

“Betting on a Sure Thing”

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“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20)

The passage before us is a response to the dark notes sounded in the previous paragraph (vv. 12-19). If Christ was dead and did not rise from the dead, then all Christian profession as it relates to Him and His promises would be of naught. Yet our text says, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, [AND IS] the first fruits...” This statement is significant. First, it stands in contrast to the dark notes sounded earlier. It is light in darkness. It strengthens, encourages, and lightens those who are weak, downcast, and broken. Second, it is a promise of what is to come.

The historical significance of Christ as a first fruit for His people is lost to most readers. In Leviticus 23 the initial produce of a crop was to be offered up as a “first fruit.” It spoke of more to come, of a fuller and larger harvest. This same idea is captured by the text. Because Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, everything He has promised and we have believed in light of those promises will come to pass.

This can be applied to all of His promises, but there is a specific idea inside of the paragraph. First, His triumph over all things created is exhaustive. Second, His reign over all things created is eternal. Finally, His purpose for all things created is ended. Let us consider each of these ideas as they are found in the text before us.

First, in verses 24-26, His triumph over all things created is described as exhaustive. There is nothing that can be excluded from His triumph. There is coming a time when nothing created will defy His authority. Presently we live in a world that stands in open opposition to Him. It expresses a will that often looks in conflict to Him. It is hard to imagine that what we see and hear every day through various media is an expression of His triumph over all things created being exhaustive. Yet for all of His people we understand that His triumph is an “already-not yet” truth. His cross-work has set in motion His full and final triumph over all things created. He will destroy “all dominion, authority, and power” (v. 25). And “the last enemy to be destroyed [will be] death” (v. 26). Because of the language used in verses 25 and 26, I chose the word “exhaustive” to show the far reaching arena of His triumph. Nothing will escape His victory over sin and death. Everything we encounter in our lives will fall into subjection to Him who has and will triumph over all things created.

Second, in verses 24-25, His reign over all things created is described as eternal. There is a lot of movement within the idea of His reign in our passage. First, everything will be placed in a position of subjection to the Son except the Father. Second, everything, including the Son, will be placed in a position of subjection to the Father. The idea presented reflects the economical Trinity whereby the Son is placed in a position of dependence to the Father. This is a part of the incarnation when He

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took upon Himself the nature of man and became the God-man. It is noted that His placement of dependency is a part of the incarnation. As Son, He was functionally in subjection to the Father prior to the incarnation. This economy or administration existed before the Trinity chose to create. There is a great mystery here. In this mystery within the Trinity we must never conclude that the Son, as Son, is anything less than the Father or the Holy Spirit in their essence. The kingdom ruled by the Son and then handed over to the Father is singular in nature. The difference is where the Son sits in relation to the Father. Currently the Son sits at the right hand of the Father (Rev. 4 and 5). There is coming a day when the Son will sit on the throne of David. When the Son hands the kingdom over to His Father, the purpose of God for all things created will be ended. This is a part of the imagery presented for us in 1 Corinthians 15.

Finally, in verse 28, His purpose for all things created is described as ended. O friend, there is coming a day when the purpose of God for all things created will be ended, when He will be all in all! What a glorious and compelling day this will be. To even speak of such things fills the writer with awe, excitement, and expectation. Everything that appears so disjointed and illogical will open before us into a unified and intentional whole. Nothing will be out of place. No longer will “square pegs be forced into round holes.” The union of all things will be consummated.

This is absolutely fascinating. Ephesians 1:9-10 speaks of this truth in the following manner, “In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him **with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.**”

When the Son places Himself, along with the trophies of His work, under the authority of His Father, the Father will be all in all, and in so doing He will have summed up all things in Christ. This same action echoes the idea of Philippians 2:9-11, when the Father grants to Christ a position before which all things created bow. and in such action the Father receives glory.

“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that speaks of this future. What the Father did in the raising of His Son was place on His promises a pledge to complete that which He alone began. Oh what joy is ours both now and in the future. Today I can rest in full contentment knowing that He is faithful to complete that which He started (1 Thess. 5:23, 24). He is both the author and finisher of my faith (Heb. 12:1, 2). This is the Christian hope, and this is what stands out as our identifying quality to a world that is without this hope. Today, may you find great peace knowing that the triumph of God is exhaustive, that the reign of God is eternal, and that the purpose of God will end. God has won, and in Christ we share in this magnificent victory.