

21. 1 Corinthians

*1 Corinthians 15; Resurrection of Christ and believers, Christ reigns (15:20-26); the rapture (15:51-58)

- "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (15:20-26). Jesus Christ was raised from the dead (resurrected) and is the first fruits of all believers who have died. First fruits is an Old Testament word (Exodus 23:16, 19) used here in the sense of a preliminary installment of what will be both an example and a guarantee of more to come (Romans 8:23). In Adam, all people die physically and in Christ all believers will receive eternal life (1 Thessalonians 4:16). All believers (dead and living) will receive their resurrected bodies "at His coming"; the rapture (15:23, 51-54).

- "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (15:51-52). This is one of the great rapture passages in the Bible (refer also to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The rapture was a mystery in that it had not been known in the Old Testament but now was revealed. This "last" trumpet is the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16), which precedes the resurrection of the dead in Christ. The "first" trumpet is probably the trumpet of the Lord, heard on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16, 19, 20:18). When Jesus returns, both dead (sleeping) and living believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The dead in Christ will rise first, followed by living believers; both groups receiving their resurrected, imperishable bodies (15:53-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This transformation from a physical body to a spiritual body will happen "in the twinkling of an eye". Then it will be said "Death is swallowed up in victory" for the resurrected body is immortal (15:53-55). Believers are encouraged to give thanks to God, "who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:57) and to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (15:58).