

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1 Cor 15:1-8

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Thesis

1 Corinthians contains a credible and independent¹ witness of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 15:3-7 records details of the resurrection appearances that are coherent and complimentary to the accounts found in the Gospels. The passage is in the form of an early hymn or creed² that predates Paul's quotation.

Passage

1 Cor 15:1-8 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

¹ "Independent" in this instance refers to literary independence. The Gospels were not literally dependent upon Paul's recounting of the events and Paul is not dependent upon any of the Gospels. Paul is dependent upon others for portions of the Gospel proclamation since he was not himself an eyewitness. Paul's faith is grounded in the appearance of Christ to himself.

Paul's Purpose for Writing

At first glance, this passage appears to have been written as a summary of the Gospel.

While that is descriptive of what the passage contains it's not reflective of Paul's purpose for writing. Neither did Paul write this passage to prove that Christ rose from the dead.

Paul's purpose was to restate what the Corinthians had already believed as a result of Paul's preaching. Paul uses the fact of the resurrection of Christ as the basis for the argument that follows where he answers those who deny the resurrection of the believer. This is summed up in 1 Cor 15:12³ where Paul says that if they believe that Jesus rose, then they already believe in the resurrection⁴.

Paul goes from a point of agreement with the Corinthians (they accepted that Christ rose from the dead) and proceeds to argue that if Christ rose from the dead, that the resurrection of the dead must be possible. After all, if the people who are dead are not raised, then Christ wasn't raised. The reason this argument is effective is that this was the core of the gospel that the Corinthians had already accepted.

The Corinthians may have been influenced by Greek philosophy, particularly that of Plato and Aristotle⁵. Aristotle taught the immortality of the soul⁶, but denied the

² Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, E. T. 1955, p. 129ff.

³ 1 Cor 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

⁴ Paul is using cognitive dissonance in his argument. He is showing internal inconsistencies between what the Corinthians believe about the resurrection of the believer and what they believe about the resurrection of Christ.

⁵ Nash, Ronald, *The Gospel and the Greeks*, p. 37. "Plato advanced one of the most rigorous separations of

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permanence of the body. The monotheistic claims of Paul didn't bother the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill, but the resurrection of the body bothered them⁷. The Greeks were familiar with dying God from their own mythology, but the idea that the God came back in the same physical body would be scandalous. Thus, in their over-realized eschatology the Corinthians may have done away with the need for a resurrection of the body. Paul brings them back to the Gospel message itself when he reminds them of the resurrection of Jesus.

Dating

This section of 1 Corinthians is significant because it contains the earliest complete written expression of the historical events of the life of Christ. A date of 53-55 ACE predates Gospels and is less than 25 years after the events described and as such has great apologetic value.

The issue of dating of 1 Corinthians gets tied into the issue of the dating of the Gospels by necessity for those who claim that Paul wrote the proto-gospel in 1 Corinthians which was inflated by the Gospel writers. Under this theory, the Gospels had to have been written Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. However, the literary dependence has not been demonstrated in the text and, in fact, is refuted by the details of the text.

the human soul and body to be found in philosophical literature. Not only do the soul and body differ with respect to corporeality (the soul is immaterial, while the body is material) and mortality (the body dies, while the soul is immortal)...In this view the body is not simply inferior to the soul it is a real hindrance as the soul attempts to progress toward truth and virtue.”

⁶ Sahakian, William S. *History of Philosophy*, p. 71.

⁷ Acts 17:31-32 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.:And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

Summary of Comparison with the Gospel Details

Appendix A has a detailed comparison of the sequence of events of the Gospels and the account as recorded by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:1-8. The 1 Cor. passage has some unique features that are not repeated in the Gospel accounts. For instance, the detail that Jesus appeared to 500 persons is not included, although Luke does mention that 120 were in the upper room. Also, the appearance to James is not explicitly mentioned in the Gospels, although the prominent position of James in the early church as recorded in Acts would presuppose such an appearance.

The Gospels show the first appearances to be to women. Paul doesn't explicitly mention the appearances to the women. The inclusion of the detail of the appearances to women does not increase the credibility of the accounts found in the Gospels to the people of that time⁸. Whether the appearances were not included by Paul for that reason, or whether Paul simply was unaware of the actual details of the events, is unknown. Paul's purpose of including the apostles may also be related to his own claims to be an apostle as the sequence ends with the appearance to Paul. This vindicated Paul's calling.

⁸ Bruce, F. F. *The New Century Bible Commentary 1 & 2 Corinthians*. p. 140. "The testimony of the women, of which much is made in the resurrection narratives of the Gospels, is not mentioned here, probably because it was not formally admissible as public evidence and if so used would in the minds of many have discredited the resurrection (cf. Origen, Celsus ii.55)."

Detailed Exegesis

1 Cor 15:1-2

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Verses 1 and 2 form a complex double chiasm. Reordering verse 2 shows this chastic parallel. This is illustrated as:

Paul preached gospel	Corinthians received gospel	Corinthians stand on gospel	Corinthians will be saved
What Paul preached	Believed in vain	Corinthians keep in memory	[If not Corinthians will be lost]

The words “received” and “believed” are synonymous in this parallel. Further, “stand” and “keep in memory” are also synonyms.

The negative conclusion, if the Corinthians fail to keep the gospel in mind they will be lost, is unstated. Some commentators argue that this is only a hypothetical possibility in the text⁹, that is not actually possible, based on their position on the doctrine of eternal

⁹ Bruce, F. F., p. 138, is an example of an exegete who does not believe this is a real possibility, where Bruce wrote “Not that Paul really entertains this as a serious possibility, but if the denial of the resurrection

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security, or some other notions external to this text. Others take this as a serious potentiality but lessen the application¹⁰. It should be noted that if the passage is saying that a person can lose their salvation, then the cause of the loss of salvation is not sin that they have committed, but a failure to continue to believe the Gospel.

Paul is reminding the Corinthians of what they once believed and what they should continue to believe. The message of the resurrection of Christ is central to the Gospel¹¹.

1 Cor 15:3

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

How Paul himself received the gospel is not stated in this passage. One possible alternative is that Paul had a direct revelation of the Spirit of God¹². Paul hints at this in other passages where he describes his calling¹³. Paul is careful to note the independence

is carried to its logical conclusion, then it would be shown that their belief was fruitless, perhaps because it exercised superficially or at random.”

¹⁰ Fee, p. 721 at least partially reverses the sense of the passage, “If they do not hold fast to the gospel, that is, if their current position as to “no resurrection” is correct, then Christ did not rise, which in turn means that they indeed believe in vain. If they are right, everything is a lie, and they cease to exist as believers altogether.” While this takes the passage as a more serious potential, it does not address head on the issue of loss of salvation.

¹¹ The message of the resurrection is so central that Paul expressed in 1 Cor 2:2 “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

¹² A possible parallel to this is 1 Cor 11:23 where Paul tells how he learned about what happened at the Last Supper. In that instance, Paul describes how he came to know what happened as; “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you”

¹³ Gal 1:15-17 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

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of his calling. The appearance of Christ to Paul was a cornerstone of his sense of calling¹⁴.

Another possibility is Paul received knowledge of the historical details of the life of Christ via the teachings of the disciples of Jesus. Acts 9 shows that immediately after Paul's conversion, he was with the disciples at Damascus for some number of days¹⁵. It's also likely that Ananias preached the gospel to Paul when he visited him after Paul met by Jesus on the road to Damascus. The use of the Greek verbs *paradodomi* and *paralambano* implies the message was received from others¹⁶.

Also Paul would have taken the time to interview Christians who he had arrested and become familiar with the details of the Gospel message from their testimonies. Acts 7, as an example, shows Paul present when Stephen preached the Gospel prior to being stoned¹⁷.

Paul refers to the Old Testament prophecies of the life and death of Jesus. Paul does not specify which particular passages he is referring to. A likely candidate as such a passage would include Isaiah 52:13-53:12. In some other instances, Paul explicitly references messianic prophecies of death and resurrection¹⁸.

¹⁴ Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1 show that Paul had a strong sense of his calling.

¹⁵ Acts 9:19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

¹⁶ Bruce., F. F., p. 138.

¹⁷ Acts 8:1a And Saul was consenting unto his death.

¹⁸ In Acts 13, Paul quotes a range of Psalms as proof that of this statement. Acts 13:33-35 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up

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Paul's point here is to show that his message was not diluted when he preached it to the Corinthians. Even though he was not one of the original twelve apostles, his message comported with the facts of the Gospel as it was preached by all of the apostles. In that sense, Paul is no second-class apostle. The Corinthians should consider his message as first rate since it is nothing less than the Gospel.

Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, Paul relates additional details about the death of Christ¹⁹. In describing the Last Supper, Paul refers to "the same night in which He [Jesus] was betrayed²⁰". This additional detail agrees with the Gospels, but shows textual independence as well²¹.

1 Cor 15:4

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

This passage again demonstrates the level of detail of the life of Christ of which Paul had

from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

¹⁹ Paul describes the sacrifice of Jesus as "Christ our passover [lamb]" in 1 Cor 5:7. This is a direct reference to the sacrificial nature of the death of Christ and a possible allusion to the date (Passover) of the crucifixion.

²⁰ 1 Cor 11:23-25 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

²¹ Fee, p. 540-549 describes the textual relationship between the Gospels and 1 Corinthians. Fee splits the

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knowledge. It was the unanimous witness of the early primitive church that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again²². The details of the burial of Jesus are left to the Gospel writers, but there can be no denying that Paul believed and taught that Jesus had really died²³. The concreteness of the act of burial is matched by the concreteness of event of the resurrection.

The Third Day

The phrase “third day” has great significance of prior usage in prophetic history. A few of these include; Abraham took Isaac to be sacrificed and on the third day saw the place of the sacrifice²⁴. In this, Isaac was dead to Abraham for those three days. God appeared to the people on the third day at mount Sinai²⁵. The third day had significance in the Old Testament sacrificial system as well²⁶. The purification ritual for someone who had contact with a dead body was to take place on the third day²⁷. Although it’s not explicitly referred to in this context, a passage in Hosea could also be what was in mind with use of

Gospels into two traditions Mark/Matthew and Paul/Luke. Although Paul has some affinities with Luke there are also some significant differences.

²² Bruce, F. F. p 138.

²³ The alternate theories of recent date such as the “Passover Plot” fail to take into account the historical details.

²⁴ Gen 22:4 Then on the **third day** Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

²⁵ Exo 19:11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

Exo 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

²⁶ Lev 7:17 But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire.

Lev 7:18 And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.

²⁷ Num 19:12 He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.

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the third day²⁸. Finally, Jesus Himself had made the connection between His ministry and the ministry of Jonah when He told the Jews that the only sign they would receive would be the sign of Jonah, who was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights²⁹.

The tense of the Greek verb used for “raised” is the perfect tense, implying the enduring aspects of the resurrection continuing to the present.

1 Cor 15:5

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

That Cephas is Peter is well attested³⁰. Paul refers to Cephas in other passages in 1 Cor³¹.

The term may be in deference to the role of Peter among the apostles or simply out of respect to the fact that it was the Lord who renamed Peter to Cephas.

Again, there is yet another historical detail that adds to the credibility of the account. The appearance to Peter was not explicitly related in any of the Gospels. Luke 24:34 refers to

²⁸ Hosea 6:2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. This passage was quoted in rabbinical tradition as a prophecy of the final resurrection per Bruce, p. 140.

²⁹ Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. See also, Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

³⁰ In John 1:42 Jesus renamed Simon [Peter] son of Jonah as Cephas.

³¹ 1 Cor 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. See also, 1 Cor 3:22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And, 1 Cor 9:5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

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the appearance but does not describe it the narrative itself³². If the Gospels were conflated tales based on 1 Corinthians, they surely missed a great opportunity to tell a fantastic story at this point. Once again, this speaks to the textual independence.

The phrase “the twelve” would not be the original twelve since Judas was dead by this point in time. The eleven apostles, in Acts 1, after the death of Judas, felt the need to select a twelfth apostle³³. Whether the use of “the twelve”, in this passage, is simply the traditional name for the apostles and is used as sort of a “shorthand” for the apostles, or “the twelve” includes Matthias is unknown. One of the selection criteria for selecting Matthias was that he be a witness of the resurrected Christ³⁴. Another possible reason that they selected another apostle was to fill out the twelve is the tradition of travel two-by-two³⁵ and the fact that eleven in an odd number precluding such a division³⁶. The twelve has been specially ordained by Christ himself and given the distinct title of apostle³⁷.

Although Thomas was not with the rest of the apostles when they initially saw Jesus³⁸, he did see him later along with the rest of the apostles. This passage probably refers to that

³² Luke 24:34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

³³ Acts gives the reason for the selection of a twelfth apostle as being based on the understanding of the apostles of a passage in the Psalms. Another possible explanation may be found in the passage - Mat 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³⁴ Acts 1:22b ... must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

³⁵ The seventy were sent out two-by-two. Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. In Mat 21:1 Jesus sends two disciples. Mat 11:2 and Luke 7:19 hints that John the Baptist may have had the same practice.

³⁶ Paul and Barnabas often traveled together as well.

³⁷ Luke 6:13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

³⁸ John 20:24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

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event³⁹ or it may simply be another shorthand.

The use of the Greek word *horao* translated as “seen” in the passage refers to more than a vision⁴⁰. Luke tells us that Jesus stressed in His appearances that He was not a Ghost⁴¹.

1 Cor 15:6

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

The appearance to the “above five hundred” is one of the harder passages in the text as it has the surface appearance of exaggeration on the part of Paul. No other accounting of appearances directly approaches the boldness of this number. However, Acts 13 describes the number of appearances as being over “many days”⁴². The elapsed time between the resurrection and ascension was about 40 days. Further, the number of disciples in the upper room is listed in Acts as one hundred and twenty⁴³.

The phrase “greater part remain unto this present” further dates the passage. If it was shortly after the event, it would make no sense to say that most of those who saw Jesus

³⁹ Mat 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

⁴⁰ Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament.*, v 4, p. 186 Robertson writes, “Paul means not a mere vision, but an appearance”

⁴¹ Luke 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

⁴² Acts 13:31 And **he was seen many days** of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

⁴³ Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names

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raised were still alive. If it were too long after the event, most would be dead. Placing the event at 20-25 years past fits this quite well. Thus the internal evidence supports the dating of the text already offered.

1 Cor 15:7

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

This James is the brother of Jesus that Paul had visited in Jerusalem⁴⁴. The appearance to James was not recorded elsewhere in the canonical Scriptures⁴⁵. This further reduces the likelihood of any literary dependence of the Gospel writers on Paul's writings. The Gospels never mention the appearance to James, or any of the other relatives of the Lord, although Luke/Acts mentions that the brethren of the Lord were in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, implying that Jesus had appeared to them prior to that time. Acts also shows the leading role that James had in the early church⁴⁶. This would be an important detail for the later Gospel writers to include if they were copying Paul given the important role of James in the early church. The fact that none of the Gospel writers mention the appearances to the brothers of Jesus is a prima facie case against literary dependence of the Gospels on the account of 1 Corinthians.

together were about an hundred and twenty.)

⁴⁴ Gal 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

⁴⁵ Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, quotes from the Gospel of Hebrews an extended account of the appearance of Jesus to James.

⁴⁶ Acts 15:13-22 has an extended speech by James to the church. His leadership seems to have been due mostly to persuasion.

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The phrase “then of all the apostles” seems quite out of place for a chronological sequence. Particularly after verse 6 which lists 500 brethren as seeing Jesus. Add that to the fact that Paul already mentioned the twelve and this creates an issue that needs some resolution. This may be a reference to the seventy who were specifically commissioned as apostles by Jesus⁴⁷.

1 Cor 15:8

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

In this passage Paul notes his own independence, from the other apostles, in seeing⁴⁸ the risen Christ. In other passages, Paul describes the appearance of the risen Christ with different language. One difficult passage on this subject is Acts 26:19 where Paul describes the appearance of Jesus to Paul as a “heavenly vision⁴⁹”. However, an appearance in a vision⁵⁰ is not necessarily a statement that the one who appeared was incorporeal.

Paul’s choice of vocabulary in this passage is particularly striking. The phrase translated as “born out of due time” uses the Greek word *ektomati* which is used for an abortion or miscarriage. Paul’s calling was not at the same time as the rest of the apostles. Yet, in spite of the fact that he was not among the other apostles (in time), he saw the Lord.

⁴⁷ Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

⁴⁸ Greek: *opthe* – to see.

⁴⁹ Acts 26:19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

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⁵⁰ Greek: optasia = vision.

Application

There are at least two areas of application of this passage in the field of apologetics.

Answer to Skeptics

There are many applications of the passage in the field of Christian apologetics. The fact that Paul does not offer the passage as an apologetic for the resurrection of Christ further strengthens its use with answering skeptical responses to the Gospel messages.

Answer to Hyper-Preterists

An area of application of the passage in apologetics that is nearly untouched by contemporary apologetics is a response to those people who hold to an *over-realized* eschatology. Currently, this is probably best found in the “hyper-preterist” movement that denies the future resurrection and Second Coming⁵¹. This movement is self-referred to as “consistent preterism” by those within its ranks⁵². Recently, this movement gained a prominent advocate when shortly before his death⁵³, David Chilton, who was a partial preterist, embraced the hyper-preterist position⁵⁴. There has been some concern in recent days about R. C. Sproul leaning towards the position as well⁵⁵.

⁵¹ Note that the hyper-preterist doesn't deny the Second Coming and resurrection in the sense of denying that they take place, but rather they contend that the resurrection is spiritual and is fulfilled in the new birth. They also contend that the Second Coming occurred in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁵² Found on the Internet at <http://www.preteristarchive.com/>

⁵³ Chilton died in 1997.

⁵⁴ This can be seen in the forward to Edward E. Stevens' book, “*What Happened in AD 70?*”, where Chilton wrote, “Second, Stevens presses Christ's declaration in Luke 21:22 to its limit: “Jesus said that *all* Old Testament prophecy would be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed.” The more I pondered the awesome implications of Jesus' words, the more I realized their truly revolutionary significance for eschatology. Without exception, every event foretold by the Biblical prophets was fulfilled within that generation, as Jesus had said (Matt. 16:27-28; 24:34).” As found on the Internet at http://www.preteristarchive.com/Preterism/fp-chilton_01.html

⁵⁵ Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus Christ*.

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The notion that all of prophecy has been fulfilled has led hyper-preterists to deny the historical doctrines of the resurrection and the Second Coming⁵⁶. The hyper-preterists have attempted to turn this into an issue of tradition vs. Biblical authority⁵⁷.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul provides a strong antidote for this teaching. The linkage that Paul makes between the resurrection of Christ and our resurrection is a strong one. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is not arguing for a spiritual resurrection of Christ, but a literal one. Just as Christ was raised, we too shall be raised. This message is the historical message of the church and is Biblical as well. Usage of this passage also strengthens the argument against hyper-preterism in that it uses the very same passage that they use as a proof-text⁵⁸.

Conclusions

1 Cor 15:1-8 was written in somewhere between 53-55 ACE. Yet, it contains what had already become the traditional account of the resurrection of Christ. This is seen in the words, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received". The core of the Gospel message was already fully accepted tradition within 25 years of the events. It forms the premise for Paul's argument itself. This adds further credibility to the account of the resurrection given by Paul.

⁵⁶ Fenley, Ward, Found on the Internet at: http://www.preteristarchive.com/Preterism/fp-fenley_06.html, argues for the "spiritual body" being a present reality for the believer.

⁵⁷ See <http://www.preteristarchive.com/PartialPreterism/index.html> for an example of this.

⁵⁸ 1 Cor 15 refers to the "spiritual body". The hyper-preterists take this passage out of its context.

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One piece of information is the details that the Gospels add don't actually increase the credibility of Paul's accounts for the audience it was intended to influence. Paul stresses the appearance of Jesus to Simon Peter (Cephas). The Gospels downplay the appearances to Peter and stress the initial appearances to the women. As critics point out, this does not increase the credibility of their accounts to the contemporaries of that day.

Further, Paul notes that Jesus appeared to over 500 people and the Gospel writers don't make such a claim. Luke/Acts implies that Jesus may have appeared to well over a hundred people based on the number of people in the upper room in Acts 2.

The conclusion is that there's no dependence of Paul on the Gospels nor is there any dependence of the Gospels on Paul's writings in 1 Cor. The details all tell the same account of the death and resurrection of Christ, but the differences in the details render them independent accounts.

Further, the argument of the critics that the resurrection was based on a mass delusion is greatly weakened by the appearance of Christ to Paul. Paul was a decidedly hostile witness who had met the risen Savior on that fateful day as he rode to Damascus and his life was forever changed.

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