other people. All that Paul means to say is that if you take Jesus Christ from Christians, you take their all. He is the source not only of their future, but of their present happiness. Without Him they are still in their sins, under the curse of the law, unreconciled to God, having no hope, and without God in the world; and yet subject to all the special trials which come to Christians, which in the apostolic age often included the loss of everything.

**15:26.** The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Death will reign until the resurrection. Then people will never more be subject to his power. Then death will be swallowed up in victory (Luke 20:36; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:10; Revelation 20:14).

**15:28.** So that God may be all in all. Before the ascension of Jesus Christ, God reigned as God; after that event He reigned and still reigns through the God-man; when the end comes, the God-man will hand over this administrative kingdom, and God again will be all in all. This is the way Scripture puts it, and seems to be the simple meaning of this passage. When our Lord ascended, all power in heaven and earth was given to him. It was given to Him then, so He did not possess it before. He as Mediator, as God-man, is

to retain this delegated power until His enemies are put under His feet. Then He, the God-man, is to hand it over. And God as God will reign supreme.

**15:31.** Paul solemnly assures his readers that he was constantly in jeopardy, for, he says, I die every day! – that is, I am constantly exposed to death -(2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:10).

**15:34.** The call is to prompt exertion to shake off the delusion that they were safe.

Some have suggested that Paul reserved this chapter on the Resurrection till last because he thought that a firm belief in it would help solve many of the Corinthians' problems. Certainly if the message of Christ crucified were foolishness to the Greek mind (1:23), the corollary doctrine of the Resurrection was no less so -(cf. Acts 17:31-32). The implicit denial of the Resurrection on the part of some may be seen in the Corinthian conviction that the present era represented the consummation of God's material blessings -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4:8; cf. 6:2) and sexual immorality was a matter of no lasting consequence (5:1; cf. 6:9, 13-14).

Like the problems previously discussed (1:10-6:20), the denial of the Resurrection by some in the church was a matter apparently reported to Paul -(15:12) and not something the Corinthians themselves had included among their questions in their letter to him -(cf. 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). As in his response to the Thessalonian confusion on the Resurrection -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13-18), Paul began with a fundamental affirmation of the faith -(cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:3-4; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:14) and expanded on it.

### Key Points of 1 Corinthians chapter 15

#### 1. Before and after

Previous chapter: Chapter 14: Prophecy, tongues, and public worship

Following chapter: Chapter 16: Collecting for Jerusalem, and greetings

#### 2. Analysis of chapter

The apostle testifies to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. -(vv. 1-11)

He replies to those who deny the resurrection of the body. -(vv. 12-19)

The resurrection of believers to eternal life. -(vv. 20-34)

Objections against it answered. -(vv. 35-50)

The mystery of the change that will occur to those living at Christ's second coming. -(vv. 51-54)

The believer's triumph over death and the grave. An exhortation to be diligent. -(vv. 55-58)

#### 3. Key verse

Verse 58: ***“Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”***

4. Key word / key phrase

Verse 4, **"he was raised."**

5. Key event / key person / key theme

Teaching about the resurrection

6. Key thought

Verse 56. Because Christ is raised the poison is taken out of death and Christians are made victorious.

7. Key thing to look out for

Paul gives pictures about the nature of the resurrection body.

8. Key Bible cross-reference

Verse 27. See Psalm 8:6.

9. Key "by way of explanation"

Verse 12, **"Christ has been raised."** Paul uses this verb **"has been raised" seven** times here to emphasize the certainty of Christ's bodily resurrection. See verses 4,12-14,16,17,20.

10. Key "Quotable Quote"

*"Many Christians entirely disbelieve the resurrection; many fortify themselves with the horoscope; many adhere to superstitious observances, and to omens, and auguries."*

John Chrysostom

The passage discusses Transformation in Place of Resurrection (15:50-53). Although not all will go through the process of death, all need to be changed. The parallel thoughts that stress the concept -(15:50) answer more fully the question of 15:35, especially concerning what kind of body. If there were no resurrection, then the Corinthians were ready as they were to enter the kingdom.

A question also arose about believers who would be living at the last trumpet -(15:52). The **"last trumpet"** does not correlate with the **"seventh trumpet"** of Revelation 11:15. This might be troubling to those of you seeking to draw connections relative to timing of events of the book of Revelation. Paul was simply drawing upon the practice of the Roman army to illustrate the removal of the church from the Earth. The **"first trumpet"** signaled the troops to break camp. The **"last trumpet"** was the signal to begin to march -(Josephus, Jewish War, 3.89-92). The **"last trumpet"** will signal the removal of the church to heaven. The bugle or trumpet (recording over a loud speaker) is played for reveille, retreat and taps at most military installations around the world.

Paul addresses one of the great mysteries of the ages. There have been many. For example, how did God create the universe out of nothing? How could a virgin give birth to the Son of God? Another mystery is addressed in these verses which Sherlock

Holmes would not be able to explain except by the deduction, "its elementary dear Watson. This is God's doing. "

When Jesus Christ returns at the Rapture, the bodies of living Christians will be immediately changed. In other words, there will be Christians that will not pass through the valley of death.

Unlike Jesus Christ's return to Earth, the Rapture will occur in an instant without warning, "in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye." –(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17).

Like the church, a mystery once concealed but now revealed. –(Ephesians 3:3-5, Colossians 1:17) so the church's rapture was unknown. The fact of a future resurrection was known to the Old Testament Jews, but nowhere was it revealed that a large body of believers who were neither Jew or Gentile, -(Galatians 3:28) but a "new creature" –(2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17) and "one new man" –(Ephesians 2:13) would be Raptured to heaven without either dying or being resurrected from the graves.

Blessings,

Pastor Bob, [EvanTeachr@aol.com](mailto:EvanTeachr@aol.com)  
[www.pastorbobreid.com](http://www.pastorbobreid.com)

P.S. I wrote a compare/contrast article on "**Contrasting the Rapture vs. the Second Coming.**" It contains 35 specific examples of distinction between the two events, the most complete list anywhere. The link is at:  
<http://jesusisthewaythetruththelife.com/PastorBob/Rv2.pdf>