The Life of Jesus (153)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ (16)

The Certainty of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1 Cor. 15:1-8

#1 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

There is one chapter that discusses the resurrection of Jesus Christ most extensively and most clearly from a theological perspective—1 Corinthians 15.

It seems that some of believers in the church in Corinth didn't believe in the resurrection. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:12, "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor 15:12)

The denial of the resurrection by some members of the church must have caused significant confusion in the church in Corinth. In fact, such a belief represented a serious flaw in understanding and accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That is why, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul devotes a lengthy section of 58 verses to the resurrection, carefully explaining both the historical reality of Jesus Christ's resurrection and its profound significance.

#2 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. The Historical Reality of the Resurrection

First, Paul emphasizes that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a myth or a made-up story, but a historical fact supported by numerous witnesses and testimonies.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared also to me, as to one abnormally born." (1 Cor 15:3–8)

Here, Paul lists a series of eyewitness appearances to affirm that Jesus' resurrection is a verifiable historical event. This shows that the resurrection is not merely a story, but an event firmly grounded in history, witnessed by many.

#3 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. The Historical Reality of the Resurrection

Those who saw the risen Jesus didn't stop at simply witnessing Him. They went out into the world to proclaim what they had seen. The cost of their testimony was enormous. Many were imprisoned, beaten, and even killed because of their witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet they continued boldly and joyfully, never ceasing to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is the strongest evidence for the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection. No one dies for a story they have made up. No one dies for what they themselves doubt.

Therefore, the one and only reasonable conclusion we can draw from the apostles and early believers risking their lives to faithfully testify under persecution is that they truly saw the risen Jesus and found in Him genuine hope and joy.

So, what Paul emphasizes through this passage is that the resurrection of Christ is a historical fact confirmed by many witnesses, and therefore the resurrection truly happened and is certain.

#4 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

2. The Resurrection Foretold in the Scriptures

Another aspect of the resurrection that Paul emphasizes in this passage is that it was foretold in the Scriptures.

"... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3–4).

In this passage, Paul highlights that the death and resurrection of Jesus were not random or unexpected events. They were part of God's plan, foretold in the Old Testament, fulfilling Scripture and demonstrating that Christ's resurrection was divinely ordained.

The suffering and death of Jesus Christ were already recorded in the Scriptures. The time gap between when these texts were written and when Jesus actually died on the cross is roughly 700 to 1,000 years.

That time gap is something that cannot be bridged or explained away by any theory. This fact shows us that the death of Jesus Christ was part of God's plan, and that God revealed it in advance through the prophets, so that we, reading these Scriptures today, can understand His purpose.

#5 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

2. The Resurrection Foretold in the Scriptures

While there are fewer Old Testament prophecies regarding the resurrection compared to those concerning the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, there are clear examples. One of the most frequently cited passages is Psalm 16:10–11.

"You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Ps. 16:10–11).

Psalm 16 was written by David, who expressed confidence that God would not abandon him to the realm of the dead. Here, "the realm of the dead" is a translation of the Hebrew word Sheol, understood in ancient Israel as the symbolic place where the dead reside.

David trusted that even after the death of his body, God would not abandon him to Sheol, nor would he see the decay of his flesh. This reflects David's belief that God would resurrect not only his spirit but also his body.

#6 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

2. The Resurrection Foretold in the Scriptures

This prophecy was fulfilled through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the descendant of David. Peter testified to this very fulfillment of Scripture as part of his sermon after receiving the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

"David said about him: ... My heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' Brothers and sisters, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it" (Acts 2:25–32).

#7 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

2. The Resurrection Foretold in the Scriptures

Paul also quoted Psalm 16:10 to proclaim Jesus' resurrection. During his first missionary journey in Pisidian Antioch, he boldly testified to the gospel of Jesus Christ,

"God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay... It is stated elsewhere: 'You will not let your holy one see decay.' Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay" (Acts 13:34–37).

Here, Paul makes the same point Peter made earlier — that Psalm 16 was not ultimately about David himself, since David died, was buried, and his body decayed. So the psalm prophetically pointed to Jesus Christ, who, unlike David, did not see decay because God raised Him from the dead.

Through this passage, Paul emphasizes that the resurrection of Jesus is not a new or random idea but the fulfillment of God's promise, written in Scripture long before it occurred.

#8 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

2. The Resurrection Foretold in the Scriptures

Isaiah 53 is also widely known as the chapter that prophesies Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross.

About seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote about the Suffering Servant who was to come:

"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:4–6).

This prophecy points to Jesus' death on the cross. In fulfillment of these words, Jesus bore all our pain, sorrow, transgressions, and iniquities in His own body and suffered. He was scourged with whips embedded with sharp bones, nailed to the cross, and pierced by a spear. Through His suffering and death, Jesus paid the full price for our sins, and through His wounds, we have received peace with God.

#9 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

2. The Resurrection Foretold in the Scriptures

Yet Isaiah 53 doesn't only foretell the death of the Messiah; it also contains a glimpse of His resurrection.

"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand" (Is. 53:10).

Here, the suffering and crushing of the Messiah are not presented as the end. Although He is struck down and made an offering for sin, the prophecy declares that "he will see his offspring" and "prolong his days."

The phrase he will see his offspring signifies that through the Messiah's death, many will come to God and become His children. The expression he will prolong his days implies that the Messiah's suffering and death would not be the final word—He would rise again and live forever.

#10 The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

In this way, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were not only witnessed and testified to by many people of that time, but they were also foretold centuries earlier by the prophets and by David himself.

These two aspects—the historical certainty and the prophetic fulfillment—together testify that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not a story invented or fabricated by human imagination.

Rather, it was the outworking of God's divine will, plan, and purpose, and a concrete event verified within human history.

Memory Verses

"He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living" (1 Cor. 15:5–6)

"... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3–4).

"You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Ps. 16:10–11).

"Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it" (Acts 2:31–32)

Memory Verses

"God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay... It is stated elsewhere: 'You will not let your holy one see decay.' Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay" (Acts 13:34–37).

"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:4–6).

"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand" (Is. 53:10).

Reflection Questions

1. What evidence did Paul present in 1 Corinthians 15 to affirm the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection? Do you find it convincing? Why or why not?

2. How does knowing that Jesus' resurrection was both historically verified and prophetically foretold strengthen your faith in Him?

3. What might it look like for you to live each day as someone who truly believes that Jesus is alive? How can you testify to His resurrection through your life just as early Christians did?