

THE DEATH OF DEATH

1 Corinthians 15:12-28

Almost everyone in the New Testament world believed in an afterlife, in some kind of dual reality composed of a disposable physical body and an immortal soul connected to larger, spiritual realities. Because of their assumptions about the nature of physical reality, most people would have rejected the Christian idea of a bodily resurrection (*cf. Acts 17:32; 23:6-8*). Those widely held and deeply rooted ideas infiltrated the church through Gentiles who, raised with those beliefs, brought them into the church after their conversion.

While the differences between Christianity's ideas of the afterlife and those of the New Testament world might seem minor to us, they represent fundamentally opposed ideas about reality that created deep tensions in the early church. Paul addressed that tension in his comments about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. In that passage, he wrote about members of the church in Corinth who claimed "there is no resurrection of the dead"¹ and made the following points:

- No doubts exist about the reality of Jesus' bodily resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:3-8*).
- God planned for Jesus' bodily resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:3-4*).
- Jesus' bodily resurrection guarantees our bodily resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:20*).
- Rejecting the idea of a bodily resurrection requires rejecting the reality of Jesus' bodily resurrection and, consequently, undermines the foundations of Christian belief (*1 Corinthians 15:12-19*).

Paul, building on the reality of Jesus' bodily resurrection, introduces a few important messages, including:

Jesus' resurrection positions him as a new Adam who brings life to people

(1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

Jesus' resurrection gives him the authority to defeat God's enemies, including death

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

***Death is an enemy that needs to be defeated rather than an
'natural' part of reality***

(1 Corinthians 15:24-28, 54-57)

***Jesus' defeat of death will introduce a new, transformed
reality***

(1 Corinthians 15:35-55)

Applications

- Jesus' resurrection reminds us that there is more to life than this present life.
- The certainty of Jesus' resurrection guarantees us a better, future reality.
- Jesus' resurrection, while guaranteeing our future life, ought to change our present life.
- Our appreciation of the reality and meaning of Jesus' resurrection ought to motivate us to share the good news of that event with everyone around us.

Paul believed the good news of Jesus' resurrection changed everything and offered the foundation upon which Christian thinking and living built itself. We should therefore ask ourselves, as people who claim to believe in Jesus' resurrection, does it offer the same foundational, life-changing place in our lives that it held within Paul's life?