

“The Sequel!”—1 Corinthians 15:22-26

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Sequel!”, is 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 → *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Have you ever seen a movie and enjoyed it so much that you hoped they would make a sequel, a part two? You may even watch with a certain amount of anticipation and when it does come out you immediately resolve to see it. Have you ever seen the sequel and walked away disappointed because it just wasn't as good as the original movie? Unfortunately this happens quite frequently. A sequel is the next installment of an event or story which unfolds the subsequent developments of the drama.

With the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from dead I wonder

if we might consider this the sequel of the story. If so, it is possible that it turned out nothing like the expectations in the minds of the followers of Jesus. As they considered the events of “Part 1” things were not unfolding very favorably. Jesus’ followers watched as He allowed Himself to be arrested, ran through a mock trial, mocked, spit upon, beaten and then crucified as a man in Whom the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, could find no fault. (cf. Luke 23:4) Who would possibly want to experience the sequel to such a story! Even His disciples envisioned a sequel involving their fate of death at the hands of the Sanhedrin, staying in locked rooms for fear that they were next. What possible good could come for them out of all this mayhem?!

It is interesting how people have a desire to get a glimpse of “Part 2” in life in order to get some kind of understanding of what’s on the other side of life. This desire reveals itself by the popularity of those who have had “near death” experiences, claiming to have been “beyond and back.” People will even exchange a Scriptural perspective of the “afterlife” for the testimony of one who claims to have been to heaven and received revelation from God! Many seek out those who claim to be channels for their dead relatives in an effort to communicate beyond the grave or find some reassurance that they are OK. In Luke 16:31 Jesus spoke specifically to such mentalities when He said to the man in hell who thought the appearance of someone from the dead would

convince his brothers to believe: *If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets* (i.e. the written Old Testament Scriptures), *neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.* When it comes to this story **the sequel can only be experienced by faith in Jesus as He Who was the needed sacrifice for your sin so you can be forgiven!**

Thus, the message of Easter Sunday is continuation of this new life of forgiveness of sins in Jesus as you look forward to eternal life with Him! The promise for the Christian is given in verse 22 of our text: *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* In the context Paul was speaking about the bodily resurrection of the dead on the Last Day for Christians. *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.* Even though there had been people whom Jesus resurrected from death during His public earthly ministry (cf. Mark 5:35-42; Luke 7:14-15; John 11:43-44), Jesus was the first one to rise from the dead never to die again. He was *the firstfruits* making it possible for us to do the same.

Easter is actually the celebration of **your** victory over death! 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 says: *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* It is the celebration of **your** sure and certain hope of eternal life! Christ's resurrection

insures that His words from John 11:25-26 are true **for you!** *Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.* Easter is also the celebration that Jesus is **your** Champion over **your** struggle with death and the devil once and for all! Hebrews 2:14-15 says Jesus came so *that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.* Our text refers to *Jesus destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* (cf. Verses 24-26)

So what about you? Are you going to continue being a part of God's ongoing story to watch His "sequels" unfold in your vocations of life, relationships and conversations? Are you going to celebrate Easter as "Part 1" of the story? If so, the true celebration of Easter cannot take place in your heart because you have failed to recognize your sin and the eternal separation from God in hell which that sin brings. A true celebration of Easter recognizes the need for Jesus' death for your sins, repents of that sin with the desire to live for Jesus everyday.

A true celebration wants to continually experience this new life in Jesus. That's why the early Christians picked Sunday as their day of worship. Every

Sunday was to be an opportunity to receive new life through means of grace dispensed by the gathered believers, with the response of praise, worship and thanksgiving for this new life! Every Sunday was intended to be an Easter celebration! Then the Easter celebration becomes “Part 2” of more and more sequels recognizing new life every moment under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit!

This story actually began the moment sin entered into the hearts and lives of His perfect people in the Garden of Eden. Since Adam and Eve couldn’t deal with their sin properly Yahweh said He would deal with it for them. His promise to the devil in Genesis 3:15 “set the stage” for all the rest of the story when He said He would provide an offspring from the woman who would crush his head. However, the devil would *bruise* this offspring’s heel— a “bruising” which involved Jesus having to suffer and die. It was a “bruised heel” in the sense that **it was temporary**. Thus, the “sequel” which set the direction for all the other “sequels” of His story to take place:

- the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and His ascension into heaven— “Part 2”—make it possible for Him to give us His Holy Spirit so that . . .
- . . . He brings our sin-deadened hearts to life and gives us the experience of new life **today!**—“Part 3.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the*

new has come. He has given us His Holy Spirit so that . . .

- . . . we can live a different kind of life each day in good works—“Part 4”—as Galatians 2:22-23 says: *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* This new way of living brings others into contact with Jesus so that they too can take part in God’s story by faith in Him for the forgiveness of their sins so we can all look forward to and experience His sequel in . . .
- . . . “Part 5”—heaven in the bodily resurrection on the Last Day! We confess in the words of Philippians 3:20-21 → *Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. Amen!*

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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