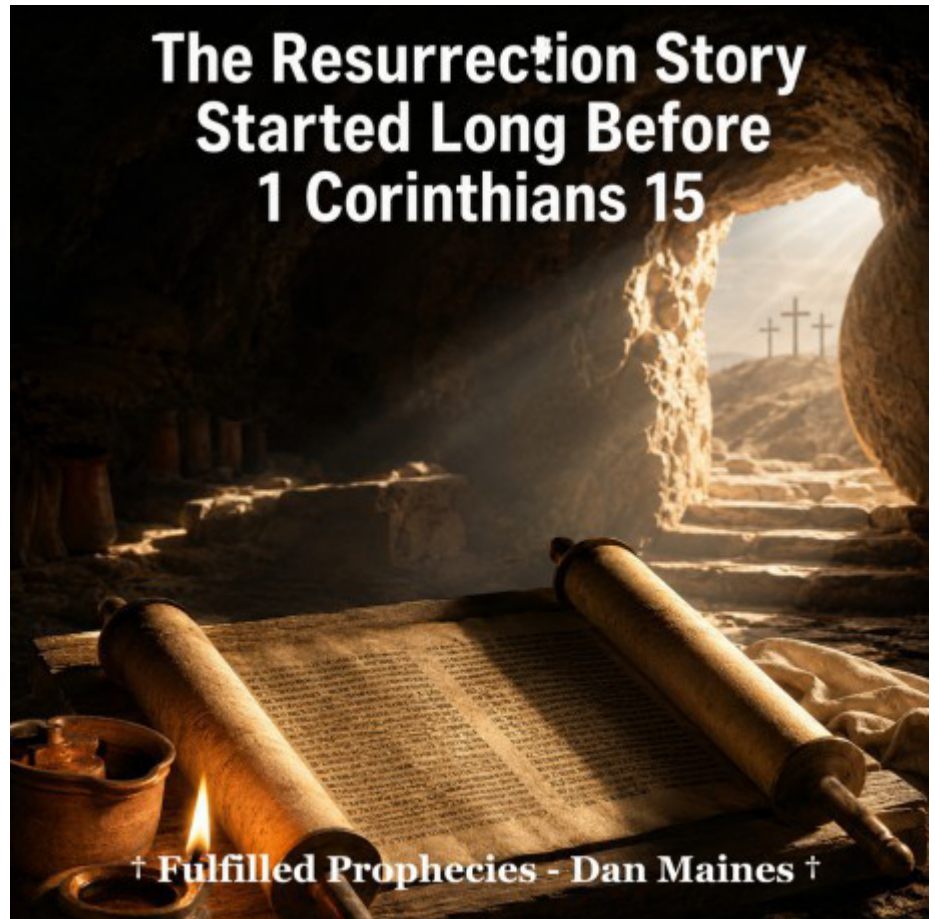


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The Resurrection Story Started Long Before 1 Corinthians 15



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† The resurrection teaching of the New Testament didn't suddenly appear when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15. Its roots were already deeply planted in Israel's prophets.

† Ezekiel described Israel as dead men coming out of graves. Hosea described Israel being raised up. Isaiah connected resurrection with the removal of death. Daniel placed resurrection within Israel's time of unparalleled trouble. Jesus

then used the same resurrection framework before Paul gave his extended teaching in 1 Corinthians 15.

† When these passages are read together, a consistent biblical story emerges. Resurrection language developed within God's promises to bring His covenant people from death into life, from exile into restoration, and ultimately from the condemnation of the old creation into life in Christ.

† This doesn't deny the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection is the foundation and guarantee of the resurrection of His people. But it does require us to let the Old Testament define the prophetic resurrection language that the New Testament writers inherited and used (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

Ezekiel 37:11-14

Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the entire house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'This is what the Lord God says: "Behold, I am going to open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. And I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it," declares the Lord."

† The Bible itself identifies the dead bones. They represented the whole house of Israel. God wasn't describing a cemetery filled with physically dead Israelites. He was describing His covenant people as dead, hopeless, and cut off.

† God promised to open their graves, bring them out, put His Spirit within them, and make them live. Grave, resurrection, Spirit, and life language were already being used to describe covenant restoration centuries before the New Testament was written (Ezekiel 37:1-10).

† This becomes extremely important when reading New

Testament resurrection passages. We can't assume that every reference to graves, death, life, or resurrection automatically means physical corpses leaving literal cemeteries. Ezekiel proves that Scripture itself uses resurrection language covenantally.

Hosea 6:1-2

Come, let's return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him.

† Hosea again describes Israel's restoration as resurrection. Israel had been struck because of covenant rebellion, but God promised to revive and raise His people so they could live before Him.

† Notice the corporate language, He will revive us, He will raise us, and we shall live. Resurrection was already part of Israel's prophetic vocabulary for covenant restoration.

† This prophetic pattern reaches its fulfillment through Christ. Jesus personally passed through death into resurrection, and His people participated in His death and life through union with Him (Romans 6:4-8; Ephesians 2:4-6).

Isaiah 25:7-8

And on this mountain He will destroy the covering which is over all peoples, The veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken.

† Isaiah connects the destruction of death with God's covenant salvation. The covering is removed, death is swallowed up, tears are wiped away, and the reproach of God's people is removed.

† Paul deliberately draws from this prophecy when explaining resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. His statement that death is swallowed up in victory wasn't invented in Corinth. It came directly from Isaiah's prophetic restoration promise (1

Corinthians 15:54).

† That connection matters because Isaiah gives us the prophetic background for Paul's language. Paul expected his readers to understand resurrection as the climax of the redemptive story already announced by the prophets.

Isaiah 26:19-21

Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. Come, my people, enter your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs its course. For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their wrongdoing; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain.

† Isaiah moves directly from resurrection language into a coming time of divine indignation and judgment. God's people are told to hide for a little while until the indignation passes.

† Resurrection and judgment therefore belong together in Isaiah's prophetic framework. The raising of God's people isn't presented as an isolated biological event disconnected from covenant judgment.

† This same pattern appears repeatedly in the New Testament, resurrection, judgment, vindication, and the establishment of God's kingdom are interconnected themes (Matthew 16:27-28; Revelation 11:15-18).

Daniel 12:1-3

Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. And those who have insight will shine like the glow of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to

righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

† Daniel places resurrection within a specific covenant setting, the people of Daniel, their deliverance, and an unparalleled time of trouble.

† Jesus used Daniel's language when He described the great tribulation that would come upon His generation. He said there would be great tribulation unlike anything before it, and then declared that all these things would happen within that generation (Matthew 24:21, 34).

† That connection gives Daniel 12 an important historical boundary. Daniel's resurrection prophecy can't simply be removed from Daniel's people, Daniel's time of trouble, and Jesus' application of that trouble to the first-century judgment.

† Daniel was also told that these events would occur when the power of the holy people had been completely shattered. That covenant marker points directly toward the end of old covenant Israel's national system (Daniel 12:7).

John 5:24-25

Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, a time is coming and even now has arrived, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

† Jesus didn't wait for people to die physically before describing them as passing from death into life. He told living people that believers had already passed out of death into life.

† Jesus then said the hour was coming and already was when the dead would hear His voice and live. That statement establishes spiritual and covenant death as an essential part of His resurrection teaching.

† This prepares us for the resurrection language that follows. Jesus' audience had already been given the prophetic background of Ezekiel, Hosea, Isaiah, and Daniel, and now Jesus announces that resurrection life was breaking into history

through Him.

John 5:28-29

Do not be amazed at this; for a time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come out: those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the bad deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

† Jesus now expands the resurrection picture to resurrection of life and resurrection of judgment, language closely resembling Daniel's awakening to everlasting life and shame (Daniel 12:2).

† John 5 therefore shouldn't be isolated from the prophetic story that came before it. Jesus was speaking within Israel's established resurrection vocabulary and Daniel's expectation of life and judgment.

† The movement from death to life had already begun, because Jesus said the hour now is, while its covenantal consummation was approaching in the judgment and resurrection hope announced by the prophets.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

But the fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man death came, by a Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

† Paul begins with Christ because Jesus' bodily resurrection is the historical foundation of the entire resurrection hope. Christ is the firstfruits, and His resurrection guarantees the victory of those who belong to Him.

† But Paul's contrast is larger than individual biological death. His framework is Adam and Christ, death in Adam and life in Christ. These are two corporate covenantal identities (Romans 5:12-21).

† The resurrection story therefore reaches back through Israel's prophets and ultimately to Adam. Humanity's death problem finds its answer in Christ, the last Adam, who brings His people

into resurrection life (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, 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.

† Paul tells us exactly where his resurrection theology came from when he says, then shall come to pass the saying that is written. He reaches backward into Israel's prophets to explain what resurrection victory means.

† Death being swallowed up comes from Isaiah 25. Paul's resurrection doctrine is therefore the fulfillment of a prophetic story already underway long before he wrote to Corinth.

† Paul also identifies the sting of death as sin and the power of sin as the law. That places the resurrection victory squarely within God's redemptive solution to sin, condemnation, and the covenant administration that exposed and intensified transgression (Romans 7:7-13; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11).

† First Corinthians 15 isn't the beginning of the resurrection story. It's one of the great explanations of its fulfillment in Christ.

Historical References

† Josephus described the Jewish War and Jerusalem's destruction as an unparalleled national catastrophe, recording famine, internal violence, siege, slaughter, and the destruction of the temple. His account provides important historical background for the first-century time of trouble associated with Jesus' warnings concerning Jerusalem.

† Josephus also described extraordinary conditions surrounding the fall of Jerusalem, showing how completely the old national and temple order was shattered during the Roman war.

† Eusebius later connected Jesus' warnings with Jerusalem's destruction and recorded the tradition that believers in

Jerusalem departed before the war and settled at Pella.

† These historical witnesses don't establish the doctrine of resurrection. Scripture does that. They help establish the historical setting in which the first-century covenant judgment described by Jesus reached its devastating conclusion.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We shouldn't begin our study of resurrection with modern assumptions. We should begin where the Bible begins, with the language, promises, symbols, and covenant story given through the prophets.

† Ezekiel shows dead Israel coming from graves. Hosea shows God's people being raised to live before Him. Isaiah shows death swallowed up in victory. Daniel connects resurrection with Israel's great time of trouble. Jesus announces that the dead were already hearing His voice. Paul brings these themes together in Christ.

† This means our resurrection hope isn't based on one isolated chapter. It's the climax of a story running through the entire Bible.

† We live in the accomplished reality of life in Christ. Believers have been made alive with Christ, raised with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:4-6).

† Death doesn't have the final word for those who are in Christ. Our confidence rests in Jesus Christ, who conquered death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10).

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did Paul invent the doctrine of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15?

A: No. Resurrection language appears throughout Israel's prophets long before Paul. Ezekiel 37, Hosea 6, Isaiah 25-26, and Daniel 12 all provide important prophetic foundations for the New Testament resurrection teaching.

Q: Does covenant resurrection language mean Jesus wasn't physically raised from the dead?

A: Absolutely not. Jesus' bodily resurrection is essential to Paul's argument. Christ was raised from the dead and became the firstfruits of those who were asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). The point is that the resurrection of God's people must be understood within the larger covenantal and prophetic framework Scripture itself provides.

Q: Does Ezekiel 37 actually call Israel's restoration a resurrection from graves?

A: Yes. God identifies the bones as the whole house of Israel and then promises to open their graves, bring them out, place His Spirit within them, and make them live (Ezekiel 37:11-14).

Q: Why is Daniel 12 important to understanding resurrection?

A: Because Daniel connects resurrection with the deliverance of his people and an unparalleled time of trouble. Jesus uses the same unparalleled-trouble language concerning the events that would occur within His generation (Daniel 12:1-3; Matthew 24:21, 34).

Q: Why does Isaiah 25 matter when interpreting 1 Corinthians 15?

A: Because Paul directly uses Isaiah's declaration that death would be swallowed up in victory. Paul himself points us back to Isaiah when explaining resurrection victory (Isaiah 25:8; 1 Corinthians 15:54).

Q: What does John 5 contribute to this picture?

A: Jesus explicitly said that believers had passed out of death into life and that the hour already was when the dead would hear His voice and live. This demonstrates that death and resurrection language in Jesus' teaching can't automatically be reduced to biological death and physical graves alone (John 5:24-25).

Q: What is the central message of the resurrection story?

A: The central message is victory through Jesus Christ. What the prophets anticipated, Christ accomplished. God's people are brought from death into life through Him, and death's covenantal power of sin and condemnation has been defeated (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Romans 8:1-2).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Ezekiel 37:11-14; Hosea 6:1-2; Isaiah 25:7-8; Isaiah 26:19-21; Daniel 12:1-3; John 5:24-25; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

† Historical writers: Josephus, The Wars of the Jews; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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