

Study 23. 1 Cor 15:1-11

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Big idea: Hold firmly to the message that Christ died for our sins and was raised.

Introduction

What's the most important news you've ever had to deliver to someone?

Observation and interpretation

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

"Gospel" is originally a secular term meaning "good news", which came to refer specifically to God's announcement concerning Jesus Christ. Later Christians used "the gospels" to mean a book recording details of Jesus life.

- What does it mean to "believe in vain" (verse 2) and how does Paul suggest we avoid that?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

- For Paul, what is the gospel story? What things do you find interesting or surprising about how he outlines the gospel here?
- In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul resolves to know nothing but "Christ and him crucified". Is the resurrection an optional extra to the gospel, or did he forget to include it back in chapter two?

Interestingly in 2 Timothy 2:8 Paul majors on the resurrection as he summarises the gospel: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead." So the cross and resurrection seem to be inseparable - speaking of one implies the other.

- Twice Paul says "according to the Scriptures". What does this mean and why is it so important?
- What does "resurrection" mean? How does it differ from merely resuscitating someone who is clinically dead through CPR?
- Jesus "was raised" - he didn't raise himself. Who did the raising and why is that significant?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:5-11

- Why does Paul both to name these people and tell us whether they're living or dead?
- Why does Paul call himself the "least" of the apostles?

"Abnormally born" here is not a very nice thing to say about Paul – it can mean a miscarriage or a premature birth, alluding to the unusual way that Paul came to be an apostle. Indeed some may have doubted Paul's credentials as he was not "born again" in the "normal way" for an apostle – he never met Jesus before his crucifixion, he persecuted the church, and he saw Jesus after everyone else.

- What does the "grace of God" mean to Paul?
- Why do you think Paul is so keen to bring the Corinthians back to the original message he preached to them?

Application / Implications

- Imagine you're on a bus about one minute from your stop, and someone asks you to explain the gospel to them. What would you say?
- Is it possible to investigate the historical truth of the resurrection or does belief in the resurrection require faith?
- Imagine that the whole gospel was the same except Jesus was not raised (he was truly the Son of God, and he truly died for our sins, but then he went to be with God without coming back to earth). What difference would that make to the Christian faith?

We often talk about the resurrection as an after thought in our gospel presentations, but it is actually as central as the cross. Some examples:

- Acts 17:30-31 speaks about the role of the resurrection in giving vindication of Jesus' identity – reversing humanity's erroneous judgment on him as worthy of death.
- Next week in 1 Corinthians 15:20 we'll hear about the resurrection as the "first fruits" of our own bodily resurrection.
- In Romans 1:4 Christ's resurrection is the means by which he is appointed or declared the Son of God in power.

Prayer ideas

- Praise God for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- Pray for opportunities to share this gospel with others this week.