

The Book of 1 Corinthians, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 13: The Resurrection and Final Matters

1 Corinthians 15:1–16:24

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This final section brings the letter to its foundation: the bodily resurrection of Christ and of believers. What is doctrinally at stake could not be higher. Paul presents the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the gospel itself, grounded in eyewitness testimony and the Scriptures, and he insists that the bodily resurrection is essential and historical, not optional or merely symbolic. If Christ is not raised, faith is futile and we are still in our sins. The teacher should present the resurrection of Christ as a historical fact and the resurrection of believers as certain, against any who deny or spiritualize it. Handle 15:20–28 in line with sound teaching: Christ reigns now, from the right hand of the Father, and will reign until the last enemy, death, is destroyed, at which point he delivers the kingdom to the Father in one great consummation. This is one resurrection and final judgment, not a future earthly thousand-year political reign. Guard students gently against premillennial schemes by letting the text speak: the end comes when Christ hands the kingdom over, and God becomes all in all.

At the same time, this section is gloriously formational. The resurrection is not an abstraction but the ground of all hope: it transforms how we face suffering, death, and loss, and it fuels wholehearted labor for the Lord, since in him our labor is not in vain. Paul's closing charges, to be watchful, stand firm, be strong, and do everything in love, together with the weekly collection on the first day of the week (16:2), show that resurrection hope produces steadfast, generous, loving Christian living now.

Aim, then, for hope-filled steadfastness. Send students home certain that the tomb is empty, that their own resurrection is sure, that Christ reigns now and will destroy death, and therefore resolved to stand firm and pour themselves out in the work of the Lord. The heaviest doctrinal block belongs at Question 9, with the reign of Christ and the consummation handled carefully at Question 5. As this is the final lesson, help students feel the whole letter resolving here, at the feet of the risen, reigning Lord.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel he preached, "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," and that he appeared to Cephas, the twelve, and more than five hundred at once (15:1–8). What are the essential facts of the gospel according to this passage, and why does it matter that Paul grounds them in eyewitness testimony and the Scriptures?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Lay out the gospel as Paul defines it in 15:3–8. Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to many witnesses, all in accordance with the Scriptures. These are the essential, non-negotiable facts of the faith.

Stress the historical grounding. Paul names witnesses, Cephas, the twelve, more than five hundred at once, most still living, and James and all the apostles. The resurrection is not a private vision or a comforting myth but a public, witnessed event open to investigation.

Note the phrase in accordance with the Scriptures. The death and resurrection of Christ fulfill the Old Testament; God had promised and foreshadowed them long before. The gospel is rooted in God's eternal plan.

Apply it. Christianity stands or falls on history. Our faith is not a leap into the dark but a reasoned trust in something that actually happened, attested by those who saw the risen Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The essential gospel facts: Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared (15:3–8)
- The resurrection grounded in eyewitness testimony, a public and historical event
- The death and resurrection in accordance with the Scriptures
- Christianity resting on history, not myth or private vision
- Faith as reasoned trust in what actually happened

Discussion Prompts

- What are the essential facts of the gospel in this passage?
- Why does Paul appeal to eyewitnesses?
- What does it mean that these things happened according to the Scriptures?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul says this gospel is the one “in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast” (15:1–2). Is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus truly the foundation your life stands on, or is your faith resting on something else? What would it look like to hold fast to the gospel more deliberately in this season?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the gospel foundation into the student's own life. Paul says the gospel is where we stand and how we are being saved, if we hold fast.

Note the conditional. Salvation comes through holding fast to the gospel, not through a faith that drifts away. This is consistent with the New Testament call to continued faithfulness.

Help students examine their actual foundation. Is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus truly what their life rests on, or are they leaning on success, relationships, religion, or self?

Aim for one deliberate step. Ask each student how they could hold fast to the gospel more intentionally in this season, through the word, prayer, the Lord's table, and the fellowship of the church.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gospel as the foundation we stand on (15:1)
- Being saved through holding fast, not a drifting faith (15:2)
- Examining what our life actually rests on
- Holding fast through word, prayer, the Supper, and fellowship

Discussion Prompts

- Is the gospel truly the foundation your life stands on?
- What does it mean that we are saved if we hold fast?
- How could you hold fast more deliberately this season?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul argues that "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain," and even that those who have died in Christ "have perished" (15:13–18). Why does Paul make the resurrection of Jesus the one truth on which everything else stands or falls, and what does this teach about how central the bodily resurrection is to the Christian faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Walk through Paul's relentless logic in 15:13–18. If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised; if Christ is not raised, preaching and faith are empty, the apostles are liars, we are still in our sins, and the dead in Christ have perished. Everything unravels.

Draw out why the resurrection is the linchpin. The resurrection is God's vindication of Christ and his acceptance of the sacrifice for sin. Without it, the cross is just a death, and we have no assurance that sin is forgiven or death defeated.

Stress that this is bodily resurrection. The Corinthian error spiritualized or denied it; Paul insists on a real, bodily rising. The faith cannot be reduced to a set of ideals while emptying out the historical event.

Apply it. Because so much rests on the resurrection, it deserves our confident attention. It is not a peripheral doctrine but the hinge of the whole faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The resurrection as the linchpin on which all else stands or falls (15:13–18)
- The resurrection as God's vindication of Christ and acceptance of his sacrifice
- Without the resurrection, no forgiveness and no defeat of death
- The necessity of a real, bodily resurrection
- The resurrection as the hinge of the whole faith

Discussion Prompts

- Why does everything stand or fall on the resurrection?
- What would be lost if Christ were not raised?
- Why must the resurrection be bodily and not merely spiritual?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul says that if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are “of all people most to be pitied” (15:19), but the resurrection means our hope reaches beyond the grave. How does a real, settled hope in the resurrection change the way you face disappointment, suffering, aging, or the loss of those you love?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes resurrection hope into how the student faces hardship. Paul says a hope limited to this life would make us pitiable; the resurrection extends hope beyond the grave.

Help students connect the doctrine to lived experience. A settled hope in the resurrection reframes suffering as temporary, aging as not the end, and the death of loved ones in Christ as a parting, not a final loss.

Guard against shallow comfort. Resurrection hope does not deny grief or pain; it grieves, but not as those without hope. It holds sorrow and confidence together.

Aim for one area of applied hope. Ask each student where a real hope in the resurrection most needs to change how they are facing a current disappointment, fear, or loss.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Hope that reaches beyond this life (15:19)
- The resurrection reframing suffering, aging, and loss
- Grieving with hope rather than without it

- Holding sorrow and confidence together

Discussion Prompts

- How does resurrection hope change the way you face suffering or loss?
- What is the difference between grieving with hope and without it?
- Where do you most need this hope right now?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul declares that Christ, raised as “the firstfruits,” now reigns and “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet,” the last enemy being death, after which he delivers the kingdom “to God the Father” that God may be “all in all” (15:20–28). What does this teach about Christ reigning now, about the final defeat of death, and about the one great consummation in which Christ hands the kingdom to the Father, rather than a future earthly political reign?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Handle this passage carefully, as it is both rich and easily misunderstood. Christ is the firstfruits (15:20–23), the first of the harvest whose rising guarantees the resurrection of all who belong to him. His resurrection is the pledge of ours.

Open up the reign of Christ in 15:24–28. Christ is reigning now and must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death itself. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all.

Address the timing carefully and gently, to guard against premillennial schemes. Notice what Paul actually says: Christ reigns now, not at some future date, and the end, his coming, the resurrection, and the handing over of the kingdom, all belong to one great consummation. There is no room here for a separate, future, earthly thousand-year political reign inserted before the end. The kingdom is Christ’s present reign from the right hand of the Father, which culminates when he returns, raises the dead, destroys death, and delivers all to the Father.

Connect this to the broader teaching of Scripture. The kingdom arrived with Christ and was established when the church began (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Acts 2; Colossians 1:13). Christ is King now. Our hope is not an earthly political reign to come but the final defeat of death and the glory of being with God when Christ hands over the kingdom.

Apply it. The reign of Christ is a present comfort, not merely a future one. The risen Lord rules now, and history is moving toward the consummation in which death is destroyed and God is all in all.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ as the firstfruits guaranteeing the resurrection of his people (15:20–23)
- The present reign of Christ from the right hand of the Father (15:25)
- Death as the last enemy, finally destroyed (15:26)
- One great consummation when Christ delivers the kingdom to the Father (15:24, 28)
- No future earthly thousand-year political reign; the kingdom is Christ's present reign (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Acts 2; Colossians 1:13)
- The reign of Christ as a present comfort and a sure hope

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Christ is the firstfruits?
- How does this passage show that Christ is reigning now rather than in a future earthly kingdom?
- What is the one great consummation Paul describes when Christ hands the kingdom to the Father?

Question 6

Student Question:

Knowing that the risen Christ reigns even now and will finally destroy death itself, how does that present reign of King Jesus give you courage and steadiness in a world that often feels out of control? Where do you need to live this week as though Jesus is truly reigning right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes the present reign of Christ into the student's daily courage. If Jesus reigns now, the world is not finally out of control.

Help students feel the comfort. Whatever the headlines or the household troubles, the risen Christ is on the throne, ruling until every enemy is subdued. Nothing is outside his reign.

Apply it to fear and anxiety. Living as though Jesus reigns means entrusting what we cannot control to the King who can, and obeying him even when the outcome is uncertain.

Aim for one area of applied trust. Ask each student where they most need to live this week as though Jesus is truly reigning right now.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The present reign of Christ as a source of courage
- Nothing outside the rule of the risen King
- Entrusting what we cannot control to the King
- Living and obeying under Christ's present reign

Discussion Prompts

- How does the present reign of Christ give you courage?
- Where does life feel out of control, and how does his reign speak to it?
- Where do you need to live as though Jesus reigns now?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul answers those who ask how the dead are raised by describing the resurrection body: “sown perishable,” it is “raised imperishable”; sown in weakness, raised in power; a natural body sown, a spiritual body raised, bearing “the image of the man of heaven” (15:35–49). What does this teach about the nature of the resurrection body and about the future God has prepared for those who belong to Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open up Paul’s teaching on the resurrection body in 15:35–49. Using the image of a seed, he shows that there is both continuity and transformation: what is sown perishable is raised imperishable, what is sown in weakness is raised in power, a natural body is sown and a spiritual body is raised.

Clarify what spiritual body means. It does not mean a ghostly, immaterial existence, but a real body fitted for the life of the Spirit and the world to come, no longer subject to decay, weakness, or death. The risen Christ is the pattern.

Highlight 15:49: we shall bear the image of the man of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of Adam, earthly and perishable, those in Christ will be remade in the likeness of the risen Lord.

Apply it. The Christian hope is not escape from the body but the redemption of the body. God is not finished with our physical existence; he will raise and glorify it. This dignifies the body and the material creation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Continuity and transformation in the resurrection body (15:35–44)
- The spiritual body as real and imperishable, not ghostly
- Bearing the image of the man of heaven, the risen Christ (15:49)
- The Christian hope as the redemption, not the escape, of the body
- The dignity of the body and the material creation in God’s plan

Discussion Prompts

- What does Paul teach about the nature of the resurrection body?
- What does it mean that we will bear the image of the man of heaven?
- How does this dignify the body and the physical creation?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul says we will one day bear the image of the man of heaven, fully remade in the likeness of the risen Christ. If your body and your whole self are destined for resurrection and glory, how should that shape the way you treat your body and live your life now? Where are you investing in what is perishable rather than what is imperishable?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question takes the destiny of the body into how the student lives now. If our bodies are destined for resurrection and glory, the body matters.

Connect to earlier lessons. In chapter 6 Paul called the body a temple of the Spirit; here he shows it is destined for glory. Both truths call us to honor God with our bodies now.

Press the investment question. We can pour our lives into what is perishable, appearance, comfort, accumulation, or into what is imperishable, faith, love, holiness, the souls of others, the work of the Lord.

Aim for one reinvestment. Ask each student where they are investing in the perishable and one way to invest more in the imperishable this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The body destined for resurrection and glory, so it matters now
- Honoring God with the body in light of its destiny (connecting to chapter 6)
- Investing in the imperishable rather than the perishable
- Living now in light of the resurrection to come

Discussion Prompts

- How should the destiny of your body shape how you live now?
- Where are you investing in the perishable rather than the imperishable?
- What is one way to invest in what lasts this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul reveals the mystery that “we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” when the trumpet sounds and “the dead will be raised imperishable,” so that death is “swallowed up in victory,” and he concludes, “Therefore ... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (15:51–58). Why is the bodily resurrection of believers, like Christ’s own bodily resurrection, essential and certain rather than

optional, and how does this victory over death give us reason to labor wholeheartedly for the Lord now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson and the climax of the letter; give it full weight. Paul reveals the mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, at the last trumpet (15:51–52). The dead will be raised imperishable, and the living will be transformed.

Stress the certainty and the necessity of the bodily resurrection. Just as Christ's resurrection was real and bodily, so will ours be. This is not an optional or symbolic doctrine; it is essential to the gospel. Paul has already shown that to deny the resurrection of the dead is to deny Christ's own resurrection and to empty the faith (15:12–19). The bodily resurrection of believers stands or falls with the bodily resurrection of Christ.

Open up the victory of 15:54–57. When this perishable puts on the imperishable, the saying is fulfilled: death is swallowed up in victory. Paul taunts the grave, O death, where is your victory, where is your sting, and gives thanks to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Death, humanity's last and greatest enemy, is defeated.

Keep this within one resurrection and final judgment. The trumpet, the raising of the dead, and the transformation of the living all belong to the Lord's coming and the consummation Paul described earlier. Scripture presents one general resurrection and a final judgment, not a series of separate resurrections spread across an earthly millennium. Let the certainty of this single, glorious hope stand clear.

Then land on the therefore of 15:58, which is the whole point. Because the resurrection is sure and death is defeated, we are to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain. Resurrection is not a reason to withdraw from this life but the reason to pour ourselves into it. Nothing done for the Lord is wasted, because we will rise.

End with worship and resolve. The right response to the empty tomb and the promised trumpet is not idle speculation but steadfast, wholehearted, hope-filled labor for the Lord who conquered the grave.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The certain, bodily resurrection and transformation of believers at the last trumpet (15:51–52)
- The bodily resurrection as essential, not optional or symbolic, standing or falling with Christ's own (15:12–19)
- Death swallowed up in victory through Christ (15:54–57)

- One general resurrection and final judgment at the Lord's coming, not separate resurrections across an earthly millennium
- The therefore of steadfast, wholehearted labor, since in the Lord it is not in vain (15:58)
- Resurrection hope as the reason to pour ourselves into this life, not withdraw from it

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the bodily resurrection of believers essential and certain rather than optional?
- What does it mean that death is swallowed up in victory?
- How does the resurrection give us reason to labor wholeheartedly for the Lord now?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this final lesson, and across the whole letter. Paul ends with the empty tomb, the promise of our own resurrection, and the charge to “be watchful, stand firm in the faith ... be strong. Let all that you do be done in love” (16:13–14). Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from 1 Corinthians 15 and 16 that you most need to carry forward?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone asks students to look back across the final lesson and the whole letter, and to name one way Christ is forming them. Let them speak first.

If needed, recall the sweep: the gospel of the risen Christ, the resurrection as the foundation of faith, the reign of Christ and the defeat of death, the glorified body to come, and the charge to steadfast labor.

Draw in the closing of chapter 16. Paul ends with practical faithfulness: the weekly collection on the first day of the week (16:2), and the ringing charges to be watchful, stand firm in the faith, be strong, and let all that you do be done in love (16:13–14). Resurrection hope produces steadfast, generous, loving lives now.

Help students feel the whole letter resolving here. Every problem in Corinth, division, pride, immorality, disorder, finds its answer at the feet of the risen, reigning Lord, in a life built on the gospel and poured out in love.

Push toward the specific and close in prayer that students would stand firm, abound in the work of the Lord, and do everything in love, in the sure hope of the resurrection.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal formation through resurrection hope
- Steadfast, generous, loving living as the fruit of the gospel (16:2, 13–14)

- The whole letter resolving at the feet of the risen, reigning Lord
- Moving from general agreement to a specific, named response

Discussion Prompts

- Which part of this lesson, or of the whole letter, pressed on you most?
- What is the one truth from 1 Corinthians 15 and 16 you most need to carry forward?
- What named step is God asking you to take in response?