**The Resurrection Secures our Victory (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)**

 The resurrection of Christ is the victory of our salvation journey, which will be finally established with our bodily resurrection on the day of His Second Coming. Greetings to you all dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we stir up topics related to Christ’s Resurrection until the day of Pentecost. All of us are aware of the indispensability of believing in the truth of Christ’s Resurrection. Thus, we are going to study the Resurrection of Jesus and see the teachings of the Apostle Paul and other New Testament authors regarding this subject. The Apostle Paul was forced to explain to the church of Corinth the veracity of the Resurrection and its consequences because of their spiritual confusion. It seems that the Church of Corinth had members who did not believe in a bodily resurrection on the Day of Judgment. It is against these members that Paul had just explained that without the reality of the (Last Day) Resurrection, Jesus’ Resurrection and the forgiveness of sins, as two pillars of our salvation, would not have taken place. Therefore, we are studying today the verses that follow that argument. So, we are going to speak about the central role of (both instances of the) Resurrection, especially about the events to eventually take place at the End of Time described in this letter. The resurrection of Christ is the victory of our salvation journey, which will be finally established with our bodily resurrection on the day of His Second Coming. Therefore, let us move on to the study of this important subject…

 The veracity of the Final Resurrection (also known as General Resurrection) contributes to the proven veracity of Christ’s resurrection as well solidifies our hope of our final emancipation from this broken reality. Often, sermons about Jesus’ Resurrection only serve to establish its truth, but do not go any deeper than that. The Apostle (Paul) is reminding the church that Christ has already truly risen from the dead as the firstfruits, the first of the harvest which was the most valuable portion of the crops (in those days) and would be offered to God according to the Old Testament law. Along with the crops, the first male child, the first male animals would also be offered to God. Jesus’ Resurrection was like this “first crop”, which is called “firstfruits” in the Bible. However, this offering of firstfruits (Jesus’ Resurrection) would not have happened if people don’t rise on Judgment Day. In other words, it means that Jesus is not going to be the only one having experienced resurrection; He was simply the first of the Final or General Resurrection (which has not yet happened yet) breaking the power of Death and opening our path to salvation, which will arrive in its finality at the Last Judgment.

The reason for the Apostle’s explanation is clear, and ought to be clear to each of us: ***Adam, because of his own sin, did not simply die individually with no consequence to anyone else – rather, as the father of all humanity, he passed on to them the curse of death. Christ, in the same fashion, did not only defeat death as a personal feat (not that death could ever hold Him down…)\_ – rather, He defeated death in our place as well, and it is with that hope that Paul says that we will also rise from the dead on the Last Day.***

But the Apostle doesn’t stop there: rather, he reveals to us extremely important truths. First, that our bodily resurrection will certainly happen at Jesus’ Second Coming. Second, that when the end of all things arrives, Jesus, having finished His work, will hand back the Kingdom over to the Father as a sign of love and unity of the Trinity. That will take place, however, once every spiritual ruler, authority and power, in other words all opposing spiritual entities are defeated in this world. In addition, before Jesus hands over the Kingdom, our Lord will annihilate Death, which is the last and most important enemy for mankind.

Some years ago a popular English novelist wrote a book called When It Was Dark. The story centers about the efforts of a wealthy unbeliever to discredit Christianity. He endeavors to do this by attempting to discredit the Resurrection. In that respect his logic is sound, for if the Resurrection can be discredited Christianity is overthrown. This man hired venal archaeologists to fake a discovery of the body of Jesus in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. On the tomb was an inscription testifying that the owner of this sepulcher stole the body of Jesus and hid it there. The novel then goes on to describe the ultimate effect of such a discovery, if accepted as truth, upon the Christian world, upon the Christian Church, and upon civilization in general. In powerful passages he shows how, gradually, the Christian Church crumbles and collapses; how men and women go back to lust, cruelty, and animalism; and how the flame of hope dies out in every human heart.

Had the body of Christ ever been found, or a grave in which it could be proved that his body had been placed, other than that of Joseph of Arimathea, the Church would indeed disappear and the sun of human hope would set in the darkness of an ever-ending life. But thanks be to God, now is Christ risen from the dead! On that empty tomb is the epitaph written by the angels, the epitaph that ends all other epitaphs—"He is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him!"

Having said this, the Lord invites us today to remember that He has truly risen and that His Resurrection is the beginning of that (general) resurrection which we also will experience at the Last Judgment, to be finally united to our Lord (for good). Therefore, it is extremely important that we believe in the Resurrection that takes place at the Last Judgment. It is also indispensable for us to believe that Christ rose bodily (as opposed to rising as an apparition). Our Savior was the first to rise, but we also, one day, will rise bodily if we are dead when His Second Coming takes place.

God has not left us alone to simply die and disappear from His Presence. Rather, God calls us to live with hope and to expect that this body that wears out and ages will one day be renewed and transformed into a glorified body, and that we will experience a bodily resurrection when the voice of the Son of God sounds throughout the world. Therefore, let us rejoice in Jesus’ Resurrection, because it is our salvation and also reminds us of our coming resurrection, which will take place when the Lord returns in His glory on the Last Day. The veracity of the Final Resurrection (also known as General Resurrection) contributes to the proven veracity of Christ’s resurrection and solidifies our hope of our final emancipation from this broken reality.

After hearing the above, let us give glory to Jesus for His Resurrection, who accomplished our victory over sin and death, and who opened the way to every believing follower who surrenders and subjects their life to Him. The resurrection of Christ is the victory of our salvation journey, which will be finally established with our bodily resurrection on the day of His Second Coming. Amen.