

## Exegetical Notes – 1 Corinthians 15:20-34

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship  
101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320  
610-384-1375  
charleshjensen@aol.com

**Introduction:** In the first parts of this great chapter on the resurrection of the dead, Paul has laid out the basic truths upon which our faith rests: Christ came to earth and lived among us; Christ died and was buried; Christ arose from the grave; Christ is coming again. He then turned his attention to a false teaching among the Corinthians that Christ had not been raised from the dead and that there was no general resurrection of those who believed in Jesus. In this passage he renounces that teaching emphatically.

### 1 Corinthians 15:20-34

#### Verse 20

***But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.***

- Two great truths are proclaimed in this verse. 1. Christ has been raised from the dead. 2. Christ is the “firstfruits.” Because of him, others will be raised from the dead, too.

#### Verses 21-23

***For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.<sup>23</sup> But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.***

- When Adam, the first man, sinned and rebelled against the word of God, the penalty was death. Death came into the world through the first man, Adam. Since all people since Adam have followed Adam’s example and rebelled against the word of God, all have sinned. (Romans 3:23, 6:23) Therefore, all people die.
- But Jesus lived a perfect life, free of sin. But he took upon himself the sin of all of us and died on Calvary’s cross. But on the third day, Jesus rose from

the dead, defeating death and setting those who believe in him free from death, the penalty for sin.

- Those who believe in Jesus will rise from the dead at the moment of Christ's return.

### **Verses 24-28**

***<sup>24</sup> Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. <sup>28</sup> When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.***

- At Christ's return, the last enemy, death, will be defeated. The dead in Christ will rise and the kingdom of God will be restored. At that moment, Jesus' role in the plan of God for the salvation of our kind will be completed.

### **Verse 29**

***Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?***

- Paul mentions an obscure practice. This is the only reference to it in the Bible and we do not have enough information to know exactly what is described here. Because we do not know what this practice was, we should leave it alone. We cannot explain what this practice was.

### **Verses 30-32**

***<sup>30</sup> And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? <sup>31</sup> I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>32</sup> If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,  
"Let us eat and drink,  
for tomorrow we die."***

- At the core of our faith is the belief that those who believe in Jesus will be raised from the dead. Paul and many others have risked their lives and faced many dangers to proclaim that the resurrection of the dead is true. If

they did not believe that the resurrection was fact, why would they risk their lives to tell others about Jesus? They might as well have a party, if the resurrection of the dead is a lie. But it is truth, and through the years many, like Paul, have died to proclaim this truth.

### **Verses 33-34**

***<sup>33</sup> Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” <sup>34</sup> Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.***

- But the resurrection of the dead is illogical. Some teachers have been pointing out the illogicality of the idea and some Corinthians have been listening to them. It is dangerous to hang out with those who bend the truth of God’s word. These woke preachers have led some of the Corinthians astray. Christians must not hang out with corrupt teachers.
- Paul says it is their fault that they have rejected sound doctrine and followed false teachers.

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