

**I CORINTHIANS**  
**Chapter 15:20-34**

**INTRODUCTION:**

As we saw in our last study – **verses 12-19**, there were some in Paul's day who did not believe in the bodily resurrection of the believer. Yet, Paul declares that if there were no resurrection of the believer, it would mean that Christ had not risen from the dead. Paul had said in **verse 13** - ***“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen,”*** and in **verse 16** ***“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.”***

If Christ was not raised from the dead there are serious consequences as Paul explained in **verses 12-19**. If Christ be not risen from the dead, our preaching is vain - **verse 14**, our faith is vain – **verse 14, 17**, all who preach a resurrected Christ are false witnesses – **verse 15**, we are yet in our sins – **verse 17**, those who have died have perished – **verse 18**, and we are to be pitied – **verse 19**.

After telling us in **verse 20** what it would mean if Jesus had not been raised from the dead, Paul boldly states - ***“But now is Christ risen from the dead.”*** Paul declared, “He’s alive! He has risen from the dead!” He now tells us what it means by Christ having been raised from the dead. He tells us that because Jesus was raised from the dead, the believer will be resurrected also.

Jesus declared in **John 14:19** - ***“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”*** To the grieving family of Lazarus – ***“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” - John 11:25.*** What is Jesus saying? He was declaring that our bodies would not stay in the ground. If Jesus does not come in our lifetime and we must meet our appointment with death our bodies will be resurrected. Also, all our loved ones who died in the Lord will one day be raised in a glorified body from the grave.

**VERSE 20:**

The – ***“but now”*** is very emphatic and introduces a change from the argument Paul had been making against the totally preposterous idea that there is no resurrection of the dead. He now begins his declaration and vindication of the fact that there is a resurrection of the dead because Christ is risen from the dead.

All the discouraging consequences given in the preceding verses follow from the assumption that Christ did not rise from the dead. But as a matter of fact, He did rise; these discouraging consequences have no place. Preaching is not vain, your faith is not vain, ye are not in your sins, the dead in Christ have not perished, we are not more miserable than other men. The reverse of all this is true. Christ not only has risen in a representative character, His resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of all His people. He rose as the firstfruits of them that slept, and not of them only, but as the first fruits of all who are ever to die in Jesus.

The words - ***“is risen”*** are in the perfect tense indicating that the resurrection of Christ is a historical event in the past, yet the effects of that event are still felt in the present.

It has been 2000 years since Jesus rose again from the dead, but the power of His resurrection is still being felt today. Every time a person is born again we see the effects and power of His resurrection. There are many whose lives have been totally changed and transformed. There was a time when many of us had nothing to do with eternal things, but now the things of God cannot be separated from our daily lives. What brought about such a changed life? It is the power of His resurrection and the effects that are still felt even this day.

Take note of Saul of Tarsus in - **Acts 9** as he was on his way to Damascus filled with bitterness and hatred toward those who proclaimed Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Suddenly the heavens opened, and a light brighter than the sun shown down on the wayward persecutor. At once a tremendous change takes place and Saul of Tarsus becomes a new creature and goes forth to defend what he once destroyed. What made the difference? It was his contact with a risen Christ that wrought the miracle, as it has created similar miracles in the hearts and lives of untold millions. It is the power of His resurrection that is still felt today.

Now we see Paul use the principles of farming and the designation of an Old Testament feast, Paul expressed his belief in both the factual resurrection of Christ, and the future resurrection of men. The sense of the verb "**is risen**" is that Christ is now in a permanent risen state of existence as the result of an accomplished resurrection from the dead in the past, and not that He is in the process of being raised.

Earlier, Paul had referred to Christ as the Passover Lamb, the fulfillment of the typology of the Passover feast - **5:7-8**. Now, Paul identified the Saviour as the - "**firstfruits**". Every Jew knew what the "**firstfruits**" were - **Lev. 23: 9-14**. This was the farmer's first sheaf of ripened grain presented to the Lord as the pledge of the ingathering of the whole harvest. On the first day of the feast of firstfruits, selected delegates marked out the spot in the grain field from which the sheaf would be cut. On the second day the sheaf was cut and brought into the sanctuary. On the third day, corresponding to the day of Christ's resurrection, this sheaf was presented to the Lord as a pledge, sample, or guarantee that the remainder of the harvest would be brought in.

According to this previous type, the present fact is that Christ as the firstfruits was raised from the dead. He is the pledge and guarantee that all Christians will be raised from the dead. The harvest will be completed - **John 37-40; John 14:1-3**.

The word "**slept**" in **verse 20** simply speaks of those that have died.

### **VERSE 21 – 22:**

In **verse 21 "since by man came death"** literally means - death came through a man. In **Genesis** we find the record of death's entrance through Adam. Note God's command to Adam in – **Genesis 2:17**. Adam died spiritually for he was separated from God and he eventually died physically - **Genesis 5:5**. The death of Adam affects all of mankind - **Romans 5:12**. The second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, gave His life on the cross; He has victorious over it, He has robbed it of all its horror, and He has come forth victorious. Now through Him comes the resurrection of the dead. The emphasis here is upon the fact that it is the Man, Christ Jesus, who calls the dead to life. That is what we should expect for God sets the one over against the other. The first man threw the race into ruin, the Second Man brings redemption. In our emphasis upon the deity of the Lord Jesus we must never belittle or in any way lose sight of the perfection of His humanity. He is as truly Man as if He had never been God, and He is as truly God as if He had never become Man.

Christ, the second Adam, brought life and resurrection - **verses 21-22**. There is no general resurrection. The word order in - **verse 23** originally referred to military rank. The first resurrection described in this chapter and in **I Thessalonians 4:13-18** will only be composed of saved people. The resurrection of the unsaved will not take place until over 1,007 years later – **Revelation 20:11-15**

The marvelous grace of God sent His only begotten Son into the world as a man in order that by His life, sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection, He should be the Saviour of all who believe on Him - **Galatians 4:4-5**.

**VERSE 23:**

**"But every man"** - Everyone, including Christ as well as others.

**"In his own order"**. In this verse this phrase means that the Lord has a proper order to be observed in the resurrection of the dead. I believe Paul's purpose in giving this information was probably to counteract the idea that the resurrection was passed already as some believed. Or, that there was no future resurrection to be expected. The order is primarily that of time; meaning that Christ would be first, and then that the others would follow. But, it also means that Christ would be first because it was proper that he should be first.

**"Christ the first-fruits"** - Christ's victory over the grave and being the firstfruits was the guarantee that they should rise.

**"They that are Christ's"** - They who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**VERSE 24 – 27:**

The second coming of Christ will occur in two phases. The first phase is for the purpose of removing the saints, resurrecting - **"the dead in Christ"** as in **verse 23**, and the verses quoted from **I Thessalonians 4:16-18; I Corinthians 15:51-53**. This is what Jesus spoke of to His disciples in the upper room just before His arrest and consequent crucifixion. The disciples were already quite upset because Jesus had told them He was going to leave them and they could not follow Him. - **John 13:33-36**. Then the Lord Jesus tells them that though they could not go with Him, He would come again for them and take them to heaven to be with Him for all eternity - **John 14:1-3**.

**VERSE 24: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father..."**

After the resurrection of the saints and a period of time we call the tribulation, Christ will reign on this earth for 1,000 years. As Luke describes, He will sit upon the throne of David - **Luke 1:32**. Afterwards, He will deliver up the kingdom to His Father.

**VERSE 25:**

**"He must reign."** There are three - **"musts"** that are related to Christ. He must rise, He must return, and He must reign. **Romans 14:11**, **"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."**

This world as a whole does not recognize Him as Lord, and does not bow to His Lordship. But, there is coming a day when He shall reign, and every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess He is Lord.

The effects of His reign are many. In **verse 24** He will, **"put down all rule and all authority and power,"** and in **verse 25** He will **"put all enemies under His feet."** One day every Christ-rejecting nation, and every Christ-rejecting person, as well as every demon in hell along with Satan himself, will be put under His feet.

**VERSE 26:**

This verse tells us that even death will be eliminated: **"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."** Every foe, every enemy, and every adversary will be conquered for, **"He hath put all things under His feet"**.

**VERSE 27:**

On that day, **"it is manifested that He is excepted"**. He will be revealed that He is Lord of lords and Lord of all. It will be a glorious resurrection.

**VERSE 28:** - **"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all"**.

**"And when"** - in this future time when this shall be accomplished. This implies that the time has not yet arrived, that his dominion is now exercised, and that he is carrying forward his plans for the subjugation of all things to God.

**"Shall be subdued unto him"** - shall be brought under subjection. When all his enemies shall be overcome and destroyed; or when the hearts of the redeemed shall be entirely subject to God. When God's kingdom shall be fully established over the universe. It shall then be seen that he is Lord of all. In the previous verses he had spoken of the promise that all things should be subjected to God; in this he speaks of it actually being done.

**"Then shall the Son also himself be subject"** - this subjection can in no way reduce or detract from the essential Deity of the Son. Since the Lord Jesus cannot change – **Hebrews 13:8**, just as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit cannot change, His oneness with the Father must forever remain just as it always has been – **John 10:30**. God willed – **"that all shall honor the Son, even as they honor the Father – John 5:22-23**.

**"That God may be all in all"** - in the eternal state the Triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be perfectly worshipped, praised, adored and joyfully served by all the redeemed of all ages. Though each Person in the Godhead shall retain his personality, office, and distinction, they shall be seen and understood as One God by the saints. Oh, how limited are our present capacities, what great hindrances are our sins, to know and understand God in His fullness!

**VERSE 29:**

First, let us look at this verse negatively. The view held by the "Latter Day Saints", (the Mormons), and a few others is that Paul means that baptism in itself is a saving ordinance, and that apart from it none will ever be saved. Since a great many have died without having the opportunity of being baptized, somebody else must be baptized for them if they are going to be saved. So, they say that the apostle is referring to living Christians being baptized on behalf of people who have died un-baptized. In fact, the Mormons have many temples in which they carry out the ceremony of baptism for the dead, people who were never baptized in this life. Such a teaching would make baptism a part of salvation. Yet, we know that this is not what the scripture is teaching because baptism does not save a person while they are living and certainly cannot save a person after they die. **Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:5; 2:7-9; Romans 11:6; Titus 3:5**. When a person dies they immediately go to heaven or hell. There are no second chances to be saved. Note – lost man immediately in hell - **Luke 16:19-31. Luke 23:43 – "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."**

How thankful we should be that that the Lord has opened our eyes to see the truth concerning His plan of salvation. Truly we are what we are and know the truths we do by the grace of God.

Now let's take a look at one of the most difficult passages in the Bible to understand. There are many different opinions as to what Paul was saying in this verse. It is one that has been used to support many strange and heretical interpretations and only one idea is given above.

My desire is to give what I believe fits in the context of this passage in which it is found. One thing we know, this long chapter of **I Corinthians 15** deals with the resurrection of the body. Therefore, we might expect to find baptism included in the argument.

I think if you understand the clear teaching of baptism it will be obvious as to what this - **"baptized for the dead"** means. Baptism pictures death of the old sinner and a resurrection. It pictures, of course, the death of Christ and His resurrection. Why should we have baptizing if Jesus did not rise from the dead? If Jesus did not rise from the dead the proper picture would be to bury the Christian in the water and leave them there if there is no resurrection. Baptism pictures this: **"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection"** - **Romans 6:4-5**. Why have a baptism picture the death and resurrection if there were no resurrection of Christ? Everything in the whole gospel plan would be out of joint if you nullify the resurrection.

#### **VERSE 30-32:**

**"And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"** The word - **"jeopardy"** means danger or to run a risk. He and every professing child of God was living in danger and could be arrested and killed at anytime. Paul and all believers in those days were living under the constant threat of being martyred for their faith.

Paul had willingly risked his life because of his belief in Christ's resurrection and of his hope for his own. He acknowledged that his life was presently threatened at Ephesus - **15:30; 16:9; Acts 19:23-41**. The rejoicing of the Corinthians in the resurrection of Christ contributed to Paul's perseverance; however, he saw no advantage in his human predicament if they denied what he stood for, **15:31; 15:21,19**.

He died daily in that he was always subjected to the possibility of physical harm and death. The dangers that threatened him were real and constant - **II Corinthians 1:8-10**. Read **verse 32**, and ask what does Paul mean here? He is referring to that time when he was almost torn asunder by beast-like men in that riot at Ephesus. He saw that angry mob pressing upon him as they shouted - **"Great is Diana of the Ephesians," Acts 19:28**, and he thought of that great throng ready to destroy him and likened them unto beasts. He says, it is no matter what they do to me; Christ is real for He is risen, and I know him as the risen One and ready to die for His name's sake.

**"But what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?"** Why should I live like this, why should any Christian give up the world and live a life of self-denial and devotion to the One whom this world has rejected - **"if the dead rise not"**. Why not accept the philosophy of the worldlings?

In **Isaiah 22:12,13** God reproves the careless worldlings. They did not respond to His call and humble themselves before Him, but went on in the ways of the world. **"Eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die."** Here are the words from which the apostle quotes. If Christ has not been raised, if there is no reality in Christianity, then get all the enjoyment out of the world that you can. The worldling says, "Let's have a good time while we live, for we are going to be a long time dead." If death ends everything, why not go on and get what you can out of this life. There is a better world beyond the grave; there is a Saviour who died to put away our sins and who lives triumphant in glory waiting to receive to Himself those who trust Him. So our lives are not in vain.

**VERSE 33:**

The word - **“communications”** is from a Greek word which means company, associations. Paul says, “Don’t you be deceived, bad company corrupts good manners. The word - **“manners”** basically means – good things or the morals a person has. You hang around the wrong people and the wrong places and sooner or later they will pull you down.

Read what God’s Word has to say about this subject: **Psalm 1:1 - “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”** Take note of the deterioration given in this verse: 1) First you walk, 2) then you stand still, 3) and finally you sit down.

**Proverbs 4:14; Proverbs 24:1 - “evil communications corrupt good manners.”**

**VERSE 34: - “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”**

**“Awake to righteousness** - more literally means - “awake up righteously or sober up. It was like some were drunk with sin, but Paul says, “Sober up and live right. Stop living the sinful lives you have been living.”

Why? Because **“some have not the knowledge of God.”** Paul says that there are people who are unsaved and the way you have been living is not helping them to be saved. Instead of living lives that helped people get saved they hindered them. There were people going to hell because of people going to heaven.

Paul says, **“I speak this to your shame.”** It is honestly a shame the way some professing Christians live. At work some know you are a church member and profess to be a child of God, yet they hear the same corrupt language you use, the jokes you tell, and ungodly way you act. You are an embarrassment to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is even worse, you are a stumbling block to them getting saved.

Paul was simply saying, “Don’t be indifferent to the fact that lost people need to be saved. Don’t live like it does not matter how you live because it does matter. **“Some have not the knowledge of God.”** There is a resurrection, and in light of that fact, so live that others can see Christ in us by the way we live and conduct ourselves on a daily basis.

## I CORINTHIANS 15:20-34

## Work Sheet

1. Paul declares that if there were no resurrection of the \_\_\_\_\_, it would mean that \_\_\_\_\_ had not \_\_\_\_\_ from the dead.
2. In this **chapter** Paul gives six (6) serious consequences if Christ was not raised from the dead. List these consequences.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Paul tells us that because Jesus was raised from the \_\_\_\_\_, the believer will be \_\_\_\_\_ also.
4. Who said - ***“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”***? What did he mean by this statement?
5. In **I Corinthians 5:7-8** Paul referred to Christ as the \_\_\_\_\_, now Paul identified the Saviour as the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What does Christ being the “firstfruits” mean?
7. The word ***“slept”*** in **verse 20** simply speaks of those that have \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What does the phrase ***“since by man came death”*** - \_\_\_\_\_
9. What does **Romans 5:12** mean?
10. Who is the second Adam?
11. How much of Christ was man?      How much of Christ was God?      What do these answers mean?
12. In **verses 21-22**, Christ, the second Adam, brought \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
13. How many years between the resurrection of the saved and the unsaved?
14. After the resurrection of the \_\_\_\_\_ and a period of time we call the \_\_\_\_\_, Christ will reign on this earth for \_\_\_\_\_ years. As Luke describes, He will sit upon the throne of \_\_\_\_\_ - **Luke 1:32**. Afterwards, He will deliver up the \_\_\_\_\_ to His \_\_\_\_\_.
15. List the three must in **verse 25**: \_\_\_\_\_.  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
16. Give, at least, two effects of the reign of Christ. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
17. What is the last enemy that shall be destroyed?
18. What does the phrase - ***“And when”*** mean?

19. What does the phrase - **"Shall be subdued unto him"** mean?
20. What does the phrase - **"That God may be all in all"** mean?
21. What does – **"baptized for the dead"** in **verse 29 NOT MEAN**? Give several verses to prove your answer.
22. What does – **baptized for the dead"** mean?
23. What is the main subject of this lesson?
24. What does baptism picture? Why should we have \_\_\_\_\_ if Jesus did not \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_? If Jesus did not rise from the dead the proper picture would be to \_\_\_\_\_ the Christian in the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ them there if there is no \_\_\_\_\_. What verse in the Bible would you use to prove this statement?
25. The word - **"jeopardy"** means, \_\_\_\_\_ or to run a \_\_\_\_\_. Why was Paul willing to risk his life?
26. What does - **"But what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?"** mean?
27. Give the definition of the word - **"communications"** \_\_\_\_\_. Define - **"manners"** \_\_\_\_\_.
28. What does - **Proverbs 4:14; Proverbs 24:1** mean? \_\_\_\_\_.
29. **"Awake to righteousness** - more literally means what? \_\_\_\_\_.
30. What did Paul mean when he said - **"I speak this to your shame."** \_\_\_\_\_.