



### **The Gospel Paul Preached Part 3 (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)**

The Second element of the Gospel Paul preached is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul testifies that Christ “was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:4). Every serious student of the Bible would agree that the Resurrection is the most profound event in all of history. Indeed, without the Resurrection the death of Jesus would be just another sad event that happens to everyone. Theologian Daniel Yeago, captured the significance of the Resurrection when he said that “The Resurrection of Jesus is to Christian Theology what the sun is to the natural world: it is extremely difficult to look directly *at it*, yet we see everything else in its light. The Resurrection is the mystery *par excellence*.” C.S. Lewis echoes the same sentiment: “To preach Christ meant primarily to preach the Resurrection.” Lewis further points out that the Resurrection is a key element in the sermons recorded in the Book of Acts. “The Resurrection,” he says, “is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the Acts.” Statements of the Resurrection of Jesus in these sermons can be found in the following passages: Acts 2:24, 31, 32; 3:26; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30-37; 17:3, 31; 23:6; 24:15; 26:23. “The First fact in the history of Christendom” adds C.S. Lewis, “is a number of people who say they have seen the Resurrection.”

The apostle claims that Christ was raised “according to the Scriptures.” In a previous Update, I explained that, when the New Testament uses the term “Scriptures,” it is primarily referring to the Old Testament Scriptures (See Mk. 14:49; Lk. 4:21; Jn. 5:39; 10:35; Acts 18:24; Rom. 4:3). One exception to this is found in 2 Timothy 3:16 where the phrase “All Scripture” refers to both Old and New Testaments.

Although the doctrine of the Resurrection is not fully disclosed in the Old Testament, the idea is typified in Israel's experience. For example, the Return of the Remnant from Exile in Babylon is often depicted in the prophets as a Resurrection. This in turn anticipates the eschatological return of God's people from the dead at the end of the ages (See Is a. 25:8ff; 26:19; Ezek. 37:1-14; Dan. 12:2; Hos. 13:14).

Another feature found in the Old Testament Scriptures which prefigures the Resurrection of Jesus is the Feast of First-Fruits. (Lev. 23:9-14). In acknowledgement of the fact that all the products of the land came from God, and thankfulness for His goodness, Israelites brought as an offering to Him the portion of the fruit that ripened first, these being looked upon as a guarantee of the coming harvest. Such an offering was made both on behalf of the nation (Lev. 23:10) and by individuals (Exod. 23:19). Paul uses this in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 as a type of the Resurrection of Christ. Christ is the first-fruits of a great harvest. He is the first one to be resurrected. Just as the first sheaf was a token of many more that would follow, in the same way Christ's resurrection is a pledge of a multitude of others who will likewise be resurrected. Interestingly, the offering of the first-fruits took place “on the day after the Sabbath” (Lev. 23:11), i.e., Sunday. This, of course, is the day Christ was resurrected.

In His resurrection, Jesus has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has opened. This is the second element of the Gospel Paul preached.

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By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis