



Study Guide: 1 Corinthians – Chapter 15

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This study guide provides an educational overview of 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

1 Corinthians 15 stands as a pivotal chapter within Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, addressing foundational truths about the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of believers. This chapter contributes significantly to the book's flow by resolving doubts and misunderstandings circulating in the Corinthian church regarding resurrection, a core tenet of Christian faith. Readers should watch for Paul's methodical defense of the resurrection, his use of eyewitness testimony, and the theological implications that extend from Christ's resurrection to the believer's hope of eternal life.

Context

The immediate literary context of 1 Corinthians 15 is Paul's response to questions and some skepticism within the Corinthian church about the resurrection of the dead. Earlier in the letter, Paul addresses various ethical and doctrinal issues, but here he focuses on the resurrection, which some in Corinth apparently denied or misunderstood. Historically, the Corinthian church was a diverse community influenced by Greek philosophy, which often regarded the body as inferior or corrupt, leading to confusion about bodily resurrection. Paul, as the key speaker, writes from Ephesus, aiming to correct false teachings and reinforce the gospel's core message. This chapter also fits within the broader covenantal framework of God's promises of redemption and restoration, fulfilling the hope of resurrection promised throughout Scripture.

Outline

The chapter opens with a reaffirmation of the gospel message and its importance, emphasizing the resurrection of Christ as the foundation of Christian faith. Paul then presents a series of eyewitness testimonies to Christ's resurrection, establishing its historicity. Following this, he addresses the theological necessity of resurrection, arguing that if Christ has not been raised, faith is futile. The middle section deals with the nature of



the resurrection body, contrasting the earthly and the resurrected forms. Paul concludes with a triumphant declaration of victory over death through Christ and an exhortation to remain steadfast in the faith. Throughout, the chapter moves from gospel proclamation to doctrinal explanation and finally to practical encouragement.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians of the gospel he preached, which they received and on which they stand. He stresses the importance of holding fast to this message, which centers on Christ’s death for sins, His burial, and His resurrection on the third day, all in accordance with Scripture.

Verses 4–8: Paul provides a list of witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, including Cephas (Peter), the twelve apostles, over five hundred believers, James, all the apostles, and finally Paul himself. This serves to authenticate the resurrection as a historical event verified by multiple eyewitnesses.

Verses 9–11: Paul reflects on his own role as an apostle, acknowledging his past as a persecutor of the church but affirming that his ministry is by God’s grace. He emphasizes the consistency of the gospel message despite differing human efforts.

Verses 12–19: Here Paul confronts the denial of resurrection in Corinth. He argues that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, and the Christian faith is in vain. He explains the devastating implications of this denial, including the futility of preaching, faith, and the hope of eternal life.

Verses 20–28: Paul proclaims Christ as the “firstfruits” of those who have died, indicating that His resurrection guarantees the future resurrection of believers. He describes the sequence of resurrection events culminating in Christ’s ultimate victory over all powers and the restoration of God’s kingdom.

Verses 29–34: Paul addresses practical concerns and challenges, such as the practice of baptism for the dead, and warns against sinning in light of the resurrection hope. He appeals to the Corinthians to live soberly and wisely, recognizing the resurrection’s moral implications.

Verses 35–49: This section explores the nature of the resurrection body, using analogies from nature to explain transformation. Paul contrasts the perishable, dishonorable earthly body with the imperishable, glorious resurrected body, emphasizing continuity and



transformation.

Verses 50–58: Paul concludes with a powerful declaration that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, highlighting the necessity of a spiritual transformation. He describes the mystery of the resurrection, the final defeat of death, and exhorts believers to remain steadfast, knowing their labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Key Themes

The central theme of 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection, both of Christ and of believers. This chapter underscores the resurrection as the cornerstone of Christian faith and hope. Another key theme is the historical reliability of the resurrection, supported by eyewitness testimony. The chapter also highlights the transformation from mortal to immortal life, emphasizing the future glory that awaits believers. Victory over death and the final restoration of God's kingdom are prominent, along with the ethical implications of resurrection faith, calling believers to live in light of eternal realities.

Cross-References

Romans 6:4–5 clarifies the believer's participation in Christ's resurrection through baptism, reinforcing the newness of life Paul discusses. Philippians 3:20–21 complements the transformation theme by describing the believer's future glorified body. John 11:25–26 records Jesus' own declaration about resurrection and life, providing foundational teaching for this chapter. Revelation 21:4 offers a vision of the final defeat of death, echoing Paul's triumphant conclusion. Finally, Luke 24:36–43 provides eyewitness accounts of the resurrected Christ, supporting Paul's emphasis on historical testimony.

Application

Modern discipleship rooted in 1 Corinthians 15 calls believers to anchor their faith in the reality of the resurrection, which assures victory over sin and death. This assurance should inspire steadfastness in trials and motivate holy living, knowing that present sufferings are temporary. The chapter challenges Christians to live with an eternal perspective, valuing spiritual transformation over earthly status or appearance. It also encourages boldness in proclaiming the gospel, grounded in the historical truth of Christ's resurrection. Finally, believers are urged to cultivate hope and perseverance, recognizing that their labor in the Lord has eternal significance.



Summary

1 Corinthians 15 systematically affirms the resurrection as the foundation of Christian faith, providing historical evidence, theological explanation, and practical exhortation. Paul moves from the gospel's core message to the nature of the resurrection body and the ultimate victory over death, culminating in a call to steadfastness. This chapter not only addresses doctrinal errors in Corinth but also offers enduring hope and motivation for believers to live in light of the resurrection's transformative power.