

## Jason Upchurch - 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 - The Resurrection and Reign of Jesus

Well, this little section of Paul's letter is very weighty. There is a lot going on here. If you could take a tablespoon of the material of our sun, it's so dense that 1 tablespoon would weigh 5 pounds. That seems dense until you compare it to a neutron star. If you could take a tablespoon of the material in a neutron star, it would weigh around 1 billion tons - the weight of Mt Everest in a table spoon.

This little passage is 9 verses of neutron star level theology. It is glorious. We touched on verses 20-24 briefly last week as we considered Easter and the resurrection of Jesus but we'll look more deeply.

At the same time I have to tell you that in terms of views on eschatology this is one of the most influential passages on my thinking of future events that's in the Bible.

(Expositor's Bible Commentary Ro-Ga (Rev)): Those who adhere to an amillennial position...will see in 1 Corinthians 15 the basic outline of their eschatological viewpoint.

So different people have different views on eschatology. Eschatology is the study of last things. What are we waiting for, what does the future hold, what comes next? And this passage deals squarely with those realities in some of the clearest ways possible. There's no prophetic imagery or apocalyptic literature to wade through. It's really a straightforward presentation of what's to come.

So how to begin here? Let me start with a general observation and then we'll walk through this.

The general observation is that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is at the center of all eternity and all of God's plans. This is the focus of everything that God has done and will do. We see that clearly in this passage.

When we read that in Adam all die and so also in Christ shall all be made alive part of what we understand is that from the opening pages of Genesis God is setting the playing field for the coming death and resurrection of his Son. Paul mentions the whole scope of time from Adam to the New Heavens and New Earth and it all revolves around Jesus and his death and resurrection.

And so we read the OT through the lens of Jesus and his glorious atonement. Jesus's death and resurrection saves us from the death and hell Adam earned us. And Jesus's resurrection is what secures our future hope in the New Heavens and New Earth. How do we know Christ will come again and raise the all of us? Because he rose from dead.

Everything is anchored to Jesus and his death and resurrection. And so here's the big takeaway for us this morning: Christ rules and Christ will conquer because he rose from the dead. Because God has the power of life and death and resurrection, he does rule over all things.

So whereas last week we looked at basically 6 implications of saying there is no resurrection, this week Paul goes the other way and tells us what we have since Jesus rose from the dead.

### 1) Jesus's resurrection is a fact. **Read 20**

That Jesus died and rose again is simply historical fact. It's not made up, it's not fantasy or some alternate reality. As much as he was dead dead, he is now alive alive.

Chuck Colson (who was involved in the Watergate scandal): "I know the resurrection is a fact and the Watergate scandal proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if that was not true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world - and they couldn't keep a lie for 3 weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible."

I saw a bunch of atheists on Easter post nonsense on social media. "Happy Zombie Day" and stuff like that. We don't believe that Jesus is a zombie. Zombies are undead, mindless corpses that walk around. They're some weird hybrid. We don't believe that at all.

We believe that Jesus is truly alive in the fullest sense. We've had people in our congregation who have been technically dead for some small period of time. They're not zombies, they're truly alive.

And we need to wrap our mind around the significance of that.

As someone said: If Jesus did not rise, then nothing matters. If Jesus did rise then nothing else matters. Which leads to the second reality:

### 2) Jesus's resurrection means there will be more. Read 20

I said last week that the first fruits in the OT was an offering people gave to God. It was the first part of their harvest. If you farmed grain, you brought the first bundle of grain to the priest. If you had a vineyard, you brought the first bit of wine to the priest. If you raised sheep, you brought the first wool. And so on.

The idea was that you did that because you trusted the Lord that there would be more coming. It might not happen right away, but it would come.

That's Jesus and his resurrection. There were a few people who were raised from the dead in the OT and in Jesus's ministry. Chronologically they were before Jesus, but the idea is that Jesus's resurrection is the basis for every other resurrection.

And we get just a little taste of this actually. **Look at Matt. 27:51-54.** This is a really interesting portion of Scripture that we often read right over. **Read 51-54**

Did you notice what happened? Jesus dies and rises and a whole bunch of other people do too! It's almost like his death and resurrection is so powerful that other people can't help but be raised from the dead. These are saints that experienced death and yet rose.

Now, we don't know any more than this about this account. The wording here is not as precise as what we might want. It seems like they either rose when he died, or rose when he rose but they go into the city on Sunday as a testimony to Jesus's own resurrection.

What happened to them? We have no idea. Some think they were raised with glorified bodies and went to heaven when Jesus ascended. Some think that they were raised with their normal bodies, only to die again and will be raised in the future. We literally no other information than this.

But what we know is that Jesus's resurrection is so powerful that it's almost like others can't help but be raised from the dead. When he returns we will all be raised.

**Look back at 1 Cor. 15.** That's the idea of the first fruits. His resurrection is the guarantee of the resurrection of all humanity.

### 3) Jesus's resurrection reverses Adam's curse. Read 22

In the opening pages of the Bible we have this huge tragedy. At first, we have what appears to be a hero - Adam - and his wife and they are in absolute paradise. Every good thing is given to them. The Garden is lavish, gold is everywhere, they walk with God. It's like the tropical island paradise everyone dreams of in the middle of winter but with no sin. What could go wrong?

Well, it turns out Adam isn't our hero. He had one job - don't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - and what'd he do? He ate. You had one job.

But here's the reality, we'd all do the same thing if we were in his spot. People often talk about free will; well aside from Jesus, Adam and Eve had the closest thing to what we might call free will and Adam took his free will and plunged humanity into sin because he disobeyed. He is what scholars call our "federal head" - he represents all of humanity and his actions affect us.

And now we don't really have free will, our will is actually in bondage to sin and the penalty is death until Christ redeems a person. Our first father, Adam, failed and brought us death.

**Rom. 5:12:** Just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned...

You ever seen those really elaborate domino setups on YouTube? Where people will set up thousands and thousands of dominos and you push one over and it's just this huge chain and it's pretty amazing to watch?

That's kind of like Adam's sin. One man affects all the rest of humanity. And it's not neat to watch, it's utter tragedy. One by one we all fall to death. One by one we all die. The Bible is filled with genealogies that have a refrain over and over: and he died, and he died, and he died. The dominos of human death drop by the hundreds and thousands and millions and billions. We all die in Adam.

Imagine you're watching one of those YouTube domino video as the dominoes go down, there's this one domino in the middle of all that that supernaturally stands back up. And a few others do too while the rest of the dominos are still falling. And just as the dominos are all toppled over, there's this record scratch all of the billions of toppled dominos stand back up. They're course is instantaneously reversed.

That's Jesus with the resurrection. Although in Adam all die, in Christ, all will be made alive. All will be raised. Jesus reverses the death that Adam brought on humanity.

And so everyone - believers and unbelievers alike - will be raised from the dead.

**Phil 2:10-11:** there is coming a day where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

**Revelation 21** - which we'll look at more next week - talks about the dead who are in death and Hades - hell - giving up their dead only for God to throw their resurrected bodies into the Lake of Fire.

Everyone will be raised. But only those who are in Christ - who are believers, Christians - will be glorified in the New Earth with Jesus forever.

I often think: what if Adam hadn't sinned. What if he had obeyed and he and Eve had kids and history continued on like that. No one sins, everyone is in the Garden, eternal life on earth. Wouldn't that be better?

You know what the answer is? No. See, here's the beautiful truth: whatever we've lost in Adam, we've gained infinitely more in Christ. The sin and suffering and death Adam has brought is nothing compared to the glory and grace and joy we will experience forever and ever with Jesus.

When we look at Genesis 1-2 we think: man the Garden is a great paradise. But when we look at heaven in Rev. 21-22 we have these visions that are really over-the-top breathtaking. The New Garden of eternal life will be infinitely better than the old. All because of Jesus's resurrection.

People die because of Adam's sin. But we will be made alive - truly alive - because of Christ's resurrection.

#### 4) Jesus's resurrection secures the victory of the gospel. **Read 23-27**

Okay, this is where this passage gets into eschatology. We're going to expand on this next week but here's the gist of what Paul is getting at.

Jesus has been raised from the dead. And he has ascended into heaven. His ascension is important because the Bible views his ascension - his going up into heaven - as like when someone becomes King. So Jesus going into heaven and sitting down at the right hand of God is how he rules over all creation.

And Paul gives us a quick timeline in **Vs. 23**: Christ is raised, that happened 2,000 years ago. Then when he comes again his people are raised. Then Paul says “it’s the end.” Once Jesus comes again it’s the NHNE.

That’s what I believe the future holds. We’re here until Jesus comes back. When Jesus comes back everyone is resurrected and eternity begins in the New Heavens and New Earth. Easy Cheesy.

But Paul answers a couple questions here. How long will Christ reign? He answers that not with a timeline, but with some things that need to happen. **Read Vs. 24**

So first, he reigns until he destroys every rule and every authority and power. Usually when the Bible talks about rules and powers and authorities it’s talking about things that are against God.

So Jesus is going to be in heaven reigning until every rule and power is defeated. How long is that? We have no idea. It’s been 2,000 years so far. It could be another 2,000 years. We really don’t know.

Then he says it again a different way. **Read 25**

So he says almost the same thing here. He must reign until all his enemies have been put under his feet.

Now here’s the interesting thing about this. I think this tells us **how** Jesus is going to conquer his enemies.

What does it mean to put all of his enemies under his feet? We do have accounts of ancient kings squashing the necks of their enemies. The king would literally step on his enemies and even the enemy kings to show their domination. This could mean that.

But here’s the interesting thing. When we see God putting things under his feet it’s almost never in vicious conquering, it’s almost always an act of worship. God’s footstool is almost always a place of worship.

**1 Chron. 28:2**: Then King David rose to his feet and said: “Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building.

**Psalms 99:5**: Exalt the Lord our God; worship at his footstool!  
Holy is he!

**Psalms 132:7**: Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!”

The footstool of God is a place of adoration and worship. Listen to what **Psalms 110:1** says. This is a Messianic psalm about Jesus’s reign:

**Psalms 110:1**: The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

That’s basically what **1 Cor. 15:25** is quoting: He must reign until all of his enemies are under his feet.

So what does that mean? What I think Paul is telling us is that Jesus will reign in heaven until his enemies are his worshippers. That the gospel is going to spread into the world more and more and more and more.

Most of Christ’s enemies will be defeated and dispatched into hell. But the focus of the Bible is that Christ reigns to make his enemies his worshippers. Is this happening? Yes.

There are more Christians today than ever. There’s also more persecution than ever. But that persecution usually has the effect that more and more people come to faith. God often conquers through the death and suffering of his people.

We see this in the book of Acts: there’s persecution, so the church is scattered and then even more people hear the gospel. We’re on literally the other side of the planet from where Jesus was crucified proclaiming his

greatness. We have phrases like “church shopping” because there are so many believers and so many churches that we evaluate where to go.

Jesus has promised to build his church and it will continue to expand and grow even as the forces of evil push harder and harder. It’s like wind resistance in a car: the faster you go, the more you get. The Kingdom grows, despite growing opposition, until one day Jesus comes again.

All of his enemies are either destroyed in his wrath or converted by his grace and then one last enemy is defeated. **Read 26**

The very last enemy Jesus defeats at his coming is death. When Jesus comes he destroys all his enemies, glorifies all his saints and there is no more death ever again.

Death is the greatest enemy because death has never, ever been defeated. Only 2 people in history have ever not died: Enoch, the seventh from Adam and Elijah. Billions and billions of people have all been defeated by death. And unless Jesus returns billions more will be defeated as well.

You and I and everyone we know will follow along in the same refrain of the OT: and he died, and he died, and he died.

And then Jesus will come. And I think no one says it better than Andy Mineo in his rap song: Death Has Died. I think this is one of the most powerful lyrics about the return of Christ:

One Day my God gon’ crack the sky  
He gon’ bottle up every tear that we ever cried  
Bring truth to every lie, justice for every crime.  
All our shame will be gone and we’ll never have to hide.

No more broken hearts, no more broken homes,  
No more locking doors, no more cops patrolling  
No abusive words or abusive touches  
No more cancerous cells that will take our loved ones.

No more hungry kids, no more natural disaster  
No child will ever have to ask where his dad is  
No funerals where we all wear black.  
And death will be dead and we’ll lock the casket.

That’s what happens when Jesus comes back.

Now you know why Paul calls this the blessed hope. Now you know why Peter says to set your hope fully on that day. It’s the Day when all things are made right.

**Look down at Vs. 50-57. Read**

Not everyone will sleep. Every believer alive at the coming of Christ will be changed. Transformed into glorious bodies. That generation of believers will not see death. They will simply be transformed into glory.

The angel’s trumpet will announce Christ’s coming, the dead are raised, the saints are glorified, and eternity breaks in.

It will come to pass then - at Christ’s return - that death is swallowed up in victory. And it will have no more sting. Where does that victory come from? Jesus. How did he achieve it? His resurrection.

**Phil. 3:20-21:** But our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

The same power that raised and glorified Jesus, the same power by which he reigns over all things in heaven right now, is the power that will raise and glorify us.

5) The resurrection is what brings eternal glory to God. **Read 27-28**

What does this mean? Paul is touching on the relationships in the Trinity, specifically between the Father and the Son. It was always the Father's plan to send the Son.

And during this time, the Son has been given all authority. Everything has been subjected to Jesus. There's only one exception: the Father is not under the authority of Jesus. **Read 27**

That's a technical way of saying it. But Jesus ruling over all things does not include ruling over God the Father. The Father is the one who subjected all things to Jesus

If I owned a store and made my son the general manager of the store, he'd have authority over all things. But obviously not me as the owner. That's the idea.

And Paul says that once all things are in ultimate submission to Jesus, then Jesus turns around and hands the Kingdom back over to the Father that the Father is all in all. **Read 28**

So the Father gives all authority to the Son. And at his coming the Son gives all authority back over to the Father. The Father and Son work in perfect sovereign harmony to bring all of history to its fullness.

Listen, we look around at the world - the news, politics, church, the world - and a lot of times it seems crazy. Absolutely out of control. We can get down and depressed and frustrated because the world isn't going the way we want.

Can I tell you something? The world is going exactly how God wants. Christ is ruling and Christ is reigning and Christ will conquer because Christ rose from the dead.

It's slow, it's steady, but Jesus is building his church. Little by little, disciple by disciple. The leaven of the gospel is expanding into the loaf of the world. The little boulder in the book of Daniel that toppled the statue is growing and will fill the world.

We have hope and we have joy because God will be all in all.

**Pray**