

Christ the Firstfruits

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

I have had a busy week. About 6 in the evening on Monday I drove to Alabama for the funeral of my older brother's wife, Ginger. It was a sad occasion as all funerals are. There was the lifeless body of a lady who I had known since I was 13. Her children had grown up with our children in their younger years. Of course the grand-children were there.

It was worst of all from my brother. They would have been married 50 years this June 9th. Like other widows and widowers he is now lost without her.

But my brother is not in good health and is probably not too many years behind her.

Death is the greatest thief in the world. For he takes from all and we cannot resist him for long. He divides families and separates the best of friends. No one can restrain his power. He comes to the young and the old. He has no respect for the rich or the poor. Color, language, or religion hold no power with him.

But on Tuesday when the body of my dear sister-in-law was laid beneath the sod on a hill in Alabama, death had not won. Death had only relived her of her suffering and taken away her disease. All that death could do was loose her from the body that had become such a source of suffering for her in the last days of her life.

How do we know this? How can we be so sure? Because this is Easter Sunday.

- I. Now Christ is risen from the dead
 - A. Death could not keep its prey, He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord.
 - B. Matt 28:5-7 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. NKJV
 - C. 1 Cor 15:3-6 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, NKJV

- II. He has become the firstfruits
 - A. Of those who have fallen asleep
 - 1. Since the resurrection is true, death is but a sleep.
 - 2. 1 Cor 11:30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. NKJV
 - 3. 1 Cor 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – NKJV
 - 4. 1 Thess 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. NKJV
 - 5. 1 Thess 5:9-10 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. NKJV
 - 6. 1 Thess 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. NKJV
 - B. Firstfruits
 - 1. This goes back to the feast of firstfruits where they would offer the first picked grain to God as an offering.
- III. He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.
 - A. Today this world is in rebellion with God.
 - B. But through the victory of Jesus, He will put an end to all the usurpers of power here on earth.
- IV. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.
 - A. All the enemies of God will be subdued and destroyed.
 - B. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.
 - 1. Rev 21:1-4 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." NKJV

C. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

1. Some have only a here and now religion, which Christianity is but it is also a faith for beyond this life and for the next.

Is your only hope what is in this life. They you are to truly to be pitied.

You may gain the whole world but where can that get you ultimately?

Jesus said those who seek to save their lives will loose it.

It is only in total surrender to Jesus that you can have real peace.

It is only in total surrender to Jesus that you can have the hope of the resurrection.