

**International Sunday School Lesson**  
**Study Notes**  
**April 5, 2015**

**Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, 20-22**  
**Lesson Title: Resurrection Guaranteed (Easter)**

**Introduction**

Without question the single greatest event in the history of mankind is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If Jesus Christ conquered death then He can conquer anything else. In fact, Christ's resurrection is the single most important truth that separates Christianity from all other belief systems. All other belief systems and cults were founded by men and women who are this very moment dead or will die in the future. All belief systems other than Christianity are destined to a cold dark grave. But Jesus Christ is alive and seated at the right hand of God the Father (Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22).

If one looks logically, rationally, and historically, there is more than enough evidence to support the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Add to that the record of Scripture which is infallible and inerrant and it is an irrefutable fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. One may disbelieve it, but one cannot deny it. The empty tomb, the witnesses, the historical documents and more than anything the words of Jesus Christ Himself leaves no room for doubt that Christ lives. Evidence supports resurrection. It is guaranteed.

In the closing words of The Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, he wrote to them about the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ and the human body. In the Corinthian church there were certain Greek Christians who were troubled with the thought of resurrection. It was foreign to their thinking. They had listened to Paul at Athens until he mentioned resurrection. Then they mocked him and dismissed him (Acts 17:32). Because of the struggles and challenges the Corinthians' had with the subject of resurrection, Paul challenges them to consider the implications of a guaranteed resurrection. Their faith and their future rested on their response.

**Resurrection Guaranteed: The Preaching (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)**

The importance the Apostle Paul placed upon the resurrection is clearly seen in the amount of space and the detailed language of 1 Corinthians 15. This chapter is by far the longest in the letter, and from the first sentence to the last it deals specifically with one subject, resurrection. In the opening verses of chapter 15, Paul reaffirms the gospel which he had preached and through which the Corinthians' were saved.

## Verse 1-2

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

Paul’s opening words, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand...” may be taken as a mild rebuke. Paul seems to be saying, “In case you have forgotten, let me go back over this one more time.” His point is that the Corinthians should have known that the “gospel” which was “preached” and “received” by them and ultimately “saved” them is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Highlight the word “gospel” in your mind. It is the good news of salvation. And without the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is no “gospel” or good news. The “gospel” means sinners don’t have to die in their sins. The “gospel” means sinners no longer have to live in darkness. The “gospel” was that which Paul used to evangelize the Corinthians. The “gospel” alone has the power to change lives (1 Corinthians 1:17; Ephesians 1:13; 3:6).

The Corinthians had “received” or “taken and welcomed” Paul’s “gospel” preaching and were presently “standing” in that glorious truth. “Stand” means they “rested.” Their faith “rested” in the “gospel.” Furthermore, Paul addressed them as “brethren” recognizing them as fellow Christians.

“By which also ye are saved” is a reference to their *initial* trust in Christ which followed their repentance and trust. However, the word “saved” also indicates their *continual* trust in Christ since their conversion experience. Paul assures the Corinthians that by this “gospel” they were not only “saved,” as in “saved right now,” but they were also “being saved” as in progressively experiencing salvation.

“If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye believed in vain” does not mean the Corinthians could possibly lose their salvation. The Corinthians holding fast to what Paul had preached was evidence of their genuine salvation, just as their salvation and new life were an evidence of the power of Christ's resurrection. It is possible that some lacked the true saving faith, and as a result did not continue to obey the Word of God.

## Verse 3-4

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”

As a matter of first importance, Paul writes, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received...” Paul wanted the Corinthians’ to know that the “gospel” did not originate with him. Although after his conversion on the Damascus Road, Paul withdrew for three years to the desert of Arabia, he didn’t go there to come up with some new message (Galatians 1:15-24). The gospel was not something Paul figured out on his own or reasoned out in his mind. It was “delivered” to the Corinthians’ because it was “received” from the Lord.

The first conviction of the gospel truth is “that Christ died for our sins.” Notice, Paul uses the exalted title “Christ,” not Jesus. “Christ” is the Messiah, the anointed King, and God in the flesh. Christ “died” a historical verifiable death. He “died for our sins.” He had no “sin” of His own for which to die. According to Romans 6:23, “*the wages of sin is death.*” Death is the penalty, the payment for “sin.” Christ had not earned the penalty for sin and yet He died to pay the penalty for “our sins.”

How do we know that sin’s penalty has been paid? The resurrected life of Jesus Christ is evidence that sin has been dealt with. Sinners can be saved by believing in their heart and confessing with their lips that Jesus Christ rose from the dead (Romans 10:9-10). God raised up Jesus Christ from the dead on the “third day” to show that Christ’s payment for sin was entirely accepted, the price was paid, sin’s debt had been canceled.

The second conviction of the gospel truth is “according to the Scriptures.” Our Lord’s death on the cross was no knee-jerk reaction to sin. The only “Scriptures” Paul had were the Old Testament, and he knew them well. Doubtless, he was thinking of what was written by the prophet Isaiah some seven hundred years before Christ was born in Bethlehem. “*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in*

*his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:1-12).*

The third conviction of the gospel truth is that “Christ was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” This is the point of supreme importance for Paul to make his case of resurrection guarantee to the Corinthians and to all Christians. The verb translated “rose” is in the perfect tense, thus indicating the abiding results of the resurrection. His resurrection was also “according to the scriptures.” The psalmist wrote, “*For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*” (Psalm 16:10). The word “hell” is the Hebrew word *Sheol*, meaning “the place of the dead,” or, “the grave.”

*Note: The only guarantee Christians have today to offer the world is the message of the “gospel.” We are only authorized to “deliver” what we have “received.” And that message of the “gospel” must include the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, according to the Scripture.*

### **Resurrection Guaranteed: The People (1 Corinthians 15:5-11)**

There were eleven appearances of our Lord after His resurrection, including the one to Paul (then Saul) on the Damascus Road. Paul references six of these to the Corinthians. He must have felt confident that these six would be enough to convince anyone who had an open mind.

#### Verse 5-6

“And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.”

Paul first mentions “Cephas,” who is Peter. We are not told exactly when Christ appeared unto Peter or where. We do know it was sometime after His appearance to Mary Magdalene and before His appearance to the men on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:34). Peter, the one who had denied the Lord three times is blessed with the privilege of seeing the risen Lord. What stronger proof or guarantee of resurrection could anyone have than Peter seeing the risen Christ?

Second, Paul mentions the “twelve.” This is a general term for the apostles and not specifically that “twelve” apostles saw Him. They were referred to as the “twelve” although Judas and Thomas were missing on that first resurrection appearance by our Lord.

Third, Jesus “was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.” The Bible doesn’t tell us who these five hundred are or where they saw Jesus. They must have been well known by the early Christians because at the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians, Paul says, “of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” Some of the five hundred had already died when Paul wrote to the Corinthians but the majority of them were still alive.

*Question: Do you believe the Apostle Paul? Do you think Paul would say there were five hundred brethren who saw the risen Lord if that were not the case? If you think Paul would lie about this then what about everything else Paul said and wrote? I believe Paul!*

#### Verse 7

“After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.”

Fourth, Jesus appeared to “James.” This “James” is most likely the half-brother of Jesus, the author of the Epistle of James who became pastor at the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21). James and his other brothers had not been believers. But the resurrection appearance of Jesus to James could have been the convicting and convincing factor in James’ salvation.

Fifth, Jesus appeared to “all the apostles.” This appearance could have been that first Easter Sunday evening when all the apostles along with Thomas were together in the upper room in Jerusalem (John 20:28). It could also mean that over a period of forty days between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared to “all of the apostles” (Acts 1:3).

#### Verse 8-9

“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

Sixth, Paul himself seen the risen Lord. He says that Christ appeared to him “as one born out of due time.” It is possible that the words “born out of due time” were words attributed to Paul as an insult by his enemies. It was often used to describe a birth that had no chance of survival. Certainly, the point Paul seems to be making is that he had a poor beginning, a bad start. He came in the world as an enemy of Jesus Christ.

In spite of everything that was against Paul, he “seen” the risen Lord on the Damascus Road (Acts 9). Paul never got over the fact of what he seen that day and the revelation God gave to him concerning his sin and salvation (Acts 9:4-5). No wonder the great apostle’s estimate of himself was so humbling and honest: *“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”* (1 Timothy 1:12-15).

#### Verse 10

“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

It was only “by the grace of God” that Paul was able to become the man and the apostle he was. The risen Christ’s appearance and apprehension of Paul is the only possible explanation for the change in Paul’s life. And God’s “grace which was bestowed upon” Paul “was not in vain.” It was not wasted or useless. It caused Paul to “labor more abundantly than they all.” Paul toiled harder than did all the rest of the apostles. The Greek word translated “labored” means “to toil to the point of exhaustion.”

Paul was not bragging to the Corinthians that he was better than other apostles or believers. He was simply showing them how the belated appearance of the resurrected Lord had changed and charged his life. He knew that it wasn’t anything he possessed in himself that made him the man he was. He confessed, “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Paul is saying all of this so the Corinthians will know that the resurrection of Jesus is not just some figment of someone’s imagination. No fairy tale or dream can produce the results the resurrection of Christ has produced. Paul is saying, “I’m like a receipt to the legitimacy of the resurrection.”

#### Verse 11

“Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.”

Whether it was Paul, the twelve, the five hundred, or James or Peter’s testimony of the risen Christ, it really doesn’t matter. What matters is “we preach” and “ye believed.” Without question, the preaching and teaching that changed the lives of these Corinthians and every other sinner is preaching and teaching based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## **Resurrection Guaranteed: The Precedent (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)**

In 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, just for the sake of argument, Paul had assumed that there was no resurrection of the dead in order to prove his point to the Corinthians. He proved quickly that if there were no resurrection of the dead then his preaching and the faith of the Christians at Corinth was useless, empty, and void. Furthermore, if there were no hope in life beyond the grave, they *“we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15:19).

In 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, Paul uses Christ as the “firstfruits” of those who will be raised from the dead and then contrasts two men, “Adam” and “Christ.” By contrasting “Adam” with “Christ” it does not minimize the deity of Christ, but it emphasizes his humanity. He applies that contrast to the truth of the resurrection.

### Verse 20

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

“But now is” means “the fact is” or “the truth is” that “Christ” has “risen from the dead.” The Corinthians believed that Christ had risen from the dead. The eyewitnesses, Peter, James, the apostles and Paul himself had testified to that fact and the Corinthians believed it. But the question is, do the Corinthians’ believe that their departed loved ones will be raised?

Not only had Christ risen from the dead but He had “become the firstfruits of them that slept.” The word “slept” does not refer to soul sleep but rather to the physical body that was placed in the grave after death. Always in dealing with the resurrection Paul is referring to the physical body.

“Firstfruits” referred to the first sheaf of grain which was brought as an offering to the Lord (Leviticus 23:10). It was a symbol and proof of the harvest to follow. So Christ’s resurrection was to be interpreted, not only as the “first” of its kind, but as to be followed by many more. That means those who are saved by grace and have died will one day in the future be raised from the dead. But Christ was uniquely the “first” to come forth from the tomb, permanently and eternally (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). His resurrection was a foretaste of what will one day be the experience of every believer.

### Verse 21-22

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

By “man,” referring to “Adam,” there came “death.” When “Adam” sinned in the Garden of Eden men began to die physical (Genesis 2:17). “In Adam all die.” “Adam” is the head of the natural order. There is a connection between the death of every person in the world and Adam’s sin. Sin brought separation from God and physical death as a penalty for sin. Every grave is a silent testimony that sin ends in physical death.

“Even so in Christ shall all be made alive” presents Christ as the head of the spiritual order. When a sinner comes to Christ for salvation he receives and possess new resurrection life (1 John 3:14). He may die physically but the sting of death is gone. Everyone in “Adam” dies. Everyone in “Christ” lives. Jesus Christ is the One who guarantees our resurrection!

## **Conclusion**

There are a lot of people in the world who believe a lot of things simply because it suits them. Some people believe in evolution although it is only a theory. Some believe a baby, at the moment of conception is not a living human being. They believe these things because it suits them. They ignore the evidence.

Do Christians believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it suits them? No. Christians believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it is based on irrefutable evidence. Although the evidence is overwhelming most of us were not there when Jesus died. We were not there when He arose. Like Thomas and the others, we have never seen the risen Lord with our natural eyes. However, we believe the evidence and we believe by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection. And we are blessed for believing although we have not seen (John 20:29).

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said, *“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:32-36). That’s a guarantee I can live with and die with.

At Antioch, Paul said, *“Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption”* (Acts 13:35-37). That’s a guarantee I can live with and die with.

In the Upper Room, Jesus said, “...*Because I live, ye shall live also.*” That’s a guarantee I can live with and die with. What about you?

Happy Easter!

Amen.