

The Lord's Second Coming

A reflection of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

“Christ has been raised from the dead.” Easter is a fact not to be denied. It is a reality on which to rest a sure and certain hope. Christ Himself is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Like the first sheaf of grain God’s Old Testament people were to offer to the Lord as a thank offering for the rest of the harvest that was ready to be gathered in, so Christ is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19) is our Lord’s promise.

As death came by one man, so life has also come by one man. Because Adam died, all mankind must die, including believers; because Christ rose from the dead, all who believe in Him as their Lord of life will rise from the dead.

For Christ the resurrection took place some 21 centuries ago; for those who have believed in Him, the resurrection will take place when He returns in glory on judgment day. The first sheaf was from a grave outside Jerusalem on the first Easter morning some two thousand years ago; the harvest will be from graves all over the world when our risen Lord will appear on clouds of glory, and His own will rise from their graves and will be caught up to meet Him in the skies.

Since Paul has been speaking only of believers who will rise to eternal life, the *then* in his statement, “Then the end will come,” refers to our Lord’s second coming, when Christians will be raised from the dead. “Then,” at His second coming, He will hand over “the kingdom to God the Father after he has put an end to all dominion, authority and power.” All “dominion, authority and power” will be destroyed when, at one moment, the judgment trumpets will sound, and the curtain will be rung down on this world’s history. That will be the end of the godless, sinful rule of mankind over this planet. The ungodly will also be brought back to life, but not to glory. They will meet their Judge, who will consign them and all their works to eternal damnation.

Christ will turn over His kingdom to His heavenly Father on that day. This will come as no surprise to those who know that the Son was sent by His Father to accomplish the salvation of the world and to establish His kingdom, the Church. When the last chapter of human history has been written, He will offer to His heavenly Father the trophies of His victory and the spoils of his triumph. Every enemy, even that last great enemy, death, will have been overcome and put under His feet. With His mission accomplished, His victory won, the Son will turn over His kingdom to His Father and will reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally.

A further word about “He has put all things under His feet.” It is clear, Paul points out, that “all things” does not include “the One (God Himself), who put everything under Christ.” But the Son will place Himself under God. He will be “subject to” the Father, who put everything, except Himself, under His Son.

As the God-man, who took on human flesh and blood and became one of us, He can place Himself under His Father. As the eternal Son of God, He is equal to the Father and will reign with Him as His equal. Both John 10:30, “I and the Father are one,” and John 14:28, “The Father is greater than I,” are true. Such is the mystery and the wonder of the Trinity and of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

Where, now, are the “reasonable” arguments of those Corinthians who said there was no resurrection of the dead? The resurrection of Jesus Christ and of those who die in the Lord is too great a miracle and a mystery for the small mind of unregenerate man to grasp or to destroy.