

Unit II: God Promises a Just Kingdom

Hope for a Better Life

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 53:4-12

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 16; 1 Corinthians 15

PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-14, 20-23, 42-45

Key Verses—If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (1 Corinthians 15:19-20, KJV)

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If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:19-20, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Contrast the love of the women with the disciples' response to their actions (Mark 16:1-9 [Background Scripture]).
- Appreciate the women's preparation of Jesus for His coming death and burial (Mark 16:1-9 [Background Scripture]).
- Embrace the call to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ despite ridicule or resistance.

*Key Terms

Crucified (Mark 16:6 [Background Scripture])—Greek: *stauroo* (stow-ro'-o): fixed to the cross; drove down stakes; destroyed; mortified.

Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12)—Greek: *anastasis* (an-as'-tas-is): a raising to life again.

Vain (1 Corinthians 15:2)—Greek: *eiké* (i-kay'): without just cause, reason, purpose; empty.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Life Happens

Jermaine married Melissa not only because of his undying love for her, but also for a better life that he hoped to have with her. His childhood was less than ideal growing up in the foster-care system. Jermaine bounced from home to home and longed for solitude and consistency.



Overview

In this lesson, Paul the apostle was writing to the church in Corinth. Paul, an advocate for Jesus, had not always been a supporter of Christianity, but God changed him. Saul (his Jewish name before he began using his Roman name, Paul) persecuted Christians for their religious belief. He persecuted believers for their Christian faith; however, all that changed on the road to Damascus. God blinded him by a light and converted him from being anti-Christian to being one of the most devoted followers of Jesus. In our lesson today, Paul was in a debate with the Corinthian church, where some members had begun to teach against the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, there was so much injustice present because of false teachings, which made their lives as Christians difficult. They were now confused spiritually and physically corrupted. There was no justice, and their moral and spiritual lives were on the line. Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Corinth to remind them of the purpose of Jesus' ministry here on earth. He also affirmed that Jesus' death and resurrection were not to be forgotten. Jesus was to be honored for what He did on the Cross at Calvary and three days later in being raised from the dead.

As a social worker, Melissa was even-tempered and handled tough situations with style and grace. These characteristics were ideal and transferrable to other areas of her life, particularly in her marriage with Jermaine.

Both dream of buying their first home together, having children, and travelling the world. God has blessed them at this point in their lives, and they believe that God will continue His mighty work through them. Jermaine and Melissa are grateful for what they have and what is to come.

Questions

1. What hopes and dreams do you have for your life?
2. How has God orchestrated what you already have? Do you believe in faith that God is able to do more? How so?

COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

There Is Proof (*1 Corinthians 15:1-8*)

KJV

MOREOVER, BRETHREN, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in *vain*.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

NIV

NOW, BROTHERS and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in *vain*.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.
6 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.
7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,
8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

In writing to the believers of Corinth, Paul reminded them of the Gospel and their faith as Christians. The Christians were doubtful about their faith, and Paul wanted to make certain that they believed that Jesus Christ was crucified and buried, and arose three days later for our sins. He wanted them to stand on God's Word and keep it with them (**verse 1**). In addition, Paul wanted to reassure them that they were saved because of Christ's resurrection (**verse 2a**). Paul wanted to encourage the church to remember the things that he preached (**verse 2b**), which were the truths of the Gospel. However, if they did not believe with their hearts that Jesus was resurrected, then their worship would be in vain (**verse 2c**). Paul emphasized that everything they hoped for (such as forgiveness, a new beginning, and a new life with Christ in heaven once resurrected) would be fulfilled. Paul said he received it, and they too must receive the Gospel. There is no other way to be saved but through God's Son. The most important fact to keep before us is that Christ died for our sins. Jesus Christ died on the Cross, crucified between two criminals. As Christians, it is important that we keep this in our hearts and obey the Scriptures (**verse 3**).

After His death, Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb (**verse 4a**). The burial process in these times took a lot of preparation. There were three women (Mary, Salome, and Mary Magdalene) that went out to the tomb on the morning of the first day of the week (Sunday) to find that Jesus was not there (**verse 4b**). Although it is not mentioned in this passage of Scripture, the women played a significant role during the Resurrection. They were responsible for preparing special oil and clothes to preserve the body once it was laid to rest. They also had a love for Jesus unlike any of the others.

So, Paul wrote to remind them that Christ did indeed die, and He was buried. Yes, He also rose on the third day to save us all. These are the contents of the Gospel of salvation: the (1) death of Christ; (2) burial of Christ; (3) resurrection of Christ; and (4) manifestation of Christ. Jesus appeared to several people after His resurrection. Although Paul did not mention it in this passage, the women were present; in fact, Mary Magdalene was the first person to witness Jesus after the Resurrection. Then He was seen by Cephas (Peter) (**verse 5a**). He then appeared to the other disciples (**verse 5b**), erasing their unbelief and hardness of heart after they rejected the testimony of those who had already seen Him after He was risen (see Mark 16:14). Afterward, Jesus appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters during a special annual gathering; most were still alive at the time of Paul's writing while others had passed away (**verse 6**). The Lord's brother James, and the apostles that were with him, were also visited by Jesus (**verse 7**). And last but not least, Jesus appeared to Paul (**verse 8**). There were numerous witnesses that could testify that Jesus was alive and was now the risen Savior. And although Jesus did not have to prove anything to anyone, He did appear to the ones who were dear to Him while here on earth. This gave them hope for an afterlife with Him in heaven. This also applies to us today: we must strive to make Christlike decisions on this earth because Christ has

secured eternal life for us in heaven. God loves us, and He sent His Son to die for our sins and raised Him to life again, as we will be one day as well. Just look at your surroundings; there is proof that Jesus is always with us. We know that He sent His Spirit to dwell in us to comfort and guide us in all that we go through.

? **What Do You Think?** The women followers of Jesus played a major role in the events after His resurrection. Why do you think Jesus visited the women first? How can we as the church ensure that they are not forgotten?

The Debate (1 Corinthians 15:12-14, 20-23)

KJV

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no *resurrection* of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

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20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

NIV

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no *resurrection* of the dead?

13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

.....

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

In these verses, Paul continued his writings to the church in Corinth because they were so out of order. He gave several analogies and debated the church concerning the Resurrection. He needed them to believe the Scriptures that he had preached. However, their thinking had certainly been disrupted and corrupted. There was disorder in the city, community, and church. Paul questioned them as he reminded them of the Resurrection and how important it was to the Christian faith. If they did not believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, then theirs and our faith and lives with Jesus were/are meaningless. Jesus died and rose from the dead—that is the message that Paul preached (**verse 12**). In addition, the church had been exposed to false teachings and therefore was struggling spiritually. They

believed that Jesus died and rose on the third day, but did not believe that they would also rise again after this life. So, they believed they could live life without boundaries with no fear of punishment. The people of Corinth were being misled and were going in the wrong direction because they did not believe in their own resurrection. However, Paul reasoned that Christ's resurrection gives us hope in this life and for the next. And besides, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead (**verse 13**). In fact, if we as Christians did not believe in the Resurrection, then our Christian living, testimonies, and faith would be purposeless (**verse 14**).

But Paul proclaimed that Christ is risen and lives today. Jesus is the first fruit of those who have died, meaning He is proof of life after death and much more for the ones that believe in Him and for the ones that are dead (**verse 20**). And because death came through a man (Adam), then life will come through a man—Jesus Christ (**verses 21-22**). Everyone is responsible for his or her own life and what he or she represents, and will be judged accordingly because it is certain that we who believe will be made alive forevermore. One must repent to be made alive spiritually (**verse 23**). There is no debate when it comes to one's beliefs and faith in Jesus Christ. We must stay focused on the teachings of Jesus and remain faithful to Him. There is no questioning why He died for us and rose again on the third day. We should know in our hearts that it is because we are His children and He loves us unconditionally.

? **What Do You Think?** To us believers, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a sign of hope for justice. What can we do as Christians to keep hope alive?

The Change (1 Corinthians 15:42-45)

KJV

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

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

44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

NIV

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;


44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

Paul gives a contrast of the earthly dying body and the resurrected body. The people of Corinth who had problems understanding how something dead and dying could live again and how something perishable will rise to be imperishable needed to be convinced through this teaching (**verse 42**). Additionally, the body that is sown in dishonor and weakness (meaning we are born into sin in our

bodies, and our bodies are weak to temptation in the corrupted world) will be raised in glory (**verse 43a**). The resurrected body raised in glory will also be raised in power by God (**verse 43b**). Now the people of Corinth were totally confused about the natural body and how it could be raised as a spiritual body. Paul further explained that there is a difference between the natural body and the spiritual body (**verse 44**). The natural body will return to dust according to Scripture (see Ecclesiastes 12:7).

We leave the flesh to wait for our renewed, resurrected spiritual body. The nature of our raised resurrected body is not yet known (see 1 John 3:2). We will be transformed similar to Jesus, according to Philippians 3:21; the lowly bodies we now have will be just like His glorious body. The ultimate goal of the Gospel is for all Christians to have eternal life with God. We are to be changed from this body, this life, and this world that Adam resided in at the beginning, and changed to a resurrected body and have a life in heaven with the last Adam, Jesus (**verse 45**). Although we are merely dead seeds here on earth, we have to remember that as Christians, we were replanted in fresh soil when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We will be raised and live again with Jesus. We will be changed from a dead old seed to a beautiful bloomed flower in heaven. Oh, what a change it will be!


 **What Do You Think?** As believers, we look forward to a new resurrected life. As a group, make a list of the things we won't miss here in our natural bodies.

Your Life

On this Resurrection Sunday, we honor and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As Christians, let us make it a priority to honor Him 365 days a year. He is risen!

Your World!

In today's society, there are many false teachings that can cause us to go astray. We must remember the Gospel that Paul preached and keep it alive in our hearts and in our daily walk with Christ.

 **Closing Prayer** Our Father, thank You for sending Your Son to die on the Cross at Calvary for our sins. We thank You, O God, that He got up to give us the right to live with You eternally. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY , April 13	"Mordecai Refuses to Bow to Haman"	(Esther 3:1-6)
TUESDAY , April 14	"Haman Sets a Decree to Destroy the Jews"	(Esther 3:7-11)
WEDNESDAY , April 15	"Haman Builds Gallows to Hang Mordecai"	(Esther 5:9-14)
THURSDAY , April 16	"The Decree against the Jews Is Struck Down"	(Esther 8:3-8, 16-17)
FRIDAY , April 17	"Festival of Purim Established"	(Esther 9:18-23, 29-32)
SATURDAY , April 18	"Mordecai Advances Welfare of the Jews"	(Esther 10:1-3)
SUNDAY , April 19	"Esther's Plea and Haman's Punishment"	(Esther 7:1-10)