

LESSON 13 • AUGUST 27, 2023

GOD'S AUTHORITY AND POWER

Lesson Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1-28; Ephesians 1:15-23

Focus Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Key Verse: When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15:28 (NRSV)

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28 (NRSV)

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being;

22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power.

25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection," it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him.

28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28 (KJV)

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

- 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
- 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
- 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
- 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
- 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
- 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.
- 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.
- 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

KEY TERMS

- **First Fruits** – The earliest ripening, usually highest quality produce that was harvested (Ex. 23:16; Neh. 10:35). Faithful Jews brought the first fruits of their harvests to the temple as an offering (Leviticus 23:9-14).
- **Sadducees** – A Jewish sect that did not believe in either the resurrection of the dead, angels, or spirits (Acts 23:8).

INTRODUCTION

This lesson encompasses portions of the same letter that was introduced in last week's lesson. Disputes regarding teachings on the subject of resurrection had arisen within the church at Corinth. This was among the doctrinal concerns that

the apostle Paul addressed. There was consensus, among the Corinthian Christians, that Jesus Christ was resurrected or “raised from the dead.” Whether others, including themselves, might be resurrected was the crux of this dispute. Of course, the very existence of this dispute indicated the church was being influenced by teachings that contradicted the teachings of Paul and other apostles. At least two sources of the contradictory influences have been identified: Greek philosophers, who considered resurrection to be an “impure state of existence,” and the Sadducees, who didn’t believe in life after death.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

True to his nature, Paul powerfully defended his teachings on resurrection (1 Corinthians 1:15-28). His defense capsulized proofs of Jesus’ resurrection with factual information. He also clarified the principles (or basic truths) about resurrection, and its availability to all believers.

Jesus, the First Fruit of our Resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

Paul also emphasized the centrality of Jesus’ resurrection to our Christian faith. Jesus is the source of our resurrection hopes. Paul began his discourse by noting that Jesus rose from the dead and the importance of his resurrection to believers. He referred to Jesus as “the first fruits (or forerunner) of resurrection” (v. 20). Jewish people could easily relate to this term. Moving forward with his argument, Paul explained that death came into the world by one man (Adam), and that God chose to have resurrection come by one man, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22). Paul later refers to the two as “*the first Adam* and the

second Adam,” respectively (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). However, Jesus was not the first to be raised from the dead. As you will recall, he raised Lazarus from the dead, but Lazarus died again. Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead and never die again. Therefore, as our forerunner, Jesus through his death and resurrection confirms the wisdom in our rationale for believing in resurrection for ourselves (v. 23).

The Resolution of All Things, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Paul moved forward again to show how the resurrection of Jesus Christ impacts the end of this world – the final chapter of humankind’s existence as we know it. The apostle John in Revelation 20:14 provides a more vivid portrayal of the final judgment. However, the apostle Paul, in this letter, explained how Jesus’ resurrection leads to the resolution or end of this world. His primary point is that our resurrected savior will conquer all evil, including death.

In arriving at the above conclusion, Paul takes time to explain the roles of Jesus Christ, the Son and God, the Father. The scriptures tell us that they are the same. According to Paul, each has a special role in the final establishment of sovereign control (v. 28). Jesus Christ’s role is to defeat all evil on earth. With his sacrifices on the cross, Jesus defeated sin and death. In his *Second Coming*, according to Paul, Jesus will annihilate Satan and all evil. Subsequent to their destruction, Jesus Christ will present to God, the Father a perfect world – one that is devoid of all sin and evil, and Satan will no longer exist. Paul encouraged the church at Corinth (and us) to remain secure in our faith and to believe in our resurrected savior, knowing that as he died and

was resurrected, he opened the door to resurrection for us.

SANKOFA

Misinformation was the catalyst for the Corinthian church's disputes. The basic premise of Paul's disapproval was that the misinformation flourished because the believers did not base their beliefs on facts. Unfortunately, misinformation pervades our world today. It is prevalent in all aspects of our lives. Education is currently one of the major institutions being eroded by misinformation. Obviously, black history and diversified curriculums are considered by many to be inappropriate. Diversity training in the workplace is also being demonized as divisive teaching that may cause some people to be uncomfortable. Misinformation in this regard is becoming institutionalized in some states. This movement is leading to banning books that feature diverse populations and convey positive messages that promote diversity, excluding professional educators from curriculum decisions, and so forth. Private businesses and companies, in some cases, are being scrutinized and threatened with revenue losses or special benefits if they support diverse workforces and their interests. Of course, no factual information exists to support such decisions.

The negative effects of such educational practices on minority students have been addressed for many years by numerous outstanding educators, such as Dr. Carter G. Woodson. In addition to being an educator, Dr. Woodson was also a historian, journalist, author, and founder of Negro History Week, which has become Black History Month. Although he was born to

poor, hardworking former slaves and did not attend high school until age 20, Dr. Woodson became the second black person to earn a doctorate at Harvard University.

One of Dr. Woodson's most renowned books is *The Miseducation of the Negro* (1933). His main theme of the book was based upon Dr. Woodson's observations that indicated black students, at that time, were not being educated in American schools. Instead, Dr. Woodson asserted that they were being culturally indoctrinated. Educational environments of this nature, according to Dr. Woodson, cause students to become dependent and to seek out inferior places in the greater society, thereby never aspiring to know and realize their full potentials. This resonates with primary concerns regarding evolving trends in today's educational systems.

Notably, Dr. Woodson also concluded that a major consequence of miseducation was the fact that it facilitated tendencies to blame the miseducation of poor students on lack of discipline. Even more devastating was the fact that the systematic discrimination and inequalities in education fostered incompetence on the part of many black citizens to uplift their communities and find success in society. In summary, the harm to black students, their futures, and their communities has been well documented and reported. What voices are you listening to? This is a salient question for all. Whether we advocate for policies that are based on validated educational theories and practices, or passively allow the less informed to control our educational systems, will be consequential. The impacts will not only affect today's

students, but also the futures of our communities and the world.

CASE STUDY

Despite efforts to suppress diversity and equal-rights movements, some positive messages that promote inclusiveness continue. Not all such messages are verbal, but they are equal to, if not more powerful, than others. For example, the Mattel Toy Company on August 24, 2022, released a new *Barbie* in honor of Madam C.J. Walker's legacy. The new doll is a part of *Mattel's Inspiring Women Series*. In their quest to maximize the authenticity of the new doll, Mattel consulted with one of Madame C.J. Walker's relatives. The doll's dark brown skin and hair texture and features of the production were all approved by the relative. Of course, in addition to her beauty, Madame C.J. Walker is known for innumerable accomplishments.

The Guinness Book of World Records identifies Madame C.J. Walker (1867-1919) as the first female self-made millionaire. She was an African American entrepreneur, philanthropist, and political and social activist. She made her fortune by developing and marketing a line of cosmetics and hair care products that significantly impacted black women's lives in unprecedented ways. She also employed thousands of African American women, helping them to become economically independent. Her philanthropy and arts patronage as well as her social activism continuously supported social justice reforms. Madame C.J. Walker's legacy and the new Barbie will inspire many, particularly young black girls who will learn

about her as they play.

LIFE APPLICATION

For many reasons, our world seems insane and out of control, but God is still in control. There are many theories, but humankind has few answers about why things are spinning out of control. Misinformation continues, and with technology, it is wise to expect it to proliferate even more. This lesson should, hopefully, serve as a reminder to affirm our core beliefs in God, the Father, Jesus Christ, his Son, the Holy Spirit, the universal church, the resurrection, and eternal life. Along with this affirmation, we must hold to our beliefs that God is allowing evil to remain until he sends Jesus to earth again. Jesus Christ will present to God a perfect world.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you equate “first fruits” with your offerings to God?
2. What new thoughts or insights do you have regarding resurrection principles?
3. What doctrinal disputes have you identified in your church or other relationships?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Song: “Thou My Everlasting Portion” (*AME Hymnal* #396)

Closing Prayer: Father God, we thank you for Jesus Christ and his role in opening the door to resurrection for us. We acknowledge our sins and unworthy behavior, and we humbly ask for your forgiveness. Thank you also for letting us see the relevance of Jesus’ resurrection to your grand plans for

the salvation of humankind. Your Word tells us to “watch and pray.” In a spirit of obedience, we ask you to please grant us wisdom to discern misinformation, regardless of the source. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 28–September 3

Monday Mark 7:1-8 (Follow God, Not Human Traditions)

Tuesday 1 Samuel 1:19-23 (Obedience, Not Sacrifice)

Wednesday Psalm 6 (Be Gracious to Me, O Lord)

Thursday Luke 7:24-34 (Jesus, a Friend of Sinners)

Friday Luke 14:7-14 (Humility Before God and Others)

Saturday Exodus 30:17-21 (Come to God in Cleanliness and Holiness)

Sunday Luke 11:37-44 (Be Cleansed Inside and Out)