



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12, 20-27a

1. Resurrection—Jesus' Resurrection & Ours

- a. Corinthians believed Jesus' rose, yet denied their own future resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4b, 12)
 - a. "Some in Corinth...denied the possibility of resurrection in general, presumably even those readers would at least accept the truth...of Christ's resurrection...They...did not doubt the resurrection of Jesus, but believed for themselves that they would be saved as immortal souls...[Later,] Justin [~150 CE]...refers to 'so-called Christians'...who believe in the immortality of the soul, but not the resurrection of the body...[This] seems...to portray the [situation here]." [Fred L. Horton, "Dualism in the NT," in A. Lange, E. M. Meyers (eds.) *Light Against Darkness*, p. 203 #71]
 - b. "1 Cor. 15...[has] the Corinthian denial...of [end-time] resurrection for the believers...[They] likely saw Jesus' resurrection as in some way different than the final resurrection for the people of God & this led Paul to emphasize Christ as the first-fruits of the final resurrection." [Andrew W. Pitts, "Paul's Concept of the Resurrection Body," in S. Porter (ed.) *Paul & Gnosis*, p. 50]
- b. Christ the "First-fruits"—linking the believers' resurrection with Christ's (1 Cor. 15:20, 23; cf. Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5)
 - a. "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep..." (1 Cor. 15:20)
 - b. "He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead..." (Col. 1:18)
 - c. "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead" (Rev. 1:5)
 - a. "The argument of 1 Cor. 15 is...What the Creator God did for Jesus is both the model & the means of what he will do for all Jesus' people." [N. T. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, p. 315]
 - b. "The resurrection of Christ...is the prototype & pattern for the resurrection of believers. Aparch? ('first-fruits') denotes both priority in time (cf. Acts 26:23) & superiority in status; his resurrection forms the first & most significant part of a series. So...the doctrine of the resurrection of believers has a twofold basis: [1.] an historical fact (the resurrection of Christ?the objective aspect), & [2.] the personal experience of that fact (the possession of the Spirit of Christ?the subjective aspect). [1.] In Christ's resurrection [as]...the first-fruits of the Easter harvest, Christians have a pledge of the full ingathering; [2.] in their possession of the Spirit of Christ & in his...producing Christ-likeness, Christians have a guarantee of their individual participation in that ingathering (2 Cor. 1:22; 3:18; 5:4, 5)." [Murray Harris, "Resurrection & Immortality: 8 Theses," *Themelios*, V. 1.2 (1976) p. 51]
 - c. "The apostle [Paul] draws out an intimate connection between Christ's resurrection & the resurrection of all believers (1 Cor. 15:13-19). Christ is the 'first fruits' of a [future] general resurrection still to occur (1 Cor. 15:23)...For Paul the resurrection of

Christ is not an isolated event, unrelated to the resurrection of believers, but the beginning of the general resurrection of the dead. Thus, the resurrection of Christ implies the resurrection of all who believe in him." [F. J. Matera, NT Christology, p. 96]

c. "Resurrection of dead (persons)"—the whole person raised

- a. "Resurrection is spoken of as 'resurrection of the dead' or 'resurrection from [among] the dead.' The NT concept of resurrection is not merely of corpses, either soma (body), or sarx (flesh), but the resurrection of the whole person." [David Hodgins, "Our Resurrection Body...1 Cor. 15:42-49," *Melanesian J. of Theology*, Vol. 17-2 (2001) p. 72]
- b. "In...NT use...resurrection signifies not the reanimation of corpses but the transformation of the whole person into the image of Christ by the power of the indwelling Spirit, in spite of the intervention of death...What is raised & transformed is not some impersonal corpse but dead persons. The NT nowhere explicitly refers to 'the resurrection of the body' or '...of the flesh', only to 'the resurrection of the dead' or '...from [among] the dead' [Phil. 3:11]. The subjects of resurrection are whole persons, who are transformed outwardly & inwardly." [Murray Harris, "Resurrection & Immortality: 8 Theses," *Themelios*, V. 1.2 (1976) p. 51]

2. The Cosmic Drama: Two 'Actors'—God & Humanity

a. Two Men, Two Humanities—Death through Adam, Life through Christ (1 Cor. 15:21-22)

- a. "Since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man." (1 Cor. 15:21)
- b. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22)
 - a. "There's a parallelism between Adam & Christ: whatever happened in Adam is reversed in Christ." [J. Toews, *Original Sin*, p. 38]

b. What's the Problem?—more than sins; it's enslavement, which started with Adam (1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 3:22)

- a. "The resurrection of believers [is] 'predicated by the Adam/Christ contrast...Adam's sin let something loose in the world—death—that is contrary to God & his nature,' an enemy whose undoing began with Christ's resurrection and will end with that of believers." [Gordon Fee, *Pauline Christology*, pp. 108-9 quoted by Matthew F. Lowe, *Death Dismantled*, p. 59]
- b. "The human predicament...requires more than forgiveness pronounced from on high, it requires a rescue operation on the ground...God would not have to carry out an invasion in order to merely forgive erring human beings...The root trouble lies deeper...The whole of humanity—indeed the whole of creation (Gal. 3:22)—is...trapped, enslaved under the power of the present evil age...Paul's gospel is that in Christ, God has invaded the world held captive by Sin & Death...in order to set creation & humanity free." [Susan G. Eastman, "Apocalypse & Incarnation," in J. B. Davis (ed.) *Apocalyptic & Future of Theology*, p.]
- c. Swiss theologian Emil Brunner [1889-1966] lectured a Wellesley College [Boston, MA.] not long after World War 2... not long after the horrors of the Holocaust... In his lecture he referred several times to the Devil. In the Q & A, a student asked him why, as a modern human being, he mentioned the Devil. Brunner's response: "I have referred to the Devil for two reasons. First, I find that he plays a very important role in Scripture. And second, I have seen him!" ... The world's un-redemption is a matter of universal enslavement by cosmic forces of evil!" [J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*, p. 286]
- d. Rwandan Genocide: In 100 days in 1994, ~800,000 people were slaughtered in Rwanda by ethnic Hutu extremists. They were members of the minority Tutsi community, as well as their political opponents, irrespective of their ethnic origin. BBC

3. The Cosmic Drama: Three 'Actors'—God, Humanity & Cosmic Powers

a. How Many 'Actors' in the Cosmic Drama?

- a. "In Gal. 5...the Flesh & the Spirit of the crucified Christ [are] 2 supra-natural, cosmic powers...in combat with one another...The orthodox drama has two actors, the divine agent [God,] & the human agent [humanity]. But...the Gospel's [cosmic] drama...is different...[with] three actors: (1.) the divine agent (here the Spirit of Christ), (2.) the human agent (the Galatian [believers]), & (3.) anti-God powers (here...the Flesh, [&]... 'Sin')." [J. L. Martyn, "Gospel Invades..." in D. Harink (ed.) *Paul, Philosophy*, p. 27]
- b. "Paul [presents] a 'Three-Actor' [cosmic] drama...in contrast to...the [conventional] drama [of] two actors—the divine agent [God] & the human agent [humanity]...The 'third actor' [is a] usurping agency [consisting of] anti-God powers... ([in Gal. 5] the Impulsive Desire of the flesh & the power Paul...calls 'Sin')...Paul declares that 'the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ' has freed him from the enslavement of the cosmos [& produced] 'a new creation' [Gal. 6:14-15]...[That] new creation is embodied in Christ, in the church, & thus in 'the Israel of God' [the people of God, who have]... 'bi-focal vision' to see both the enslaving Old Age and God's invading & liberating new creation." [C. Morse, "If J. Weiss..." in J. B. Davis (ed.) *Apocalyptic &... Theology*, pp. 146-148]

b. What's the Problem? The '3rd Actor'—Evil Cosmic Powers—Satan, Sin, & Death, etc. (Rom. 5:12-14, 17)

- a. "Sin entered the world through one man [Adam], & death through sin, [so,] death spread to all people...Death reigned from Adam...He's a type of the Coming One...Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:12-14, 17)
- b. "Cosmic Powers"—Supernatural, Metaphorical, Mythological, or Institutional?
 - a. Cosmic "evil powers [include]—Sin, Death, Flesh, & (sometimes) Law. The stress is most often on these personified, ontological powers, but at times, demonic beings—'rulers & authorities'—come into view." [Ben Blackwell, Paul & the Apocalyptic..., p. 9]
 - b. Some "Christians, especially [from] Calvinist & Reformed traditions, insist...the powers' this-worldly dimension must always be kept in view. They...take the NT language about 'powers & principalities' to refer not (or not exclusively) to spirit-beings but (also) to social entities, & norms for behavior. In this view, the 'powers' are not unequivocally evil...their character & effects are mixed. Most were created with [good] intention." [S. B. Garrett, "Satan & the Powers," Apocalyptic Vision, p. 30]
- c. Taking the "Cosmic Powers" seriously (Rom. 8:3; Mk. 3:27)
 - a. "The problem is that actual powers, prominent among them, Sin & Death, hold humanity in their grasp. God has intervened in the death & resurrection of Jesus to break their power (Rom. 8:3)." [Beverly R. Gaventa, When in Romans, p.]
 - b. In "Paul's view...in addition to God & human beings, powerful actors...stand opposed to God &...enslave human beings... [The cosmic] drama...involves not only human beings & God, but also those enslaving powers. & since humans are fundamentally slaves, the [cosmic] drama...begins with God's militant action against all the [enslaving] powers that hold human beings in bondage." [J. Louis Martyn, Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul, p. 87]
 - c. "Paul's letters...draw...on the images of war...As in a war, there are two opposing sides, the Old Age & the new creation... {Old Age: sphere of evil & sin, under the power of Satan, the rulers of this age, with slavery, death & the oppressive status quo} ;{ New Creation: sphere of grace, under the power of God, the Spirit of Christ, with freedom, life & genuinely new} Paul's view is ...of a dynamic invasion...[In the Gospels] Jesus' strength to exorcize demons from...human beings is a sign of the powers of God's new creation. They [new creation powers] are invading the house of the Old Age, binding the Satanic Strong Man who is the major power of that Age & freeing human beings from his grasp [Mk. 3:27]...The same image of invasion informs Paul... He sees the coming of Christ [as] the invasion of Christ...That event has unleashed a cosmic conflict, indeed the cosmic conflict." [J. Louis Martyn, Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul, pp. 281-282]
- d. God's battle with Cosmic Forces an important theme in 1 Corinthians
 - a. Scholars have "demonstrated the importance...of God's battle with cosmic forces of evil in 1 Cor." [N. Elliot, Liberating..., p. 115]
 - b. "The self operates in tandem with a lethal partner, Sin [who] is stronger' (S. Eastman)...'Held captive by the enslaving power of Sin, human beings commit sin[s]...God has to invade the realm of Sin to create a new...dual agency—the human being united with the Son [this] allows the human self to flourish.' (J. Louis Martyn)" [N. K. Gupta, Sin & its Remedy in Paul, p. #101]
 - c. "Sin is that which terrorizes humanity 'in the shadow of Adam.' ...When God condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. 8:4)...we recognize that this raging tyrant...is the direct object of God's condemnation. Now, Sin itself, the horrifying oppressor that holds humanity captive receives the death sentence...This destruction of Sin's rule is the...victory of Christ's 'death on the battlefield'." [Susan G. Eastman, "Apocalypse & Incarnation," in J. B. Davis (ed.) Apocalyptic & the Future of Theology, p.]
- e. Humanity's Enslavement is due to Cosmic Evil's Invasion of God's good creation (Rom. 7:23; Heb. 2:14-15)
 - a. Rom. 7:23 'I'm a captive to Sin' There's an "enslavement in which humans were held...that results from the militant invasion Sin makes into the world...People became Sin's captives as a result of a cosmic war...[Humanity's] existence dominated by Death...requires liberation [analogous to] the Divine Warrior's rescue of [Israel] from oppressive [pagan] powers." [Scott C. Ryan, Divine Conflict & the Divine Warrior: Romans, p. 174]
 - b. Death: "Death is an intruder, a violator of God's good world. The Creator's answer to death can't be...compromise. Death must be, & in the Messiah has been & will be defeated. (1 Cor. 15:26)." [N. T. Wright, Resurrection of the Son of God, p. 314]
 - a. "I am...the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever & ever, and I hold the keys of Death & Hades." (Rev. 1:17b-18)
 - c. Satan: "The gospels introduce us to 'the Satan', the quasi-personal 'accuser'...doing its best to drag Jesus down..." [N. T. Wright, Evil & the Justice of God, p.] "The Satan,' the accuser,'...[is] the anti-God, anti-creation, anti-human force at large in the world..." [N. T. Wright, Day the Revolution Began, p.]
 - a. Jesus declared: "Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out." (John 12:31)
 - d. "The story [of John's Gospel] concerns the battle between God and Satan." The key texts, Jn. 12:31, [etc.] "suggest that [John] sees the death, resurrection, & ascent of Jesus as the turning point in the conflict between God & the forces of evil... The decisive victory over God's great adversary [was] brought about through the death of Jesus." [Judith L. Kovacs, "Now Shall the Ruler of This World be Driven Out: Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle in Jn. 12:20-36," JBL, Vol. 114, #2, pp. 231-3]
 - a. "Jesus...shared in [flesh & blood] so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil [aka. Satan] — & free those who were held in slavery..." (Heb. 2:14-15)
 - b. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." (Rom. 16:20a)...This verse "echoes both 1 Cor. 15:25-27 and the underlying messianic readings of Psalm 8 & 110 (Ps. 8:6 & Ps. 110:1)." [Douglas A. Campbell, Deliverance of God, p. 697]
- c. What's the solution? God's Liberating Invasion via Christ as the '2nd Adam'—His death & Resurrection
 - a. "Since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man." (1 Cor. 15:21)
 - b. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22)
 - a. "There's a parallelism between Adam & Christ: whatever happened in Adam is reversed in Christ." [J. Toews, Original Sin, p. 38]
 - b. "God...'inva[des]'...the cosmos in the Christ-event, a cosmos...enslaved to anti-God powers such as Sin & Death (Gal. 3:22)...[The cosmic] drama involves not just God & humanity, but also the enslaving forces from which Christ liberates

humanity & against which the believer is enlisted in the warfare...between the Spirit & the flesh. (Martyn)" [J. Barkley, Paul &...Gift, p. 148]

4. Christ Defeats the Cosmic Powers & Launches New Creation (Gal. 5: 14-15; Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15:24-27)

a. Christ's Victory in the Cosmic Battle secures a "Beachhead" for Believers in the "New Creation"

- a. On "the cross. 15 [God] disarmed the rulers & authorities & disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in it." (Col. 2:15)
- b. "The world has been crucified to me through the cross, & I to the world...what matters instead is a new creation." (Gal 5:14-15)