

HOMEWORK FOR I CORINTHIANS 15

- 1. Read the chapter over carefully.**
- 2. Verses 1-2 = what does Paul say about the gospel in these verses?**

How might the Corinthians have "believed in vain?" (Cf. v. 14, 17; II Cor. 11:1-6; and Gal. 1:6-10)

- 3. Verses 3-11= What is the gospel in a nutshell?**

What one thing verifies the gospel?

Why is this so important? And what does it prove?

Why did Paul feel unworthy to be one of the apostles? (Cf. I Tim. 1:12-17)

How was God's grace worked out in Paul's life? (Cf. Col. 1:28-29)

- 4. Verses 12-58 = If the resurrection never happened, then what would be true? Take your time and work through Paul's logic here.**

What are the "firstfruits?" Look up the word in a Bible dictionary and also check out The Feast of Firstfruits (or Weeks or Harvest as it's called).

Was Jesus the first to be raised from the dead? Why or why not?

How was His resurrection different? (Hint: keep reading I Cor. 15; also cf. Lk. 24; Acts 26:23; Rev. 1:5)

Contrast the natural body with the resurrection body.

What similarities and differences do you see between Adam and Christ? (Cf. Ro. 5:12-21)

Why can't we go to heaven the way we are? (Cf. Jo. 3:1-15)

What is going to happen to our old bodies? (Cf. I Thes. 4:13-18)

What will we finally be saved from?

Why can we stand firm? (Cf. II Tim. 1:3-12)

Are you standing firm? Why or why not?

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1. Read the chapter over carefully.

2. Verses 1-2 = what does Paul say about the gospel in these verses?

Paul wants to remind them of what he told them before. The gospel they had received from him, and on which they had taken their stand, hadn't changed. By holding firmly to the gospel proclaimed to them they were saved. If it had been changed in any way then they were believing in vain.

How might the Corinthians have "believed in vain?" (Cf. v. 14, 17; II Cor. 11:1-6; and Gal. 1:6-10)

Apparently the lie about Jesus not rising from the dead was still going around (cf. Mt. 28:11-15). If that was true then their faith was useless/futile and they were still lost in their sin. In II Cor. 11:1-6 we see Paul is worried that they had been led astray from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ. They were putting up with false teaching ("different") about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the gospel from those who called themselves "super-apostles". But according to Gal. 1:6-10, a "different" gospel is no gospels at all. It is a perversion, and those who teach such a gospel are eternally condemned.

3. Verses 3-11= What is the gospel in a nutshell?

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, He was raised to life on the third day according to the Scriptures, and He appeared to many people in many places. (In Paul's day most of the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were still alive.)

What one thing verifies the gospel?

The Resurrection.

Why is this so important? And what does it prove?

If Christ didn't have the power to rise from the dead, then He didn't have the power to pay for our sin or save us from the power of death (15:55-57). The resurrection proves His claims to be the Son of God were true (John 5:16-30; 10:18; Ro. 1:4; Heb. 2:14-3:6; I Jo. 2:1-2; 3:8)

Why did Paul feel unworthy to be one of the apostles? (Cf. I Tim. 1:12-17)

Because he persecuted the church of God. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man, acting in ignorance and unbelief. He believed himself to be the worst of sinners.

How was God's grace worked out in Paul's life? (Cf. Col. 1:28-29)

God showed him mercy so that Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life.

Col 1:28-29 = Paul didn't do things in his own strength. It was God's energy working so powerfully within him to reach the lost and build His church, which Paul had tried to destroy. What a glorious change!

4. Verses 12-58 = If the resurrection never happened, then what would be true? Take your time and work through Paul's logic here.

If there is no resurrection from the dead then not even Christ is raised. If Christ had not been raised then:

1. The apostles preaching was useless and so was the Corinthian's faith (v. 14)
2. The apostles would have been false witnesses about God because they testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead (v. 15).
3. Their faith was futile and they were still in their sins (v. 17).
4. The dead in Christ would be lost (v. 18).
5. We would have no hope (v. 19).
6. If people didn't believe in the resurrection from the dead why would they be baptized for the dead (v. 29).
7. If it was merely for human reasons then there would be no purpose in endangering oneself or dying for one's faith (v. 29-32).
8. Death would reign victorious (v. 54-57).
9. We would have no firm foundation to stand on (v. 58).

Note: (v. 29) "Whatever "baptism for the dead" meant, it was, in Paul's opinion, as real, valid and legitimate a premise from which to conclude that the dead would rise as his own sufferings. The natural meaning of the words is obvious. Men in Corinth, and possibly elsewhere, were being continually baptized on behalf of others who were at the time dead, with a view to benefiting them in the resurrection, but if there be no resurrection, what shall they thus accomplish, and why do they do it? "The only legitimate reference is to a practice of survivors allowing themselves to be baptized on behalf of (believing?) friends who had died without baptism". "Tertullian believed that Paul referred to a custom of vicarious baptism (Res., 48c; Adv. Marc., 5.10). There is evidence that the early church knew such a practice. Epiphanius mentions a tradition that the custom obtained among the Cerinthians (Haer., 28 6). And Chrysostom states that it prevailed among the Marcionites."¹

What are the "firstfruits?" Look up the word in a Bible dictionary and also check out The Feast of Firstfruits (or Weeks or Harvest as it's called).

¹ BLB, *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, "Baptism for the Dead".

Firstfruits = "the earliest ripe of the crop or of the tree."² "In acknowledgment of the fact that the land and all its products were the gift of Yahweh to Israel, and in thankfulness for His bounty, all the first-fruits were offered to Him. These were offered in their natural state (e.g. cereals, tree fruits, grapes), or after preparation (e.g. musk, oil, flour, dough), after which the Israelite was at liberty to use the rest."³

Ex. 23:16, 19 = The Feast of Harvest was celebrated with the first fruits of the crop sown that year. They were to bring the best of the firstfruits of their soil to the house of the Lord their God.

Ex. 34:22 = The Feast of Weeks was celebrated with the first fruits of the wheat harvest.

Lev. 2:11-16 = The grain offering of firstfruits was crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire.

Lev. 23:9-21 = A sheaf of the first grain harvested was brought on Sunday and waved along with the meat sacrifice. The people were not to eat any bread or roasted or new grain from that harvest until the day of Firstfruits. 50 days later (at Pentecost) they were to bring bread baked from the new grain or firstfruits and wave it before the LORD.

Nu. 15:20 = They were to present a cake from the first of their ground meal and present it as an offering from the threshing floor to the LORD.

Nu. 18:12 = Most of the firstfruits went to the priests and Levites. It consisted of the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain that they gave to the LORD (cf. Neh. 10:35-39).

Nu. 28:26-31 = During the Feast of Firstfruits the people were to present to the LORD an offering of new grain, hold a sacred assembly, do no work, and sacrifice burnt offerings with the grain offering.

Dt. 16:9-12 = This happened when they began to put the sickle to the standing grain.

Dt. 26:1-11 = The firstfruits were an acknowledgment of God's abundant grace, redemption, provision, and protection in the lives of the Israelites.

Note: Firstfruits was on the Sunday after Passover. "Thus it happens very early in the Bible, that God honors Resurrection Sunday, the Sunday after Passover, as representing particularly the things that come up out of the ground spontaneously and miraculously after the long, dead winter."⁴

Was Jesus the first to be raised from the dead? Why or why not?

No. Many people were raised to life in the Old Testament and in the earthly ministry of Jesus.

How was His resurrection different? (Hint: keep reading I Cor. 15; also cf. Lk. 24; Acts 26:23; Rev. 1:5)

² BLB, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, "Firstfruits".

³ BLB, *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, "First-fruits".

⁴ Levitt, Zola, *Levitt Letter*, March 2013, p. 3.

When Jesus rose from the dead He no longer had His old body but a new glorified one. All the previous people brought back to life had their same bodies and had to die again. Jesus conquered death!

Lk 24 = Angels announced His resurrection (v. 4-8, 23). The strips of linen were left lying where they were, not still wrapped around the body like with Lazarus (v. 12; cf. Jo. 11:44). The two men on the Road to Emmaus were kept from recognizing Jesus at that time (v. 16, 31, 35). Jesus entered His glory (v. 26). His resurrection fulfilled Scripture (v. 27). Jesus was able to disappear from sight (v. 31), and reappear elsewhere (v. 36), even though He had flesh and bones (v. 39) and ate regular food (v. 42-43). Jesus went up into heaven while they were watching (v. 51).

Acts 26:23 = Jesus was the first to really rise from the dead!

Rev. 1:5 = Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

Note: Mt. 27:50-53. Were these holy people some of the firstfruits to be raised to new life? I bet they were quite a shock to the people they appeared to. "Jesus celebrated First Fruits in the appropriate manner by rising from the dead on that day. He also gave the Father His proper First Fruits offering: graves were opened and dead people rose and were seen after His resurrection in Jerusalem (Mt. 27:53). Our Lord, not unlike any farmer of the soil, gratefully brought before the Father a few early "crops" of what would be a magnificent harvest later on. Thus, in His Passion Week, The Lord celebrated the first three feasts, each in the appropriate manner. He was crucified on Passover, He was buried on Unleavened Bread, and He was raised on First Fruits, as a demonstration of the future resurrection of the Church."⁵ Wow!

Contrast the natural body with the resurrection body.

Like a seed, the natural body does not come to life unless it first dies, then it becomes a new body when it is raised to life. The natural body is perishable, meaning it can die (mortal); but the new resurrection body is imperishable, meaning it will never die (immortal). The old body is sown in dishonor, and in weakness, and is a natural body; it is raised in glory, and in power, and is a spiritual body. The natural body bears the likeness of the earthly man Adam; the resurrection body bears the likeness of the man from heaven, Jesus Christ. Mere flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God. It must be changed.

What similarities and differences do you see between Adam and Christ? (Cf. Ro. 5:12-21)

Adam was the first human to live, but in Adam all die because of sin and the curse. In Christ all will be made alive (v. 22). The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit (v. 45). Adam, the first man, was natural, made from the dust of the earth; Jesus, the second man, was spiritual, and came from heaven (v. 46-47)

⁵ Levitt, Zola, *Levitt Letter*, March 2013, p. 3.

Ro. 5 :12-21 = Sin entered the world through Adam, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. In spite of this, Adam was a pattern of the one to come. All men must die because of the trespass of Adam, but the grace of Jesus Christ brings life to those who accept Him. Judgment and condemnation followed Adam's sin, but in Christ those who believe are declared righteous, and there is no condemnation for them. Death reigned because of Adam, but the righteous will reign in life through Jesus Christ. Through the disobedience of Adam many were made sinners, but through the obedience of Christ many will be made righteous. Sin reigned in death, but grace reigned through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Why can't we go to heaven the way we are? (Cf. Jo. 3:1-15)

Mere flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Jo. 3:1-15 = No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born from above (v. 3). He must have a spiritual rebirth (v. 5-8). No one has ever gone into heaven except Jesus, and He died so that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life with Him (v. 13-15).

What is going to happen to our old bodies? (Cf. I Thes. 4:13-18)

When Jesus comes back for His own, the dead in Christ will be raised imperishable, and we who are still alive will be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

I Thes. 4:13-18 = We stand on the fact that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have died in Him. The Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Hallelujah!

What will we finally be saved from?

We will be saved not only from the penalty and the power of sin, but from its very presence. Death will be swallowed up in victory!

Why can we stand firm? (Cf. II Tim. 1:3-12)

Because God doesn't lie, and God's word is truth. The evidence of Christ's Resurrection cannot be ignored. It is a fact and the glorious expectation of our future.

II Tim. 1:3-12 = Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. We should not be ashamed or fearful to declare

our faith because we know whom we have believed and are convinced that He is able to guard what we have entrusted to Him for that day.

Are you standing firm? Why or why not?

Yes. The more I get to know my God and the power of His holy Word, the stronger and firmer I stand.