

# 1 Corinthians 15

N. Anderson.

Verses 1-8: The certainty of salvation, as preached in the glad tidings, rests upon the sure foundation of the death of Christ for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and also upon the fact of His resurrection on the third day, according to the Scriptures. The statement as to His burial was needed to emphasise His death. There was nothing vicarious in His burial, k else proof from the prophetic word could have been adduced in support of the fact of His burial. Isaiah 53: 9 tells us plainly that "they appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death . . .".

Verses 9-10: The grace and truth of God as to the content of the glad tidings did two things with Paul, they showed him his smallness even in the execution of his divinely endued service, especially as regarding his past history as persecutor of God's Assembly, they also enhanced to him the grace bestowed upon him with such blessing and power. This lay behind the message which had been preached and also behind the faith which had received those tidings.

Verse 12: Immediately the heinous character and implications of the false teaching is gone into, taking up 58 verses while in 1 Cor. 5 moral evil was dealt with in 13 verses, indicating that evil doctrine was, if anything, worse than evil conduct. Does it not eat as does a canker? And we read in verses 32-34, "evil communications corrupt good manners."

There are at least seven implications in the teaching that "the dead rise not."

1. *Christ is not risen*, we have lost our Saviour! (verse 13).
2. The preaching of the gospel is an empty thing. (verse 14).
3. The believing of the gospel is an empty thing. (verse 14).
4. The preachers are false and have falsified the character of God. (verse 15).
5. There is no forgiveness. (verse 17).
6. There is no hope for those who have died. (verse 18).
7. The living believers are of all men most miserable, they have lost their lives in this world, and there is nothing beyond the grave! (verse 19).

"BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM AMONG THE DEAD, AND BECOME THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT."

Verse 20: The sleeping saints shall rise again!

Verse 21: God's triumph is achieved in Man!

Verse 22: The extent of the effects of the fall of Adam — surely a racial head — "For as in *the* Adam all die," shall the extent of resurrection in Christ be any narrower? Decidedly not. "Even so in *the* Christ shall all be made alive."

Verse 23: Christ is coming! Then shall all those who are described as being Christ's experience the power of His resurrection.

Verses 24-28: In these parenthetical verses the Scripture passes quickly over the ensuing reign of the Lord indicating in so doing that the same power which shall raise and change the saints, shall also bring order into the realm where, for so long, disorder has prevailed. All rule and all authority and

power shall be put down by the once-crucified Christ. Then shall He bring to a close His mediatorial reign and upon the threshold of eternity He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. All shall be would up in absolute perfection. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Elsewhere we learn that "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."

Verse 29: We return to the consideration of the no-resurrection doctrine. What shall be the value of being baptised for the dead if the dead rise not? Baptism certainly commits to death — to the death of Christ. These Corinthian believers had entered the ranks of the faith with the intelligence that they were "filling up the ranks," some had already fallen asleep, possibly through persecution for their faith. Did this deter others from taking their place in a profession which was anything but popular in such a pagan city? Certainly not! What a waste of time and what an incurring of suffering if the dead rise not! The servants of God who had brought the saving gospel to Corinth were not immune, indeed they had jeopardised their lives and were doing so every hour. Paul even called upon these brethren who ministered rejoicing to him to take account of the fact that he died daily. Recapitulating on his sufferings as having fought with bestial men at Ephesus, he asks what profit was there in such suffering if the dead rise not? Why not join the ranks of such as claim, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die," quoting, without a doubt, from Isaiah 22: 13.

The apostle then began to pour scorn on such error saying, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God; I speak to your shame." The knowledge of God would lead to righteousness and to holiness of truth, not to licentiousness.

Verse 35: We now come to a possible question of ridicule. It is well known that if you cannot deal with your opponent with calm and intelligent proposition your next resort will be to defeat him with ridicule! Hence, the apostle acts upon the premise which he had laid down in 1 Corinthians 11: 14, "Doth not nature itself teach you?" "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him, and to every seed his own body." We are entirely shut up to the exercise of the power of God, so far as resurrection is concerned. And this is illustrated in the natural realm.

Verses 39-41, inclusive bear this out most clearly. Just as there are differences to the flesh of men, beasts, fishes and birds, and just as surely as there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, with their respective glories, "So also is the resurrection of the dead." Please note the expression "sown" which indicates that the divinely ordained way of disposing of the mortal remains of the deceased is burial not cremation.

Philippians 3: 20 teaches that in the present responsible condition the body of the believer is one of humiliation. When the Saviour comes from heaven such shall be the transformation that it shall be changed like to His body of glory.

Verse 42: of our chapter we read, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

Verse 43: "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power;

Verse 44: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

We would draw the readers' attention to a worthwhile typical feature as regards the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple in the land. Exodus 26: 15 and 1 Kings 5: 6-10; 1 Kings 6: 15, 32. Shittim (or Acacia) wood; cedar; fir; olive; palm — 5 different timbers. The first of these — Acacia —

was used in the construction of the Tabernacle and some of its furnishings. Being very close grained it was hard and incorruptible, and was used for making the boards, bars, the ark, the shewbread table, the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering.

The Temple which Solomon built was largely of stone and this was covered with Cedar of Lebanon. The floor was covered with Fir. The two cherubim in the oracle and the doors were of Olive. There were carvings of Palms on the walls. Cherubim — speak of righteous government; Palms — speak of triumph; Open flowers — speak of adornment.

To apply these typical features to the resurrection bodies of the saints: —

Shittim Wood — refers to them in their incorruptible condition.

Cedar — to their being raised in glory.

Fir — to their being raised in power.

Olive — to their being raised a spiritual body.

Palm — to their being raised in triumph.

(1 Cor. 15: 44) "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This Scripture teaches, (v. 45). "The first man Adam became a living soul; the Last Adam a quickening (life giving) spirit"

(v. 46). "But that which is spiritual is not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual" Thank God, it was the natural which gave way to the spiritual — the latter will never have to give way!

(v. 48) We now arrive at two orders of men: the First Man, and the Second Man. How different were their origins! The First is of the earth — see Genesis 2: 7. The Second Man is out of heaven. Their character is as different as is their origin, the First is earthly, the Second is heavenly. Just as there is a race like the fallen man, Adam, so there is a race like the Second Man, the Last Adam — "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (v. 48).

(v. 49) And so as to their destinies, "And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

This becomes increasingly obvious from the language of Verse 50, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

It is obvious that reference is to the heavenly side of the kingdom, for we know from prophetic Scriptures that men in flesh and blood shall pass into the kingdom on its earthly side. Hence the need of our being changed. Even Job in his day said, ". . . I wait, till my change come" (Job 14: 14).

The apostle goes on to speak of one of the mysteries which had been revealed to him, that of the first resurrection. We recall that when recounting his conversion, Acts 26: 16, before King Agrippa, he said that the Lord Jesus Christ had appeared to him with specific intention, "to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I shall appear unto thee."

So this would be one of those things. This, the resurrection of sleeping saints and the change of living saints, would take place "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (v. 52).

This expression, "the last trump," has no connection with the end of the world, nor has it to do

with the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation. These are described to us in that book, Rev. 8: 7-21, then there is a parenthesis covering the whole of Rev. 10 to 11: 14. The seventh trumpet shall sound in Rev. 11: 15.

The allusion in 1 Corinthians 15: 52 is of military character. We understand that there were three trumpet sounds: 1 — would rouse the camp; 2 — would sound 'strike camp'; 3 — would sound 'march off.'

When the change takes place then shall come to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (v. 54), and,

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (v. 55).

See in addition, Isaiah 25: 8; and Hosea 13: 14. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law" (v. 56). Also, Romans 6: 14 and Romans 7: 7.

In conclusion, may we give thanks to God Who "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 57).

May we, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" ( v. 58).

So then, let us be thankful for the fact that the "dead rise not" has its origin in the father of lies who sinneth from the beginning.