

The Gospel
According to the Apostle Paul
The Historicity of Jesus' Resurrection

Introduction

- Some Christian leaders say that Paul preached an individualistic gospel centred on personal salvation
- Jesus preached a corporate vision of life in the Kingdom of God, which is a way of living and being the people of God
- They pit these versions against each other
- Some would go so far as to say that “I don’t believe in the Pauline gospel, but I believe in the Kingdom gospel” (e.g., Brian McLaren)

Jesus' Preaching on the Kingdom of God

- The earliest record of Jesus' message is Mk 1:15:
- "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the **good news!**"
- The gospel according to Jesus is that the long-awaited kingdom of God has arrived. This is in fulfilment of God's promise to David:
- "¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever'" (2 Sam 7:12-13)
- Christians argue that the promise points to Jesus, "the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1)

Reading the Gospel Accounts Backward

- When we read the gospel accounts, we must read the content backward
- The content, structure, and events of the gospel accounts point to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus
- Jesus says: ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Lu 22:20)
- At the time of this statement, Jesus was saying that he *will* pay for all the benefits of the New Covenant when he dies on the cross

OVERVIEW OF 1 COR 15

- The Gospel summarized—1-11
- Consequences of denying the resurrection—12-19
- Importance of the resurrection—20-28
- Consequences of denying the resurrection—29-34
- How is the body raised?—35-50
- Our bodies will be transformed—51-57

1 Cor 15:1-11

- Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.
- ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.
- ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

1 Cor 15:1-11

- The foundation of Paul's discussion of the dead is Jesus' resurrection, confirmed by witnesses who saw Jesus alive after his crucifixion
- The historical certainty of Jesus' resurrection is the first step in the argument for the certainty of the bodily resurrection of believers
- 1 Corinthians was written around 52-53 AD, approximately 20 years after Jesus' death and resurrection
- The point is that there living eye-witnesses (500+) with whom the reader could verify the veracity of the story
- Thus, Jesus' resurrection is grounded in human history and is subject to historical investigation

1 Cor 15:1-11

- 1 Cor 15 also provides negative evidence for Jesus' resurrection
- The language of "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance" suggests that Paul was in fact quoting from an early church document (cf. 1 Cor 11:23: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you")
- "The Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried. He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and was seen by....."
- In the four gospel accounts, the first people who saw Jesus' resurrection were the women

1 Cor 15:1-11

- In the official church tradition, the women were already airbrushed out of the original account
- Why? Because the women were not regarded as credible witnesses in a court of law
- In the early 50s, the official church tradition has already lost sight of the women
- But all four gospels, the women were front and centered in the evangelist's portrayal of Jesus' resurrection

1 Cor 15:1-11

- Point: One would not make up the accounts of women seeing Jesus
- Either these stories go right back to original eyewitness accounts or they are crazy fantasies by people who are deliberately shooting themselves in the foot
- 1 Cor 15 is important, but sort of as a negative evidence to the historicity of Jesus' resurrection

What is Historical?

- In contemporary discussion the word “historical” is sometimes attached to a number of faulty assumptions
- For some who are heavily invested in naturalism, the word “historical” can be applied only to those events that have causes and effects entirely located in the ordinary or natural or time-based stream of sequence of events
- If that is the definition of “historical,” then Jesus’ resurrection could not be considered historical, for such a definition excludes miracles
- However, it is preferred to think that “historical” rightly as events that take place within the continuum of space and time regardless whether God has brought about those events by ordinary causes or by a supernatural explosion of power

The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

- Jesus' explicit claims (Jn 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 17:24)
- The lifestyle of Jesus Christ
- The historicity of Jesus' resurrection
 - The empty and “not-so” empty tomb (Jn 20:7-8)
 - Post-resurrection appearances to over 500+
 - Transformed disciples
 - Breaking with tradition to worship on Sunday

Discussion Questions

- In your opinion, how do you decide on which religion is true?
- How can we know that Christianity is the one true religion?