

The Resurrection Hope

Key Verse: “*Now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*”
—*I Corinthians 15:20, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 15:12-28

If there is first fruit, there must be “after fruit.” The logic is evident. Apostle Paul’s reasoning on the resurrection is powerful and constitutes the firm theological basis of our Christian faith.

Christ was raised from the dead—not in an allegorical sense. He was literally raised from the dead. He himself testified, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.” (Rev. 1:18, *NKJV*)
Because he lives, our hope for

life after death is not ephemeral but real. As surely as our race all die in Adam, so assuredly will all be made alive in Christ. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”—*I Cor. 15:22, NKJV*

Paul’s message to the Corinthians was consistent with his previous teaching on the subject. At the Areopagus in Athens, he gave one of the most memorable sermons recorded in Scripture. On the subject of the resurrection, Paul declared that God “has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. And

when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, We will hear you again on this matter.” (Acts 17:31,32, *NKJV*) Jesus’s resurrection gives assurance that all will be given the opportunity to have life eternal. God “raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”—Rom. 4:24,25, *NKJV*

Curiously, some brethren in the church at Corinth were making an outrageous claim. “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (I Cor. 15:12, *NKJV*) How could it be that Christians denied the doctrine of the resurrection? Were they ignorant? We believe not. The Corinthian resurrection-deniers were likely highly educated Sadducees who had converted to Christianity. Their sect had a peculiar notion that there is no resurrection!

Paul used that fact to his advantage when defending himself against persecution from the Jews. “When Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged! And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”—Acts 23:6-8, *NKJV*

The record in the Book of Acts is that “the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests [the majority being Sadducees—see Acts 5:17] were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7, *NKJV*) Paul’s forceful arguments were essential in countering the Sadducees’ misconception. We thank God for clearer views of Christ’s atoning work and the hope of the resurrection. ■