

ARGUMENT THREE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20–28

Introduction

What is the best way for God to prove that He can raise the dead? The answer is obvious. There is no greater way for God to prove that He can raise the dead than for Him to actually raise a dead man. This He did when He raised up the Man Christ Jesus. The consequences of the Lord's resurrection are both phenomenal and glorious. Because He arose, we too shall arise. Since Christ has risen, we know that God has the power to raise the dead. His resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection. No person could want for a greater hope nor for a greater promise.

- I. Christ assures life, guarantees the resurrection (vv. 20-23).
- II. Christ assures the coming reign of God's Kingdom: the end of all evil (vv. 24-28).

I. *1 Corinthians 15:20–23 Jesus Christ Assures Resurrection*

Christ assures life, guarantees the resurrection. He has done three marvellous works to guarantee it.

1. Christ has risen from the dead; He has become the first fruit of them that slept. The term "first fruits" refers to the harvest of a farmer's first crop. The Jewish farmer was to take part of his very first fruit and give it as an offering to God. Note two points.
 - => The word "first" means the first in order of time: the first fruit is to be reaped.
 - => The offering of the first fruit to God assures God's blessing upon the rest of the harvest: the dedication of the first fruit guaranteed and assured the blessing of God upon *all the fruit* that followed.

The point is this: the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the first fruit of the harvest, the first resurrection of a Man who would never die again. Jesus Himself had raised others from the dead, but they were all to die again. But not Christ. Christ was raised from the dead to live forever, and His resurrection was the guarantee that we, too, shall be raised from the dead.

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

Note the words, "But Christ." The words connect this passage to the former verses where some were arguing that Christ did not arise from the dead. If Christ did not arise from the dead, then the consequences are terrible, for it means that...

- our preaching is meaningless.
- our faith is futile.
- we are liars and false witnesses.
- we are still in our sins.
- our loved ones who have already died have perished.
- we are, of all men, most miserable.

“*But Christ* has indeed been raised from the dead!” He is not dead; He is not lying as a decayed corpse in the grave. We are not living in hopeless misery. In fact, the very opposite is true. We have the greatest hope in the world, the hope of being resurrected from the dead. And the great guarantee of our resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself. He has risen; therefore, we shall arise. He is the *first fruit* — the guarantee, the seal, the assurance of our resurrection.

Rom 8:23 *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

Col 1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first-born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

1 Th 4:14 *We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

2. Christ has counteracted what Adam did: reversed the sin and death of Adam. He did this through His own resurrection and life. Adam and Christ are pictured as the two pivotal points of human history. Adam stands as the head of the human race, the first to bring death to man. Christ stands as the head of the human race, the first to intervene into the process of death and to arise from the dead. The place of Adam and Christ as the representative heads of the human race is discussed in detail in the Book of Romans (see Rom. 5:12-21). Very simply stated, the sin of Adam brought death into the world, but the Man Jesus Christ brought the resurrection of life to the world. How is this possible? Note two things.
 - a. Note the words “in Adam all die.” The word “*in*” means to be inside, within, included, united, connected: to be vitally related; to be in the position and operation

and power of something. Every person born into the world inherits the nature of his father and mother, which is a corruptible and dying nature. Adam was the first to have a corruptible and dying nature: therefore everyone born into the race of Adam inherits the very same corruptible and dying nature.

Rom 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. (cp. Gen. 2:15-17; 3:6f)*

1 Cor 15:21 *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.*

Isa 43:27 *Your first father sinned; your spokesmen rebelled against me.*

- b. Note the words “in Christ all will be made alive.” The word “in” connects us to Christ just as it does to Adam. We are vitally connected and united to Christ. Just as we partake of the nature of Adam, of our mothers and fathers, so we partake of the nature of Christ. What is the nature of Christ?

=> The nature of Christ is a sinless and divine nature.

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

2 Pet 1:4 *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

1 Pet 2:22 *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

Heb 7:26 *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

=> The nature of Christ is a resurrected nature.

Rom 1:4 *And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Rom 4:25 *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Eph 1:20 *[The power of God] which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Note the word “all”: it does not mean every human person shall be made alive. It means that all who are “*in Christ* shall be made alive.” All persons are not “in Christ”; that is, all do not believe and entrust their lives “in Christ” (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 10:9).

3. Christ has fulfilled and completed His purpose: He was the first to arise. Why was it necessary for Him to be the first to arise? Because He had to complete the work of salvation for man *before* man could be saved and raised up from the dead. He had to arise first; then man could arise.

⇒ No man can save himself; no man can arise from the dead. If a man is ever to arise, *Someone* with the power to conquer death must first of all arise. And then by His resurrection, that *Someone* must promise and guarantee that He will use the same power to raise man.

That *Someone* is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the first fruit, the first Man to arise, and He assures and guarantees us that He will raise us up from the dead. Jesus Christ has completed and fulfilled His purpose upon earth. He has been the first to arise, and sometime out in the future, He will also resurrect us.

John 5:25 “*I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.*”

John 5:28-29 “*Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*”

John 6:40 “*For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*”

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.*”

Acts 24:15 *And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

2 Cor 4:14 *Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.*

1 Th 3:13 *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

1 Th 4:13-18 *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a*

loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

II. 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 Coming Reign of God's Kingdom

Christ assures the coming reign of God's kingdom, the end of all evil. (See, *Kingdom of God*, Mt. 19:23-24.) After Christ has resurrected believers, He will then move to deliver the kingdom to God. This clearly points to the end of time, the climax and consummation of human history. The Greek word (telos) means the purposed end, the determined goal, the destined climax, the sought after consummation. Note three significant facts:

- => The length of time between the resurrection of Christ and believers (v. 23) has already been over 1900 years.
- => The length of time between the resurrection of believers and Christ's delivering the kingdom to God is not given.
- => The words "then" (eita) and "when" (hotan) both indicate indefinite periods of time, long intervals of time.

These facts clearly indicate that great events and generations of time can occur between the resurrection of believers and the end of the world, for example, the one thousand year millennial reign of Christ. When will Christ deliver up the kingdom to God? After four things have happened.

1. Christ must first subject all evil power and enemies under His rule of righteousness and love (v. 24-25). This refers to both human and spiritual enemies, to the evil of both men and Satan. When Christ returns in glory to rule and reign in majesty, he will subdue all the enemies of God and present the kingdom to God.

Thought 1. Today, sin and evil run rampant throughout the world. Any daily newsstand clearly proves the point through the reports of fighting and war, immorality and crime, selfishness and greed, corruption and death. The news can easily become discouraging and make a person wonder what the fate of society and man will ultimately be. But not to the true Christian believer. The day is coming when Jesus Christ Himself will "put all His enemies under His feet," all sin and shame, deceit and lying, violence and abuse, hurt and murder, crime and injustice — all enemies shall be subjected to Jesus Christ. The kingdom of love and righteousness will be presented to God and love and righteousness will rule forever and ever.

2 Th 1:7-10 *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from*

the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Psa 110:1-3 *The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The Lord will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.*

Isa 9:6-7 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*

Dan 7:14 *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

2. Christ must subject the great enemy of man: death. Note that death is the last enemy that will be destroyed.

=> Death has an end; death will cease to be; the reign of death will be stopped.

=> Man *shall be* delivered once-for-all from death. Death *will be* swallowed up in victory.

Isa 25:8 *He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.*

Hosea 13:14 *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? "I will have no compassion."*

1 Cor 15:54 *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."*

2 Tim 1:10 *But it [God's purpose and grace] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

Rev 20:14 *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.*

Rev 21:4 *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

3. Christ must subject all things under Him and His rule, all things except God the Father. The verb “has put everything under” is aorist tense which points to the finality, the once-for-all fact. Not only will the enemies of Christ be subjected to Christ, but *all things* will be subjected:

=> all men => all beings => all the earth

=> all the universe, seen and unseen => all angels

=> all nature => all the heavens

Everything that has ever existed or ever will exist, both visible and invisible, shall be under the rule and reign of Christ, under the rule and reign of His love and righteousness. Nothing shall be exempted from His authority, *except God Himself*.

Mark 16:19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

Luke 22:69 *“But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”*

Acts 2:34-36 *“For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

Eph 1:20-23 *Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over every thing for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

Heb 1:8-9 *But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”*

Heb 2:9-10 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

1 Pet 3:22 *Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

Rev 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"*

4. Christ must subject Himself to God. This refers to the saving ministry and function of Christ, not to His eternal person and being. It does not mean that Christ is to become inferior to God and less than God. Such inferiority is impossible, for both the Son and the Father have the nature of God. They are One in their Godly nature, person and being. It simply means that God sent Christ on the great mission to conquer all the enemies of God. Therefore, when Christ has completed His mission, He will return to God the Father and present all to God. When Christ presents all, He will also present Himself to His Father as the great and glorious conqueror. Barclay says it well:

"It is not a case of the Son being subject to the Father as a slave or even a servant is to a master. It is a case of one who has accomplished the work that was given him to do, and who returns with the glory of complete obedience as his crown. As God sent forth His Son to redeem the world so in the end God will receive back a world redeemed, and then there will be nothing in heaven or in earth outside the love and the power of God" (The Letters to the Corinthians, p. 169).

Psa 57:11 *Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.*

Isa 12:4 *In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.*

Isa 33:5 *The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. ■*