

A Credible Faith
The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting
November 20, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “*the year of the Lord’s favor*” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this year and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12; 16-20, 58 NRSV *Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news^[a] that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ² through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. ³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures ⁴ and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.^[b] ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have died^[c] in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If for this life only we

have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Commentary: The *resurrection of Christ* is not seriously disputed by anyone in Corinth; the general resurrection of all dead believers is. In this chapter, Paul argues *from* their shared affirmation that Christ was indeed raised from the dead. The contrary-to-fact consideration - "*if Christ was not raised from the dead*" - designed to shock his readers and to focus their attention - is met with prohibitive and unthinkable consequences for Paul and for the Corinthians: "*Then our preaching is empty and your faith is empty; and I am found a false witness of God ... your faith is useless and you are still in your sins*" (15:14-17).

Why was the physical resurrection of believers such an important part of the gospel (v. 3)? Early Christians believed that the God who created all things good (Genesis 1) is concerned about all of this good, material creation (not just about the 'spiritual'). God is committed to renewing what humans have marred through willful disobedience (Genesis 3), so that along with humans, all creation, currently 'groaning' and out of sync with God's original Genesis 1 plan, would one day be renewed and liberated. Romans 8 declares God's renewing intention in this way: "*the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* ²² *We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor,* ²³ *and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.*" (vs. 21-23).

While believers who die before this future general resurrection/renewal will be presently cared for by God in Heaven, Paul stresses that God's ultimate plan is that one day there would be an all-inclusive resurrection of all creation, including humans. How then are we to understand this misunderstanding of some Corinthians that "*there is no resurrection of the dead*"? Some influential Greek philosophers emphasized the 'immortality of the soul,' that only the spiritual mattered, not the physical. Thus, resurrection was not considered desirable or necessary. So rather than believing that they would be raised bodily like Jesus, some Corinthians had 'spiritualized' this belief. So Corinthians 15 attempts to correct this mistaken assumption among some Corinthians that they already share in some

spiritualized resurrection that moves them to what they consider a special plateau, where they deserve honor and where they are no longer bound by certain moral restraints.

So Paul reminds them that all will take part in a physical resurrection in the 'last day', even as God renews all things in the future (Matt 19:28) including creation itself (Romans 8:21), culminating in a "new heaven and new earth" (Rev 21:1). Paul indicates that the job of Christians today (Corinthians included) is to work toward this new creation: ***58** Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

- Adapted from the New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol X, p.979,992

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. What images of the afterlife seem to be prevalent in our culture?
2. Why do you think that some Corinthians believed in a mere 'spiritual resurrection' of some sort?
3. Paul asserts that God's ultimate intention for us and all creation is to join Christ one day in physical resurrection - that the resurrection of Christ represents the "first fruits" of God's resurrection harvest (1 Cor 15:20). Why do you think that this new creation - humans and all created things - would be important to Paul?
4. What would be the downside of not believing in bodily resurrection and the new creation?
5. What about 1 Corinthians 15 confuses you? What gives you hope?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
*1 Corinthians 15:1-20, 58 **20** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. **58** Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*
3. Reflect on the words of the Apostle's Creed this week:

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

** Universal