

# Chapter 12

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## *Each in His Own Order*

In Adam all die, and in Christ all live, but each in their own order. This is a truth that has been lost and that needs to be recovered in our day. But before looking at what Paul teaches on this matter, there is an equally important truth that precedes this one.

### **All Died, All Live**

**(14) For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that *one died for all, therefore all died*; (15) and *He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 NASB)**

Paul tells us that Christ died for all and in His death, we, meaning all mankind, also died. In other words, when Christ died, *figuratively speaking*, He took the old man of Adam that is in all of us with Him into the grave. *If everyone of the old man died with Christ*, how is anyone going to come to life before God? If the old nature has been dealt with, again, figuratively speaking, for it still lives in all of us today, how does anyone come to life? On the surface, this appears to be a hopeless situation, for if all have been made to die in Christ, then how will anyone come alive again, at least in the eyes of God? The answer is in Christ.

Years ago, I had a picture of myself in a grave looking up. How was I going to get out of this grave? There was no way I could do it on my own. But then Jesus showed up. He alone rescued me from the grave. This is the same picture for all mankind. It is not based on whether we believe or not, for all mankind from Adam to the last one born of his race were taken into the grave over 2,000 years ago, whether believer or not. There is only one way out of death, and it is through God's Son.

Paul went on to state that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. But on whose behalf did He rise again? Was it not for all mankind? If all died, then He died for all, meaning He died on the behalf of all. However, it is true that in this age, many do not live for Him; nevertheless, this does not change the truth of His death for all. Besides, there are believers walking on earth today that do not live for Christ, just as there are unbelievers. Consequently, faith does not enter into this equation of one death for all and one death leads to the death of all.

Now, the question is, how does all mankind come into life? In some respects, Paul does not make it clear in the above verses. He implies that some live, but what about the rest of the dead? Do they not come alive, or are they stuck in the grave, physically (mortal body) or spiritually (lacking the Holy Spirit)?

Further, if by His one death all were brought into death, then who among the dead has the power to overcome death? How does anyone overcome the power of the grave? No one in history has been able to do this on their own.

**What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah.**  
(Psalm 89:48 NASB)

Paul gives us the answer to this riddle or enigma in his defense of the resurrection, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15, which, perhaps, is one of the greatest chapters in the whole Bible, for here Paul gives mankind the hope of resurrection into immortality.

### Hope of Resurrection

**(13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; (14) and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. (15) Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. (16) For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; (17) and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.**  
(1 Corinthians 15:13-19 NASB)

Paul makes the case that everything hinges on the resurrection of Christ from the dead. If He was not raised, then mankind has no hope and believers in this age have a worthless faith. If Jesus was not raised up, then we have no hope of resurrection and the believers that died, that is, fell asleep in Christ are gone, for they will never rise up from the grave in new bodies.

### Christ the First Fruits

**(20) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. (21) For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.** (1 Corinthians 15:20-21 NASB)

But here is the good news; Christ is the first fruits of those who are asleep, that is, of the dead. Keep in mind that Paul wrote this after the resurrection of Christ; therefore, according to this great apostle, even those who died in faith are still asleep; they are still in the state of death, asleep and waiting for the promise of resurrection. This is our hope!

Then, Paul gives us his equation again. Since by the man Adam came death, so also by the man Christ comes the resurrection of the dead, which means all mankind are destined to come out of the state of sleep. We know this is what he meant, for he states it very clearly in verse 22.

When Christ was raised from among the dead, He became the *first fruits* of all the dead. Christ was raised from all the dead and is now immortal, for death has no more power over Him.

Further, Christ is the *firstborn* from among the dead so that He might have the preeminence or first place in all things (Colossians 1:18). Essentially, Christ is first in everything, including being the first to be born again through resurrection from among all the dead that lie in the earth, and, as such, Christ is in a class all by Himself. We could say that He is the first class in all things.

Then, Paul states the same verity that he wrote in Romans 5 that death came through one man but life or resurrection of the dead comes through a Man as well. We should not overlook the import of Paul's reference that the resurrection of the dead comes through Christ. There is a difference between being resurrected *from* the dead and the resurrection *of* the dead. The former means that some are raised up but many remain in the state of death, whereas the latter means no one remains in the state of death. Resurrection of the dead speaks of all the dead rising out of the state of death.

Therefore, we can be sure that in this verse Paul was not writing of the first resurrection but of the second or general resurrection in which the rest of the dead come alive after 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4-6).

### **In Adam, All Die**

**For as in Adam all die...** (1 Corinthians 15:22a)

Could Paul state it any clearer? **In Adam, all die** or **all are dying** (CV). Again, here is the word *all*. Can anyone dispute that all born of Adam's race, whether one believes in Christ or not, will die one day, unless one happens to be in the company of believers alive on earth when He comes the second time? But, even in reference to the "alive and remain" ones, this verse applies, for all are dying, which is the way the *Concordant Literal NT* translates it: **In Adam, all are dying!** When we are born, we all enter into a process of dying that leads to physical death one day.

Paul makes no exceptions to this death sentence. Notice that Paul does not say all who are in Adam or the lost in Adam. He simply states that in Adam, all are dying, just as through one man death came to all men (Romans 5:12). The fact that all die a physical death places all in Adam in respect to death.

### **In Christ, All Made Alive**

**... so also in Christ all will be made alive.** (1 Corinthians 15:22b)

Next, Paul states that **in Christ, shall all be vivified** (CV) or **made alive**. Again, here is the word *all*. Who are we to exclude from this all? Paul makes no distinction between a believer and an unbeliever. Not one single person of Adam's race had any say in the "death sentence" of all; that is, so-called *free will* never entered into it. Why do we think it is any different with the "sentence of life" through Christ? There are no exclusions in this *all*. If all are *in* Adam, does it not follow that all must be *in* Christ, eventually, as well? Of course, logic dictates that it follows. This is God's "life sentence" for all!

**This truth needs to be restored in the ecclesia of God; it is essential for understanding Paul's hope of resurrection for all.**

### **Each in Their Own Order [Troop, Rank]**

In the next set of verses, Paul establishes that in reference to being resurrected from the state of death, there are several classes of people and each class will be raised in its own respective order. Christ stands alone in His own class as the first in all things, including resurrection from the dead. However, just as He cannot be the Firstborn without other brethren to follow, so to He cannot be the First Fruit without a full harvest of other crops or fruit to follow.

**(23) But each in his own order** [*tagma; troop*]: **Christ** [*christos; anointed*] **the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, (24) then comes the end** [*telos; consummation*], **when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.** (1 Corinthians 15:23-24 NASB)

Now, here is an important key to our understanding the revelation given to Paul—mankind will be resurrected according to order or rank. Paul makes an important distinction that all will not be made alive at the same time but each in their own order, class, or troop. It is about TIMING.

Paul brings the same concept into light in reference to Christ being *the ransom for all*, the testimony given at *the proper [appointed] time* (1 Timothy 2:6).

In the Greek, the word for *proper order* is *tagma*, which refers to "something orderly in arrangement (a troop), that is, (figuratively) a series or succession:- order."

In his defense of the resurrection, not only of Christ but of all mankind, Paul likens it to a harvest of crops. Just as a farmer harvests different kinds of crops at different times of the harvest season, so will God harvest mankind through resurrection. Consequently, troops or classes of people are raised in order, the first being a first fruits that follow in the likeness of Christ, which is similar to a barley harvest, or what could be called the cream of the crop, followed by a more general harvest, which is similar to a wheat harvest, and concluding with the final harvest of all that is left, which is similar to a grape harvest.

This same picture is given to us by John in his Patmos vision as recorded in Revelation 14. See Chapter 13. The takeaway from this vision is that John saw the first fruits of God and the Lambkin as signified by the 144,000, the conquerors. Then he saw a harvest of wheat, the rest of the church; and then he saw a harvest or crushing of the grapes, the nations or the rest of mankind.

To reiterate, Christ is in a class or order all by Himself. He is the First Fruit and the Firstborn and, as such, no one else is included with Him. His resurrection is unique in the sense that He is the first Man to put off mortality and put on immortality. As Paul wrote to Timothy: He is **the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality** (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

### Three Troops

**But each in his own order** [*tagma; troop*]: **Christ the FIRST fruits, AFTER that those who are Christ's at His coming, THEN COMES THE END....** [emphasis added]

In verses 23-24, Paul identifies three troops using the words *first*, *after*, and *then the end*. The first fruits are the first troop; after them comes the second troop of those who belong to Christ at His coming; and then between His coming and the end is a third troop of the ones who are subjected to Christ. Paul does not identify the third troop directly in this verse; this is seen in verses 25-27 in the subjection of all things, *ta panta*.

### First Fruit Anointed

**But each in his own order** [*tagma; troop*]: **Christ** [*christos; anointed*] **the first fruits....**

At first glance, it might appear that Paul is simply repeating the fact that Christ is the first in the order, but it is doubtful that this is the proper understanding because he first establishes Christ's unique place and then takes up all being made alive. Follow Paul's logic to see that *each in his own order* refers back to *in Christ shall all be made alive*. In other words, it refers to all mankind that die, not to Christ Himself. Besides, Jesus is an individual, not a troop.

Then, who are **Christ the first fruits**? Some see this as referring to those who were resurrected after Jesus rose from the dead. However, neither Scripture nor the historical record offers proof that this group was raised to anything other than mortal life; thus, they died again and did not enter immortal life at that time. After all, to repeat Paul's words, **the King alone possesses immortality**, and Jesus Himself, as the Son of Man, tells us: **"No one [man] has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man"** (John 3:13).

The answer seems to be revealed in the phrase **Christ the first fruits**.

The word *Christ* can also be translated as the word *anointed*. Rewording the verse yields the phrase "anointed first fruits." This point is made in the *English Sublinear of the Concordant Greek Text*, for it calls the first group in Paul's list "firstfruit anointed."

Also, the Greek word for *Christ* comes from the Greek word *christos*. Generally, when *christos* is not accompanied by the definite article *the*, it could simply mean "anointed" and apply to anyone (e.g., priests, kings) and not specifically to Christ our Lord. It only follows that if Christ Himself is a first fruit, there are other first fruits to follow. In harvesting crops, a farmer picks a crop of several pieces of fruit and declares it to be his first fruits. In fact, each type of crop has first fruits to come forth before the main harvest of the rest of the crop. So then, who is included in the anointed first fruits?

One of the most common interpretations of the identity of this troop is that it comprises all who have believed on Jesus. However, there is another interpretation that seems to be more in line with Scripture.

Those who conquer through Christ and His love are the first fruits. They are the ones counted worthy to attain to the oncoming eon to reign with Christ. They are sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:34-36; Revelation 20:4-6). They are the first called according to the plan of God to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

Not all who believe in our age are conquerors. Many have secured immortal life, but not all have secured eonian life to reign with Christ in His coming Kingdom. It is a matter of TIMING.

Consequently, *the anointed first fruits*, most likely, refers to those who attain to the *out-resurrection* that Paul sought to attain (Philippians 3:11 WAET), the *first or former* resurrection that John saw in his Patmos vision (Revelation 20:5-6), and the *better* resurrection that is accounted to the ones who gained approval through their faith but did not receive what was promised (Hebrews 11:39). Hebrews 11 lists the many that walked by faith and conquered in their day.

Those considered worthy of the *first, better, or out-resurrection* are ones who will have conquered while they lived in their bodies of death. How will they have conquered? They will have conquered through grace, faith, and love.

Paul declared: **We are more than conquering through Him Who loves us** (Romans 8:37 CV). How do we conquer? We do it through love—love for our God and Savior, love for one another, and love for our enemies. If we love, we also forgive, including our enemies that do us much harm, for this is what we are commanded to do (Matthew 5:44; 6:14). If we want to be in the *out-resurrection*, we must love, obey, forgive, and endure, and this is done by laying down our lives even unto death, if necessary.

**They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives in the face of death.** (Revelation 12:11 HCSB)

These believers overwhelmingly conquer through the One Who loves us; they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Christ for 1,000 years.

This is the anointed first fruits troop of the Lord. Let us conquer while it is still day and before the midnight shout goes forth that the Bridegroom has come!

**After That, Christ's at His Coming**

**But each in his own order** [*tagma; troop*]: ... **after that those who are Christ's at His coming...** (1 Corinthians 15:23 NASB)

The next troop to be made alive through resurrection is identified by Paul as those who belong to Christ when He comes [*parousia*; *presence*]. This raises the question of the timing of Christ's coming.

Now, if the *first fruits resurrection* is the *first resurrection*, and this occurs at the end of our present eon, then there must be a second resurrection that occurs 1,000 years later; a resurrection of the just and the unjust when most of mankind must stand in the presence of the Great White Throne. This group includes believers (the just) that were not included in the first resurrection or *out-resurrection*. The just will have believed in Jesus but did not conquer through His life; thus, they were not anointed first fruits. They will be **saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15), and they will enter into immortality. The unbelievers (the unjust) will be cast in the lake of fire for a season of correction and restitution, but they too, one day, will come out of the second death to enter the glory of God as all mankind, and even creation, enters into the Grand Jubilee of all. Thus, the second group to be resurrected is the rest of mankind that must appear in the presence of Christ.

Many acknowledge that there are two resurrections separated by about 1,000 years. However, many also see the general resurrection for only the unbeliever or the wicked, based on Jesus' words in the gospel of John.

**(28) "Do not marvel at this; for *an hour* is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, (29) and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."** (John 5:28-29 NASB)

It is often assumed that this refers to the two resurrections, separated by the millennial reign. But Jesus clearly referred to an hour, which in Scripture refers to a specific point in time; and at that hour, all who are in the tombs, meaning they are dead, which is a state of unconsciousness, will be awakened from their sleep. Those who have done the good deeds will be resurrected to life and those who have done the evil deeds will be resurrected to judgment.

This is in keeping with what the Jews of Jesus' day believed. Jesus was not trying to correct them but confirming what they already knew. The Jews believed that there was one general resurrection in which both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected at the same time but with different outcomes. We see this in the conversation between Jesus and Martha when Jesus said Lazarus would rise again. **Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day"** (John 11:23-24). Paul, in defense of his evangel, also referred to the general resurrection.

**(14) "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; (15) having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."** (Acts 24:14-15 NASB)



To Paul, it was *a* resurrection, which means he referred to only one resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Both Daniel and John saw this resurrection.

**(9) "I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. (10) A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened." (Daniel 7:9-10 NASB)**

**(11) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ... (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-12, 15 NASB)**

Thus, the first resurrection is only for those who have conquered; they will come to life and reign with Christ, with the second death having no power over them (Revelation 2:11). But the resurrection Daniel and John saw is unto judgment, judgment by the fiery law of God. Some of those appearing before the Great White Throne, which was ablaze with flames and with a river of fire flowing forth into a lake, were seen as destined for judgment through the second death. For them, it is a resurrection of judgment. But there are obviously others standing before the throne whose names are recorded in the **Book of Life**. For them, it is a resurrection of life, immortal life for all who believe.

It is recognized that mainline thinking says that none of the righteous can or will appear before the Great White Throne because all the righteous must rise in the first resurrection. But they fail to see that believers are not promised **eonian life** in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Entering the coming Kingdom and reigning with Christ for 1,000 years is a reward for all who conquer through Christ, but not all who believe in Jesus in this eon conquer (Luke 12:45-59; 14:13-14). Everyone is promised **immortal life**, but this does not mean that all will receive it at the same time. Some will have to wait *in* death until the end of the oncoming eon when the great and small are resurrected.

Again, as Paul wrote, they will be saved, yet so as through fire. All their carnal, fleshly works will be burned up, but they will be saved to enter the Day of God and the Holy City because their names are recorded in the Book of Life; they are accounted as righteous because of Christ, but they were not counted worthy to reign over the nations with Christ in His Kingdom 1,000 years before. They will receive immortal life as promised and enter the eon of the eons, the last eon revealed to us in Scripture; thus, they too will experience eonian life. However, it is life in the last eon, not the one that is coming soon. This is not the better resurrection! But, let us not lose sight of the fact that all will eventually enter into the presence of God.

Eonian life and the presence of God are presented in Chapters 14 and 15, respectively.



### Then Comes the End [Consummation] — Subjects all

**(24) ... then comes the end [telos; consummation], when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (27) For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. (28) When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:24-28 NASB)**

Paul defines the end in two ways by referring to what could be called controlling entities or influences over mankind. First, it comes when Jesus has abolished all rule and authority and power. Second, it comes when the last enemy, death, is abolished. Take note that these entities are abolished but all others, specifically, a troop of enemies (people), are subjected.

The key to identifying the third troop is discovered in how the Son of God abolishes all rule and authority. He does it by subjecting all things under His feet. This is covered in Chapter 6, so there is no need to go over this ground again. The point is that the Son must subject all things under His feet so that the Kingdom can be delivered up to the Father, so that He may be all in all. When this occurs, it is called **the consummation of the eons [ages]**.

This third troop will be resurrected but, most likely, not into immortal bodies at this time. Resurrection does not always automatically lead to **transfiguration (metamorphic change)** at the same time. For example, Lazarus was resurrected but later died. I believe they will be much like believers are today. We have passed out of death into life, but we have yet to attain to immortal bodies. They will require immortality, but to receive this, they must be chastened and purified in the lake of fire, which represents God's divine law, the standard by which their works will be judged. They will enter into a second type of death (not physical and definitely not for torture) that is designed to purify them, so that one day they too will enter into immortality. If they are not brought out of this second death, then it cannot be declared that death is abolished. The first death refers to mortality of our physical bodies; the second death refers to death of works. Either way, as long as the second death is active, death in all its forms has not been abolished. If this were allowed to continue, the Son would not accomplish the work given to Him by His Father. Thus, His work of the cross would end in failure. But the good news is that once it is abolished, all creation and all mankind will be beyond death.

But how do we know that the unjust one day will be brought into immortal life? We know it because Paul declared that Christ must reign until He has subjected all things to Himself. The ones being subjected to Christ are the unjust or the wicked. In other words, His purpose of reigning is to subject all things in heaven and on earth to Himself, so that He can then subject all things, including Himself, to His Father, so that God may be *All* in all. Notice that the mission of the Son of God is not to destroy all things but to subject all things, **for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them** (Luke 9:56 NASB). It is not His purpose to

destroy or annihilate the unjust but to subject them, so that the Word of God, which does not return void, is fulfilled.

Scripture is abundantly clear that **the all** or **all things** will be subjected to Christ. If we agree that **all** is truly all, then there will be nothing excluded from this subjection or, worded in the positive, everything is included in **all things**.

Consider this: Paul declared that the creation will be set free from its slavery to corruption (Romans 8:21). Most people acknowledge this. However, if creation is to be set free, do you think that God will not set free all mankind that has been in slavery to sin and death; a race created to be in His image and likeness and to have dominion over the earth? The whole earth will be filled with the glory of God.

Again, do you think that most of mankind is destined to be left out of this glory, a race that began in the glory of God? The lion and the lamb will be brought into peace with each other. Do you think that if God is going to do this with the animal kingdom, He will not do it with mankind that was created to have dominion? Will He forever be at enmity with what He created to be in the image of His Son when Paul tells us that He is not reckoning their (the world's) offenses against them but is reconciling all things in the heavens and on the earth to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross? May God be **all in all!**

### **He Purchased the Whole Field**

There is more proof along these lines. In the parables of *the mysteries of the reign of the heavens*, the Lord Jesus explained that He, as the Son of Man, sowed the good seed in the field, which He purchased. To redeem the treasure hidden in the field, the Lord bought the entire field, which is the whole world (Matthew 13:44).

The Lord not only purchased His treasure, which I believe refers to the first fruits anointed ones, but He also purchased all the crops in the world, which, more than likely, refers to the rest of mankind. Thus, He purchased the whole world, the field, which means that He possesses not only His treasure hidden in the field but also all else that the field contains, which must refer to all mankind.

Psalms 2 confirms this, as the Father decreed to His Son: **'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession'** (Psalm 2:8 NASB). Christ possesses all the earth.

The good news is that just as a farmer harvests different kinds of crops at different times of the harvest season, so will God harvest mankind through resurrection and transfiguration. Again, there are troops or classes of people raised up in order, the first being a first fruits, a barley harvest, followed by a more general harvest, a wheat harvest, and concluding with the final harvest of all that is left, a grape harvest.