

## 1 Corinthians 15: Who are the Dead Ones?

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**1 Corinthians 15**, remains for some the sure teaching for a future resurrection in which the end of the planet will bring about a miraculous transformation of dead corpses and a physical change of those living at that time. We affirm that Paul intended no such doctrine. Much of the confusion which exists is driven away when we discover that the Corinthians were not denying resurrection for everyone, but for a distinct class of those who were dead. This truth becomes apparent when noticing the arguments that Paul utilized in refuting the Corinthians' claim that there was no resurrection of the dead ones (1 Corinthians 15:12). The traditional interpretation of this passage has the Corinthians denying the resurrection of every dead person. But if that was the case those Corinthians would not have been Christians at all and the argument that Paul sets forth would have had no persuasive power. Besides this, Paul stated in clear terms, that those who denied the resurrection of the dead believed in the resurrection of Christ! Notice please, Paul's statement, "Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed" (**1 Corinthians 15:11**). Therefore, the Corinthians could not have been denying the resurrection of all the dead, for then they would have denied Jesus' own resurrection, but Paul affirmed they believed in Jesus' resurrection!

Let's take a detailed look at the chapter. In **1 Corinthians 15:1-10** we have the fact of the resurrection of Christ, Paul being an eyewitness himself. The miracle of the resurrection was no different than all the miracles of Christ in that its purpose was to produce faith (John 20:30,31). No one would assume because Jesus walked on the water we will all one day walk on the water. Neither was the purpose of Jesus' resurrection for the purpose of proving everyone will be raised in a physical body. Paul would affirm, "it is raised a spiritual body" (**1 Corinthians 15:44**). The purpose of the resurrection was to demonstrate that Christ conquered the grave, but the nature of the resurrection will not be revealed until later in the chapter. Jesus rose with a physical body that still contained wounds from his passion (John 20:27). His glorious body would not be assumed until His ascension. Therefore, the resurrection of Christ was not for the purpose of demonstrating what kind of physical body we will be resurrected with, but rather to prove that Christ had conquered the realm of the dead. Paul's argument will begin with the fact that the Gospel he delivered was "received" by the Corinthians. **1 Corinthians 15:1,2** begins, **"Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand; By which ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain."** Paul first affirmed that the Corinthians had "received" the teaching about the Gospel and consequently the resurrection of Christ. This again is proof that the general resurrection of the dead was not being denied by the Corinthians. Paul next affirmed what the Old Testament scriptures had taught, that **"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures"** (**1 Corinthians 15:3**). The vicarious death of Christ for "our sins" is an allusion to Isaiah 53:5 which says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Isaiah went on to say, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his **soul** an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10). God would require the "soul" of Jesus as the payment for sin because soul death or spiritual death is the penalty for sin. The same prophet said, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isaiah 59:2). Paul's statement in Romans 6:23 reiterates this truth, "the wages of sin is death." The law demanded "...thou shalt give life for life, an eye for eye, a tooth for tooth..." (Exodus 21:23,24). God demanded the exact

payment for sin, for he demanded “life for life.” Since spiritual death is the penalty of sin, Jesus must have died spiritually. If cancer is the penalty of sin, then Jesus would have had to experience cancer to pay the exact penalty. Jesus paid the penalty for sin, for “He hath made him to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). That Jesus died spiritually is made absolutely clear in the statement, “if one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Corinthians 5:14). All were dead because “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23). The topic is not physical death but spiritual death. The death that Jesus died was for our sins. Sin is spiritual in nature, therefore the death that Jesus died must have been spiritual in nature as well.

Though Jesus died physically, the true significance of Jesus' death was to forgive sin. The physical resurrection demonstrated that there was life beyond the grave but the true significance of the resurrection of Jesus was that He conquered Hades. Hades was the place of all departed souls and it was Jesus who would “ransom them from the power of the grave” (Hosea 13:14). In order for Jesus to build his church and restore relationship with God's people He had to overcome Hades. This is exactly what Jesus promised when He said, “I will build my church and the gates of Hell (Hades) shall not prevail against it”(Matthew 16:18). Jesus overcame Hades and was the only one to prevail against it because he did not return to Hades but returned to the Father (Acts 1:9-11). Once Jesus was raised, He then, “was no more to return to corruption” (Acts 13:34). This victory over the grave gave Jesus the right to say, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death” (Revelation 1:18). The Great Revelation theme is the second coming of Christ and He was coming with the keys to unlock the realm that the grim tyrant of death and Hades held upon God's creation. The word hell is the Greek “hades.” Jesus possessed the keys to Hades because He was the only one that had overcome it.

Paul continues his argument and states that Jesus was both buried and raised again the third day “**according to the scriptures**” (1 Corinthians 15:4). These were the Old Testament scriptures, for the New had yet been completed. But what text does Paul quote from? The only text which mentions being raised on the third day is Hosea 6:1,2 which says, “Come let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” Hosea speaks of Old Covenant Israel and their relationship with God that was to be restored. The phrases, “he hath torn” and “he hath smitten” refers to relationship with God that was lost. Paul would quote from Hosea again later in this chapter affirming the same point, that the resurrection of Christ was to restore relationship with His people (Hosea 13:14; 1 Corinthians 15:54). The resurrection of Christ signified the promise that Old Covenant Israel would be raised. The reason that Paul quotes from Hosea is because some at Corinth were denying that very thing; the resurrection of Old Testament Jews. This will be seen as we proceed.

**1 Corinthians 15:5-11** contains proof of the resurrection from the eyewitnesses, Paul himself an eyewitness of the resurrection. The resurrection provided the “hope and anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:18,19). This resurrection hope was the subject of Paul's defense before Felix, “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:14,15). It is important to note that the Jews allowed for a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. This proves that Paul, or any other Christian for that matter, did not receive a new resurrection doctrine from Jesus because these Jews had rejected Jesus as their

Messiah. Paul's hope was clearly given in the Old Testament prophets for he would teach "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22,23). The only Old Testament text that mentions specifically the resurrection of both just and unjust is Daniel 12:2 which points to the "time of the end" (Daniel 12:4). Daniel would "stand in his lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:13). Daniel was promised resurrection at the "end of the days." This end of days is not the end of time but refers to the last day of the Jewish economy, for the phrase "to scatter the power of the holy people," is an unmistakable reference to Israel (Daniel 12:7). The time of the end would also be identified by the "abomination which makes desolate" (Daniel 12:11). Jesus quoted from this text in Matthew 24:14,15 and pointed to the same end. Daniel 12:6 mentions, "all these wonders" which includes all the prophecies of Daniel 12. Therefore, every item of Daniel 12 must have been fulfilled at the same time. Jesus taught exactly the same thing as he foretold that before the generation he was living in would pass, that He would send his angels to "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31,34). The gathering together is the resurrection (Genesis 49:10: 2 Thessalonians 2:1). Paul is using the witnesses and the Old Testament to refute the claim some were making. Again, the Corinthians had "**believed** "the evidence that Paul set forth for the resurrection of Christ as he proved the Old Testament scriptures were being fulfilled (**1 Corinthians 15:11**). Because Paul proved his case from the Old Testament, the argument from the Corinthians could be easily toppled.

**1 Corinthians 15:12-19**, Paul now develops his argument based upon the fact that these Corinthians believed in the resurrection of Christ. Therefore, the Corinthians could not have been denying the resurrection of all the dead without denying the resurrection of Christ himself! The text says, "**Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say among you that there is no resurrection of the dead**" (**15:12**)? In the original language, the "dead" are actually placed in the plural number. These dead were the "dead ones." Again, the argument the Corinthians were making could not have reference to all of the dead ones, or they would have rejected the resurrection of Christ as well. In every part of Paul's argument, he argues with points the Corinthians already believed and then showed them their inconsistency. When Paul said, "**if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain**" (**15:14**), it is obvious that the Corinthians did not believe Paul's preaching or their faith was vain. If the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of all dead ones they would have agreed with Paul that his preaching was vain and that their faith was also vain. What these Corinthians did not see, was that by denying the resurrection of the dead ones, that they were making his preaching and their faith vain. Paul affirmed in **1 Corinthians 15:17**, "**And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.**" Again, the Corinthians did not believe that they were yet in their sins or Paul's argument would not have had any strength. If the Corinthians had denied the resurrection of all the dead ones they would not have even cared about the forgiveness of sins as many unbelievers react today to the Gospel. But the Corinthians did not believe that they were still in their sins. Paul next transitions to those who were "**fallen asleep in Christ**" and says if Christ is not raised then they were perished as well (**1 Corinthians 15:18**). Paul again argues with what they didn't believe to show them their inconsistency. If these at Corinth were denying resurrection for all the dead ones they would have answered, "Yes, that's exactly what we are saying." But their argument was failing, because they believed that those in Christ had not perished. But then who perished? It must have been a category of dead ones who were not in Christ. These "dead ones" were the faithful Jews under the Old Economy that had not believed nor obeyed Christ. Some among the Corinthians who were Gentile believers denied that the

Jews before Christ could be raised. This was a Gentile and Jew issue. Just as the Jews had trouble with the Gentiles, some of the Gentiles had trouble with the Jews. Paul stated that the Gentiles should remember that they were borne by the “root” and so they were warned not to boast against the branches (Romans 11:18). The Gentiles had been made partakers of Israel's “spiritual things” (Romans 15:27). Paul affirms to the Corinthians the great truth, that without Israel being raised, no Gentile could be raised and Christians could not be saved without the Jews. Paul cited the Old Testament scriptures to prove that Christ represented Old Testament Israel in the resurrection (Hosea 6:1,2). Paul is masterfully refuting the Corinthians' claim that the Jews of the Old Covenant could not be raised. This truth is corroborated in the next verse, in which Paul says, **“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19)**. When Paul says, “only we” he refers to only we Christians. A Christian's hope is Israel's hope. If one denies Israel's hope he implicitly denies his own hope. The Corinthians were denying their own resurrection by denying the resurrection of Old Covenant Jews. Paul was bound and was willing to suffer for “Israel's hope” (Acts 28:20), and there is only “one hope” (Ephesians 4:5).

This point is further corroborated in **1 Corinthians 15:29** which says, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?” In Acts 2, Peter commanded those Jews responsible for crucifying their Savior to “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Peter was preaching Israel's hope. The promise of Salvation first given to Abraham was now shared by those obedient to the gospel call. In order to share in the promises of Old Covenant Israel one had to be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26,27). Paul argued, “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Romans 15:8). Jesus too affirmed, “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). So, as one submits to baptism, that person is baptized for the dead ones, in order to be raised with them and share in their hope. Again, Paul stated clearly that there is only “one hope” (Ephesians 4:5). This otherwise difficult text, as so many others, become clear by the correct view of what was actually transpiring in the text. The truth of the resurrection brings many difficult texts into harmony and understanding.

**1 Corinthians 15:20-23** contains the true significance and spiritual nature of the resurrection. Christ is called the **“first fruits of them which slept.”** But who were sleeping? The dead saints are the subject as they were sleeping in the dust, a synonym for Hades (Daniel 12:2). These dead ones were in the Hadean world where the martyrs were awaiting justice (Revelation 6:9-11). Christ had become the firstfruits. Yet, others had come back from the dead before Jesus was raised (viz. Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain). So how then was Jesus the “firstfruits?” Jesus was the only one to ever die for sins, conquer Hades by being raised out of it, and then stand in the presence of God. The resurrection of Jesus was the promise that every Old Testament saint was coming out of the Hadean world to stand in the presence of God. Jesus returned to restore the Old Covenant kingdom to God so that all in Christ could stand in His presence (Hosea 6:1,2; Revelation 11:18,19). Isaiah's prophecy would tell of this same great event, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of the herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19). Isaiah spoke of the “dead body” of Judaism which would come out of Hades as a corporate entity. This was necessary because the Law could not deliver them from this death. The “firstfruits” is an allusion to the feast of the Pentecost that would take place at the beginning of the harvest of which Christ represented (Leviticus 23:15-17). The rest of the harvest would take place at the end of the world or age (Matthew 13:39). Yet Jesus said, “so shall it be in

the end of THIS world” (Matthew 13:40). The word “world” is the Greek *aion*, of which the NKJV properly translates as “age”. Just as the sacrifice of Christ was in the end of the “world” (Hebrews 9:26), so too, the harvest would come in the end of the age Jesus was living in. Jesus was the “firstfruits” of the harvest that was coming in the end of the Jewish age. The result of the end of the age would be resurrection life as Christ would tabernacle with his people (Revelation 21:3; John 14:-3).

The same theme continues, as Paul speaks of spiritual death, **“For since by man came death, by man came also resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made in alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21, 22)**. Paul is not speaking of physical death, but rather spiritual death. The corroborating text in Romans 5:18 states, “Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification.” Paul is not teaching inherited sin as denominational doctrine avers, but rather the introduction of sin by Adam and the introduction to justification by Christ. When we follow Adam, we die. When we follow Christ, we live. Christ is the only answer to death by sin! Paul to Timothy wrote, “who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Again, we have the same subject under consideration. The death that was “abolished” came by means of the cross, initiated at Pentecost and consummated by the time Jerusalem fell. The subject of salvation is the “already, but not yet of scripture.” Salvation was a process which was stated as accomplished while in the midst of being accomplished. Jesus fulfilled the type of the Old Testament High Priest who went into the holiest of holies to offer the blood sacrifice, and then returned to the people who anxiously waited for the blessing (Leviticus 9:20-22). The entire church was eagerly looking for Jesus to return which would bring salvation (Hebrews 9:28). Christ was promised to return “in a very little while” (Hebrews 10:37). If the spiritual salvation that Jesus came to bring was complete at Pentecost, then it must be some kind of physical salvation that Jesus was coming to offer. If the return of Christ is for physical life then why is not the redemption and grace which was in their future “physical” as well? 1 Peter 1:5, mentions the “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” But the salvation that was brought would be to the “salvation of their souls” (1 Peter 1:9). The Holy Spirit with His miraculous gifts were guaranteed until this day of redemption (Eph 4:30). The entire subject of salvation in the New Testament is proleptic in nature. The process of salvation is revealed as having already occurred though its end was not yet completed. This again, is the “already, but not yet of scripture.” Many get the “already” but scratch their heads about the “not yet.” This “already” but “not yet” “is readily seen in the Ephesian letter. Paul said, “in whom we have redemption”(Eph 1:7), but then spoke of a future redemption of the purchased possession (Eph 1:14). Did Paul speak of two different redemptions of two different natures? No, he was simply affirming the process of salvation and the redemption that would be completed at Jerusalem’s fall (Lk 21:28). The “redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14) and the “redemption of the body” (Rom 8:23) are references to the same thing; the church not the physical body. Jesus did not die to redeem flesh and blood.

**In 1 Corinthians 15:23** Paul affirms the divine order of spiritual life, **“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they are Christ's at his coming.** “Jesus was returning to claim his own. The firstfruits include the dead saints as Zechariah 14:5 prophesied that, “the Lord thy God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” During this same time period Zechariah proclaimed, “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth, in that day there shall be one Lord and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9). This time when there would be “one king” over all the earth coincides with the kingdom message preached into all the world (Matthew 24:14;

Colossians 1:6,23; Romans 16:26). Zechariah speaks of Jesus' second coming in which the promises of the Old Testament saints would now be fulfilled. Paul is referring to the same event. In the Revelation, we have the same great theme: the temple measured and destroyed (11:1,2), the dead witnesses lie in the city where Jesus was crucified (11:8) and the kingdom becoming one (11:15) then the judgment and resurrection (11:18,19). This judgment and resurrection involved the Hadean world as the dead ones would "hear" his voice (John 5:28,29). The dead souls would have heard in Hades, not in physical tombs where their bodies would have long been deteriorated. The reclamation of the kingdom was spiritual in nature as the "kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20).

Paul now speaks of the one great end of scripture. **1 Corinthians 15:24** says, "**Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.**" This verse needs to be understood in light of Matthew 25:31 in which Jesus would come "sit upon the throne of his glory." Jesus did not come to quit in his kingdom but to sit in his kingdom. The traditional view has Jesus divorcing his wife, rather than marrying her. In Revelation 19:7 the marriage took place at the coming of Christ. This is the time the church would be presented as a "chaste virgin" to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). The marriage of Christ to the church is the perfect figure of the Old Testament espousal or betrothal period and the marriage itself. Moses said, "who hath betrothed a wife and not taken her" (Deuteronomy 20:7). The betrothal of Old Covenant Israel took place at Pentecost as Israel obeyed the gospel, but was not consummated until Jesus' returned by divorcing the unfaithful of the Old Covenant Israel. The New Testament is the divorce document! As the gospel was preached, those Jews who turned away would be rejecting the marriage offer. In the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22, the city was burned because the marriage was refused (22:7). The marriage and the resurrection would take place at "the end." As stated before, Daniel 12:2 which is the only Old Testament text that mentions specifically a resurrection of both just and unjust, tells us that it would take place at "the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4,6,8 and 13). This is the time that the power of the holy people would become completely shattered (Daniel 12:7). This "time of the end" is commonly mistaken for the "end of time." The Bible never speaks of the end of time, but rather the time of the end. The Christian age is an everlasting age and an everlasting age can have no end or even last day. The last day is the same day that Daniel was promised that he would stand in his lot (Daniel 12:13). Daniel was promised resurrection at the "end of days." The kingdom which emphasizes relationship with God, would be restored now to the Father as the dead saints were invited to Heaven (Luke 21:31; Revelation 12:10; 15:8). Jesus wasn't quitting the kingdom, he was now "sitting" in it! The power and rule of Christ that began at the cross, was initiated on Pentecost and consummated in the second coming of Christ. This end is the same end found in 1 Corinthians 1:6-8. Spiritual gifts were to confirm these very Corinthians "to the end." If the end has not come, we still have spiritual gifts in the church. There are no spiritual gifts, therefore, the end has come. Paul stated the "end" had arrived (1 Corinthians 10:11)! Paul speaks of one consistent end as did all the writers of the New Testament (Hebrews 3:6; 6:11). This is the same event Peter referred to when he said, "the end of all things is at hand" ( 1 Peter 4:7).

**1 Corinthians 15:25**, "**For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.**" The word "till" does not imply a point of termination any more than the statement, "the law and the prophets were until John" (Luke 16:16) imply that the law ended at John. The law went beyond John yet the law was till John. John would announce the last days of the Jewish law and economy had begun. Those "last days" would terminate upon the return of Jesus, bringing the

law, its economy and its religion to an end. This is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 11:26 and the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper was not ending at Jesus' return, but rather initiated the fulfillment of relationship with the Father so that Jesus would partake of the supper with us in a new way (Matthew 26:30) as the Father's kingdom would be restored (Luke 21:31; Revelation 11:15; 12:10). The enemies put under the feet of Jesus were spiritual in nature and like those that Jesus referred to in Luke 10:19, "Behold I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." This spiritual rule of Satan was the topic of Ephesians 6:12, as Paul said, "against the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The Devil ruled the age in which he could accuse (Ephesians 2:2). The "present evil world (age)" was coming to an end as the kingdom of God was about to be completed (Galatians 1:4). The nature of the enemies which are put down upon the return of Christ are no different than those mentioned in Luke 10:19 in which Jesus said, "Behold I give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy." The power over the enemy was manifest during the earthly ministry of Jesus but was not completed until Jerusalem fell of which time the kingdom stood completed (Luke 21:31). As the law was winding down Satan was losing his ability to accuse and knew that he had a "short time" at the time John wrote (Revelation 12:10-12). Paul promised the Romans, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20). The word "bruised" is *suntribo* which means to crush or break. The word is used in the breaking of the alabaster box which contents were poured out on Jesus (Mark 14:3). The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 and the bruising of the head of the serpent through the seed of the woman is the subject of Paul's statement. Satan had "a short time" when John wrote! His end was "at hand" (Revelation 22:10). Though the results of Satan remain in the world, as do Hitler's Nazi agenda, Satan and his miraculous power came to an end. Satan through sin was the cause of spiritual death in the garden and that death was about to be destroyed. **"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26)**. Physical death has never been the enemy of the faithful. This same Paul would say, "for me to depart and be with Christ is far better (Philippians 1:23). The death enemy is the one referred to in 2 Timothy 1:10, "But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The death considered here is spiritual death. Spiritual death as well as Spiritual life were both prophetic in the New Testament. Death was being destroyed by the gospel as life was being revealed. The death that severed relationship with God through sin was being overcome by Christ. Jesus proclaimed, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26) and "if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (John 8:51). As spiritual death was being destroyed a new spiritual rule was being established. These scriptures comport with Jesus own words in the parable of the ten servants. Jesus spoke this parable because he was "nigh Jerusalem" (Luke 19:11). Luke 19:27 says, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." As the gospel went into all the world, Jesus would then rule through his word. The Lord promised the church at Thyatira that they would "rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:27). This rule was a spiritual rule that took place as the word of God was completed even as Jeremiah was told that he would be set over the nations through the word that God had delivered to him (Jeremiah 1:9,10).

**1 Corinthians 15:27 says, "For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest he is excepted, which did put all things under him."** The rule of Christ declares all things under his feet. This same language is found in Ephesians 1:22,23, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him head over all things to

the church.” The reign which was inaugurated at Pentecost would be consummated at the fall of Jerusalem, for the kingdom would be completed (Luke 21:31). The “excepted” of this passage is connected with being manifest. Jesus would be “excepted” in that he would be “outside” or a set apart for his mission of ruling. This is the time He would “sit” on his throne” (Matthew 25:31). Jesus promised he would be manifest or be revealed in the destruction of Jerusalem, “Even thus shall it be in the day the son of man is **revealed**. In that day he which shall be upon the housetop and his stuff in the house....”(Luke 17:30,31). The word “revealed” is the Greek word “apokalupsis” which is the same word translated “appear” (1 Peter 1:13) and is the basis for the title for the book of “**Revelation**.” The revealing of Christ would bring about the completed work of salvation and the Word from eternity would sit forever upon his throne, making intercession for his saints for “he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). This is the meaning of **1 Corinthians 15:28**, “**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.**” The finality of the plan of God was to bring “all in all” which references both Jew and Gentile being brought into one body (Ephesians 2:14-17). This is the time that Zechariah foretold, “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.” Zechariah refers not to Pentecost, but to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its ongoing results (Zechariah 14:1,2,5,9). The Savior is now subject to the Father as our prayers address the Father through Christ (John 16:23). **1 Corinthians 15:29** has already been dealt with earlier as the “dead ones” references Old Covenant Israel who died before Christ. Today, we are baptized to share in their hope. There is only “one hope” (Ephesians 4:5). That hope is “eternal life” (Titus 1:2).

**1 Corinthians 15:30-34**, speaks of further consequences that denied the resurrection of the “dead ones.” If we (Christians) cannot be raised without them (Israel), then Paul argues that there would be no reason to stand in jeopardy, die daily, contend with the beasts at Ephesus, etc. The sharing with these false teachers that denied Israel's hope was doing damage to their spiritual lives. The knowledge of God included Israel's hope. This knowledge was indispensable then as it is now (Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 26:19,20).

**1 Corinthians 15:35-50** speaks of the nature of the resurrection and the body that was to be raised. Some at Corinth asked, “**how are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come**” (15:35). The question revolved around the Jews being raised and the nature of their resurrection. If the body of Christ would be raised, how then would the Jews be raised? The singular “body” and the plural “they” point to a corporate resurrection of a singular kind. The argument centered around “their body” as opposed to “our body.” This implies that the Corinthians understood the corporate nature of the resurrection, that it belonged to the body of Christ. Isaiah's words remind us that it was God's intention to raise Old Covenant Israel, “Thy dead men shall live together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust” (Isaiah 26:19). Paul begins to argue the case for the type of body in which Old Covenant saints would be raised.

The first point Paul makes is that before a body is raised it has to die. This is so obvious that Paul states the truth in the most forceful way, “**Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die**” (1 Corinthians 15:36). Paul's next point is that the body that they were presently sowing was not the body that “**shall be.**” The body that the Corinthians were sowing was not yet seen, just as a grain of seed, “**may chance of wheat, or of some other grain**” (1 Corinthians 15:37). The seed was still so small, it could not be discerned as to what

the final outcome would produce. Paul said earlier, “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). This spiritual face to face meeting would come at the end of the revelation and end of the law. 1 John 3:2 echoes the same teaching, “Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” John is not emphasizing a physical transformation but a spiritual one. The vestiges of the law were still apparent to the early church as the elders of Jerusalem informed to Paul, “many of thousands of Jews there are which believe and they are all zealous of the law” (Acts 21:20). The law, with its new moons and Sabbaths, Paul said, “are a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17). The law was a shadow of the church which in its true and complete spiritual sense was still to come. Paul used the word (ARE) “eimi” which has no past tense in the Greek. The law still possessed its shadows, even as Paul wrote, that would be taken away at the revelation of Christ. Hebrews 8:13 taught the same truth, “a new covenant, he hath made the first old, that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” The perfect man and the unity of the faith were just around the corner (Ephesians 4:11-13).

**1 Corinthians 15:38** posits the truth, “**But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.**” This seed is the “seed of the kingdom” which was bringing forth the spiritual kingdom of God. Jesus affirmed the consummation of the kingdom would come with the fall of Jerusalem (Luke 21:31) as John affirmed as well (Revelation 11:15; 12:10). The kingdom would be completed when the revelation of the new Covenant would be completed. 1 Corinthians 13:10 and “that which is perfect” is a reference to the completion of the kingdom which coincided with the completion of revelation (1 Corinthians 1:6-8). The seed of the kingdom would bring out the perfect body of Christ, as the transitioning New Covenant from the Old Covenant would bring about the body of Christ. The law, which contained shadows of things to come, but the “body is of Christ” referred not to heaven but to the heavenly church (Colossians 2:17).

**1 Corinthians 15:39-41** points out the difference between fleshly bodies and heavenly bodies. There is a “flesh of men” and of “beasts.” These earthly animals have earthly bodies. There are bodies that are “celestial” (heavenly) and bodies “terrestrial” (earthly). The resurrection is more like the (heavenly) celestial than the (earthly) terrestrial. Paul points to heavenly bodies of the sun, moon and stars. Daniel 12, which speaks of resurrection contains parallel thoughts. Daniel 12:3 says, “And they that shall be wise shall shine as the firmament.” Jesus quoted from this passage when speaking about the “end of the age” (Matthew 13:39), when He said, “then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:43).” Both the dead in Christ that were transported out of Hades and presented before God, and the living that would experience the resurrection would shine to varying degrees are the subject. Jesus said, “So let your light so shine before men” (Matthew 5:16), as Paul affirmed, “among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life” (Philippians 2:15). To varying degrees, subjects of the eternal life are the ones that allow the gospel to shine forth in the darkness of the unsaved. This fits **1 Corinthians 15:42**, “**So also is the resurrection of the dead.**”

**1 Corinthians 15:42 b** finishes the thought, “**It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.**” The Old Covenant body, which was transitioning, was sown in weakness. It was weak because it could not save. The false teachers of Peter's day who denied the coming of Christ and argued, “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Peter 3:3) promised “liberty but were servants of corruption” (2

Peter 2:19). The natural body was corruptible because when it sinned it died. Paul affirmed, “when the commandment came, sin revived and I died” (Romans 7:9). In **1 Corinthians 15:43**, Paul does not change subject, **“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power:”** The body was raised in power because sin was destroyed in the new body. Paul affirms the blessing for those exclusively in Christ, “For in Adam, all men die, so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). The transitional body of suffering and humiliation was constantly being transformed so that it might be “fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself” (Philippians 3:16). This is a picture of the church, not a picture of flesh and blood as the futurist avers. Paul said, “hath put all thing under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church” (Ephesians 1:23). The spiritual domain in which Christ was to rule, was already in progress. This again, is the “already, but not yet” of scripture. The verb “raised” (egeiretai) is a present tense and indicative mood verb which tells us the action of the verb was taking place at the time Paul wrote. Literally, they were being raised in power.

**1 Corinthians 15:44,45** identifies for us again the body under consideration, **“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.”** The natural body, represented in Adam was made a “living soul.” The natural body was the soul or spiritual body that died when it sinned. God said to Adam, “for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Adam did not die physically for 930 years (Genesis 5:3). The death that Adam died was spiritual in nature. As Paul affirmed, “sodeath passed on all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). The last Adam was made a “quickenning spirit.” Christ died in the spirit in order to be made alive in the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:14 says, “because thus we judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” How were all dead at the time Paul wrote? Not physically, but spiritually, because all sinned as Adam had done. Therefore, Christ must have died spiritually in order to pay the price for sin. This again proves that Jesus died spiritually. Jesus was made a “quickenning spirit” because the spirit came alive. When Jesus said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” He was affirming the truth that He had died in spirit (Matthew 27:46). This is the only prayer that Jesus addressed to the Father that he used the title God. Jesus was giving up his relationship with His Father that all of us could become sons.

**1 Corinthians 15:46-47** speaks to the point of transitioning from the earthly to the heavenly, **“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.”** It was God's plan to transition the earthly man to the spiritual man. Adam was a natural man as was the “natural man” of 1 Corinthians 2:14. The “natural” unaided man could not discern the truth without the Spirit that provided the revelation to know the spiritual direction he should take, and the natural man which possessed his natural body could not find forgiveness without a spiritual body. The second man is the “Lord from heaven” as the “body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). Paul continued, **“and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:48).”** The “they” refer to those who were becoming “heavenly” during the transition period as the church was stripping off its layers of Judaism (Acts 21:20; Hebrews 8:13). Paul would say, “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 2:6). This is another instance of the “already, but not yet of scripture.” Salvation and grace were things the church possessed in promise (Ephesians 2:8,9), but Salvation and grace were in their future as well (1 Peter 1:5,9,13). The same was true for the redemption of the body

(Ephesians 4:30). The Ephesians were redeemed (Ephesians 1:7) but the Holy Spirit was the “earnest” or down payment “until the redemption for the purchases possession” (Ephesians 1:14). The “purchased possession” is nothing other than the church which was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). The physical body does not need redemption because fingernails and toes were never lost. It is the spiritual body of which Christians were a part of that needed redemption. The whole “creation” which refers to those in Christ were anxiously awaiting for their redemption (Romans 8:23).

**1 Corinthians 15:49, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.”** The church had borne the image of Old Covenant Judaism, but now it was to bear the image of the spiritual man in Christ. The perfect man would be presented after the miraculous age would end (Ephesians 4:13). The Corinthians were longing to seeing “face to face” that they would know about their true spiritual identity in Christ. They did not know while the miraculous age continued, for Paul argued, “for now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face shall I know even as I am known (1 Corinthians 13:12). This comports with John’s statement, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, it doth not yet what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). The final picture of the true spiritual man would be known at the revelation of Christ, and the spiritual gifts were promised until Christ’s return (1 Corinthians 1:6-8).

**1 Corinthians 15:50, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”** When Jesus came back in his physical body He was not in his glorified body as he challenged Thomas to thrust his finger in his side (John 20:27). In Luke’s account Jesus said, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). Since “flesh and blood” will not inherit the spiritual nature of the kingdom, it is not a flesh and blood resurrection that Paul has in mind in here. The Old Covenant world that was inherited by “flesh and blood” is not how those would gain entrance into the spiritual kingdom of God, for Jesus taught that all men would have to be “born again” (John 3:3-5). Neither would a body that is “corruptible” or subject to death enter into the glorious kingdom of God. The early pilgrims were “begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4,5). The corruption that the early Christians escaped (2 Peter 1:4) was not physical but spiritual. This “already, but not yet” that God would grant was not corruptible, but would be a body in which Jesus’ blood would clothe and change. The church which still had the remnants of Judaism in it was changing, but the change of how God viewed the church would come when God “would take away their sins” (Romans 11:25-27). Just as the High Priest granted the blessings of the covenant when came out of the tabernacle to bless the people, so Jesus granted the forgiveness of sins as He came out of Heaven (Leviticus 9:20-22). This is the picture of Hebrews 9:24-27 as Jesus would appear a “second time without sin unto salvation.” This salvation was the topic of all the prophets as Peter instructed, “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired diligently, who prophesied or the grace that should come unto you” (1 Peter 1:9,10). This is not Pentecost, for their salvation was still in their future and Isaiah prophesied that forgiveness would come “when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones” (Isaiah 27:9-13). This is a reference to the destruction of the temple.

The change that Paul promised was spiritual and not physical. This is the precise meaning of **“Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51)**. The change was spiritual and from God's perspective. The change was one of stance, not substance. The forgiveness of sins is the topic. The final pronouncement of Romans 11:25-27 is the topic. This would take place after the fullness of the Gentiles. The church which now was granted the full forgiveness which was promised before the foundation of the world would come to pass. Paul's statement, “we shall not all sleep” was not a promise to some distant generation but to the one he was addressing. Paul promised that not all the Corinthians would die before they would experience this change. As Paul affirmed to the Thessalonians, “and I pray your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Paul was not encouraging the Thessalonians to get a mortician to embalm their bodies so that they would be “preserved” for thousands of years, but rather praying that the Thessalonians would be alive to the coming of the Lord. All of this change would take place, **“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52)**. The last trump is the seventh trump of the Revelation (10:7) as John announces the mystery of God is “finished” which corresponds to the trump that announced the “gathering” by Jesus and the end of the Jewish age (Matthew 24:30). John and Jesus speak of one consistent end. The “end” that Jesus predicted almost forty years earlier was “at hand” when John wrote the Revelation (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). John prophesied that in the time of the seventh trumpet the “kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord” (Revelation 11:15). There is no plural number in the original. The kingdoms had now transitioned into the kingdom! This was so God could be “all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28) as God would unite both Jew and Gentile into one kingdom and that there would be “one king” over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9). This was Paul's mission as he made known “the fellowship of the mystery” (Ephesians 3:9). The Mishna taught that the feast of the trumpets was the birthday of the world, as the New Heavens and New Earth would announce the New Covenant world ruled by life rather than by death.

Paul again states, **“for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (15:53)**.” Jesus promised, “he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26). Again, he said, “If a man keep my saying he shall never see death” (John 8:51). These were spiritual realities that Jesus was speaking about and Paul cannot be speaking of a different physical reality that somehow trumps the importance of true spiritual life. Paul ties his entire discussion to the fact the death was being destroyed. He goes on to say, **“so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (15:54)**. Paul now quotes from Isaiah 25:8, “He will swallow up death in victory; and wipe all tears from off all their faces.” This Old Testament prophecy must not be applied to a yet future generation for Jesus said, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18). The word “fulfilled” includes all prophecy because the word “fulfilled” inheres in prophecy. Jesus said, “this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matthew 24:34). The same word “genetai” appears in both texts of scripture. The death that is addressed is spiritual in nature and signifies the removal of fellowship with God. The Hadean world is the result of sin and resided outside the presence of God. Hosea 13:14 says, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: Oh death, I will be the plagues; Oh grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” The

corruptible body is the entire body that succumbed to death and decay. The body of Adam is the one where all die (1 Corinthians 15:22). Adam sinned and he died, just as is the case with all of mankind. Only in Christ is there true spiritual life, for Jesus said, "I am the life" (John 14:6). The mortality of Adam is overcome through the immortality of Christ, for He "only hath immortality (1 Timothy 6:15). The death that is swallowed up in victory was the death lost in Adam; i.e., spiritual death, and was the consummation of the death that was being destroyed even as Paul penned these words, "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Jesus' promise that "he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26) would now come to pass.

**1 Corinthians 15:55, "Oh death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory."** This verse contains a "textual variant" and while this writer cannot commend the KJV without reservation, the Greek text which underlies the KJV is assuredly the most accurate text extant today. The Textus Receptus (TR) text is built from the majority of witnesses and here in this text, the word "grave" is translated from the word "hadas." It was the Hadean world that Jesus came to overcome. Jesus said of the church "and the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus is depicted as coming with the keys of "death and hell (hades)" (Revelation 1:18). The sting of death is not the sting from physical death but the rather the reality of dying spiritually with God. The word sting is the word "kentron" which is translated "pricks" and refers to the prick of the guilty conscience before God (Acts 9:5; Acts 26:14). Jesus asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee kick against the pricks (kentron)." The sting of death refers to sin's power to convict and then separate from God. Isaiah's prophecy, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8), is the power of Jesus' death to remove this sting so that those in Christ could live with God.

Isaiah 35:10 says similarly, "and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This came to pass in Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." These characteristics are found in the "New Jerusalem" as it made itself manifest in its completeness. This is a picture of the church as Hebrews 12:22,23 explains, "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn..." The message of the Revelation was "at hand" (Revelation 22:10). The sorrow of the consequence of sin and the reality of that separation of Hades was soon to be overcome through the coming of Jesus.

Paul explained, "**The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law**" (15:56). The "sting" refers to the result of sin. This "sting" is the lasting effects that sin leaves on the conscience. This death is spiritual as Paul said, "I was alive without the law once, but the commandment came sin revived and I died" (Romans 7:9). Under the law the "conscience" could not be made perfect (Hebrews 10:1-3). The Old Testament sacrifices were actually a reminder of their sin rather than freedom from sin. Today, our baptism is an "answer" of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21). The phrase, "**the strength of sin is the law**" refers to the law of Moses that was fading away at the time Hebrews was written (Hebrews 8:13). The futurist position has the Gospel as the "strength of sin." This is near blasphemy. The law was the "ministration of death" (2 Corinthians 3:7) and for the purpose "that sin by the commandment might become "exceedingly sinful" (Romans 7:13). While the law remained the strength of sin still effected the age. One of the purposes of Jesus' return was to take away the first law which

was fading and growing old (Hebrews 8:13; 10:9,10). The law was done away by means of the cross, but not at the cross. Paul spoke of the law in the present tense as he wrote the book of Colossians some 30 years after Pentecost. Paul said, “which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). Ten years after Pentecost Peter was still upholding the Jewish dietary laws (Acts 10:1-13). During the transition period of A.D. 30-70 the Gospel was winding up and the law was winding down. Upon the return of Christ, the law officially ended and spiritual death was destroyed for those in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 15:57,58** “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” The victory that Paul sets forth is one of a spiritual nature not a physical one. The promise of Jesus, that “he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26) is now realized in Christ. May the faithful be blessed and this truth ring free, Christ has conquered death for all in Him! [HN]