



1 CORINTHIANS 14–16

PAUL'S Q&A:

THE CORINTHIANS' QUESTIONS, AND PAUL'S ANSWERS

INTRODUCTION

After sharing a list of some of the gifts that the Spirit and emphasizing the key role of charity, or “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47), Paul returned to discuss another specific problem that dealt with the early saints’ use of the gift of tongues. Next, he gives the most in-depth study of the at-one-ment of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. In the Book of Mormon, we find several more extensive discussions on Jesus’ at-one-ment by Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Mosiah, Alma, and Mormon.¹ Comparing the two books of scripture provides a deeper appreciation for the restoration and our Savior’s redemptive gift. When Paul finishes teaching on this most important doctrine, he finishes the Epistle with “matters of Christian business,” such as the financial offerings, his travel plans, and personal greetings to dear friends there.²

1 CORINTHIANS 14

The Gift of Prophecy Preferable to Tongues

1 Corinthians 14:1-19

1 Corinthians 14:1 “Seek after love and strive for spiritual gifts, and especially that you might speak with divine inspiration” (NR) Paul asked the saints to make a loving heart their aim as they sought spiritual gifts. Most importantly, he asked them to seek the higher gifts of charity “and” (not “but” as KJV used) prophesy, not the showier gift of tongues.

The gift of prophecy “*prophéteuó*/to foretell, tell forth,” has a broader meaning in the New Testament. The phrase, “spirit of prophecy,” is used one time in the New Testament in Revelation 19:10, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” In contrast, the same three-word phrase is found eighteen times in The Book of Mormon. The Prophet Joseph Smith defended that definition on January 1, 1843, to the Illinois State Legislature:

... According to John, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; therefore if I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy.³

Paul’s definition of the gift of prophesy is consistent with John’s. It is not a gift just for apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators—but for all disciples who foster and maintained a testimony of Jesus’ divinity. This aspect of the Spirit’s influence was especially important to Paul.

1 Corinthians 14:2 “he that speaketh in *another* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God” (JST) Six times in this chapter, the JST replaced “unknown” with “another” (and these are the only changes for the first 33 verses). The JST change signified that the language spoken while speaking in tongues was known to God. The same advice was given in our dispensation by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

In an editorial dated June 15, 1842, for the *Times and Seasons*, Joseph Smith printed a similar warning against tongues (glossolalia):

The gift of tongues is the smallest gift, perhaps, of the whole, and yet it is one that is the most sought after. . . . Be not so curious about tongues, do not speak in tongues except there be an interpreter present;

OUTLINE: 1 CORINTHIANS 14-16

14 Spiritual Gifts

15 Resurrection

16 Exhortations and Greetings

the ultimate design of tongues is to speak to foreigners, and if persons are very anxious to display their intelligence, let them speak to such in their own tongues. The gifts of God are all useful in their place, but when they are applied to that which God does not intend, they prove an injury, a snare and a curse instead of a blessing.⁴

The Prophet gave this cautionary counsel over and over because he felt that the gift of tongues was easily counterfeited by the devil.⁵ He believed that God gave the “gift of tongues” mainly to bless foreign missionaries, not those seeking a dramatic display: “the gift of the tongues by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Church, is for the benefit of the servants of God to preach to unbelievers.”⁶

1 Corinthians 14:3 “the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort” (NIV) As the gifts of the Spirit are to edify others, the gift of prophecy or testimony has the potential to edify others. Especially, in the church setting, Paul asked the saints to seek the gift of prophecy over tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:3–11 “one who prophesies edifies the church” (NIV) The Corinthian meetings had a problem with order and reverence. Paul’s description sounds as if everyone spoke whenever they wanted to regardless of whether someone else was already talking or praying. He describes several people speaking in tongues without an interpreter. He complains that such messages were not edifying. Worse still, they were offensive to the Spirit. This may have been a result of some becoming inebriated from drinking too much of the sacrament wine (1 Corinthians 11:20). Rather than a worship service to renew their covenants and edify the saints, the meeting sounds like a free-speech rally in many different languages. Paul taught them to seek gifts that edified and comforted others, not just speaking “gibberish” (NEB, 14:11).



“There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire.” —Acts ii. 3.

Image via Wikimedia Commons

1 Corinthians 14:12–14 “try to excel in those that build up the church” (NIV) This is good advice for which gifts of the Spirit we seek as well as which education, career development, and hobbies we choose. It is better to glean and grow in areas that can help to build the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 14:15–17 “I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. Otherwise . . . how can someone else . . . say **“Amen”** (NIV) Paul asks the saints to dedicate their group prayers, singing, and speaking, so that everyone may understand and be “edified.”

1 Corinthians 14:18–19 “I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue” (NIV) Paul acknowledges that he often spoke in tongues, but not in church without an interpreter. Joseph Smith and his followers were known by their contemporaries as a people who spoke in tongues and practiced the gifts of the Spirit.⁷

Tongues Sign for Unbelievers

1 Corinthians 14:20–25

1 Corinthians 14:20–21 “Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults” (NIV) Being so far removed from Corinth, and unable to help in person, Paul continues to chide them with language that borders on another verbal spanking. He basically says their behavior was immature. He quoted Isaiah 28:11–12, to back up his point that showing off by speaking an unknown tongue was not helpful to convert people—they need to understand each other.

1 Corinthians 14:22–25 “Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers” (NIV) Paul describes the gift of tongues as a sign to unbelievers, not for mature Christians (i.e. Pentecost, Acts 2:11).

Edification and Orderliness in Public Worship

1 Corinthians 14:26–33

1 Corinthians 14:26–33 “Brothers and Sisters . . . Everything must be done so that the church may be built up . . . speak, one at a time . . . For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (NIV) Paul’s rule of thumb in worship services called for order and enlightenment. The Corinthian worship service sounds like a disorganized free-for-all, or several simultaneous “open mikes” (with a different form of electricity). Paul gives specific organizational ideas for an edifying meeting. He wanted everyone to participate and prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:29), but only if it were uplifting (and not simultaneously). Their meetings must have been wild. He reminded his audience that the prophets must use a rational mind in a controlled manner—not an uncontrolled impulse (1 Corinthians 14:32). The situation sounds much like the revivals during the Second Great Awakening in the early United States. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Paul was a favorite of the Prophet Joseph—he could relate to his audience. It also speaks to the devil’s consistent effort to deafen the Spirit.

Ransacked Text on Women's Public Worship

1 Corinthians 14:34–36

1 Corinthians 14:34–35 “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” These two puzzling verses contradict Paul’s previous support of women—they were “consecrated in Christ” (1:2); women were told to “pray and prophecy” in public settings (11:2, 5a), to exercise the gifts of the Spirit (12:1, 6–7, 11), all were baptized and given the same Spirit to be unified as one body (12:13–14). Just a few verses earlier and after he wrote, “You can all prophesy” (14:31, and more specific to women, 14:39, NIV). In this Epistle, from his first greeting to his last goodbye, Paul’s advice on building the kingdom includes women (as the Greek and NIV show, even though KJV does not specify gender). For example, Sister Chloe became Paul’s source of information—and he mentions her as a trusted witness and fellow worker in the Corinthian church (see prior notes on 1 Corinthians 1:11). Throughout this letter, Paul speaks to the women as equals to the men in the church (1 Corinthians 10:1–2; 11:5, 12:1–12; 14:31; etc.).⁸

OUT OF CONTEXT

These two troublesome verses are out of context. The entire section is about spiritual gifts and the latest about tongues and prophecy (1 Corinthians 12–14). Paul admonishes the use of the gifts of the Spirit for both genders (“brothers and sisters,” NIV). Then, in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 35, we find an abrupt and radical change of the subject—silencing women in public. These two verses stand out like a sore thumb in glaring opposition to Paul’s previous positive chapters of encouragement of women’s participation. I have counted at least twenty Pauline references to woman’s involvement in public worship.⁹ When textual critics note a break in the flow of Paul’s thought, they often theorize that an editor added something to the original text. In fact, just after the two verses, the text continues with the context of spiritual gifts and *again calls women to speak in church!* “My brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy” (1 Corinthians 14:39).

Some ancient manuscripts of the Epistle move these two verses to the end of the chapter so that they do not interrupt the flow. Certain words are different in each Greek text.¹⁰ From the earliest days, these verses did not seem to fit. There is nothing in our Old Testament, or Law of Moses, that claims this gender restriction. This does seem to fit with some of the 10,000 “oral laws” or traditions of the Pharisees.

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

As we do not know the question or specific issue here, we have to wonder if these two verses may have referred to a specific problem. Could they be a tangential thought that fit into the broader section of 1 Corinthians’ discussion on disorderly conduct in meetings? It is feasible that because the Greek and Jewish culture restricted many women in their public worship, perhaps the social freedom newly found in Christianity incited some women to

Statue (detail) of a Roman woman, Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, Turkey. 2nd century AD. Image via Wikimedia Commons.



speak or act beyond propriety (or at least beyond the previous norm). Were Corinthian women interrupting the meetings with questions? A few verses earlier, Paul instructs church members to listen respectfully when someone else was speaking (1 Corinthians 14:30). Or was this a particular type of meeting? Or were these verses added to the text later by an editor? Or were these words a quote from the Corinthians' question (just as Paul quoted their statement earlier in 1 Corinthians 7:1)? Was Paul writing sarcastically? Not knowing the circumstances inhibits our full understanding.

OTHER TRANSLATIONS

We also have other translations that shed light on this passage. In an alternative interpretation by John Welch, we find more sensitive wording: "Women should be reverent and not chatter but be supportive."¹¹ We find other reputable English translations, but they do not resolve the blatant conflict of messages.

JST

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to **rule**; but to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to **rule** in the church

WEB

Let your wives keep silent in the assemblies, for it has not been permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as the law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to chatter in the assembly.

JB

Women are to remain quiet in the assemblies, since they have no permission to speak: theirs is a subordinate part, as the Law itself says. If there is anything they want to know, they should ask their husbands at home: it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.

The Joseph Smith translation (JST) modified the meaning entirely by changing “speak” (KJV) to “rule” (JST).¹² It transformed the discussion from speaking to ruling. Was the problem that women usurped authority? Were they correcting the presiding elder? 1 Corinthians discusses authority repeatedly. With the perspective of the JST change, it sounds as though Paul has a particular kind of ruling in mind. The JST also took out the word “command.” This is closer to the Greek, “passive voice with the imperative construction . . . these women are not commanded to obedience but requested to willingly yield themselves to the law and church practice.”¹³

POSSIBLY AN EDITORIAL ADDITION

The most convincing explanation to me is that perhaps these two verses were not written by Paul at all, but added by a later editor. The Greek scholar, G.D. Fee, agrees that they were added to the text later.¹⁴ It does not seem plausible that Paul would contradict himself within the same section of the same letter. These two verses also match the Jewish pharisees,¹⁵ and a heretical Christian view of women from the end of the first century, and may have been added by a copyist or compiler a few decades later.¹⁶

RESTORED CHURCH AND WOMEN SPEAKING

The restored church allows women to speak, teach, counsel, testify, exhort, administer, and serve as priestesses in the restored church and temples. Women may prophesy and pray in their church services, public gatherings, homes, and temples. Joseph Smith revealed that women should be “ordained . . . to expound Scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by [God’s] Spirit” (D&C 25:7). Unique among Christianity, we also honor Eve and believe in a Heavenly Mother. However, women do not preside or rule over priesthood leaders as pointed out in the JST.



Portrait of a woman, mosaic from Pompeii, ca. AD 1–49. Image via The Naples Archaeological Museum

SUMMARY

The apostolic church battled great diversity that affected the saints' ability to accept and live Jesus' teachings. In the Epistles, we find evidence that the saints struggled with keeping doctrine pure—including accepting women as equal participants in worship. We find passages where the apostles tried to clarify and teach the principles and ordinances that Christ taught. However, in the currently available New Testament translations, we also find statements that contradict the Lord's teachings regarding women's worship. Fortunately, the majority of the Epistles encourage Christian women to join in public worship. Specifically, in 1 Corinthians, women are empowered to pray and prophesy as part of their dev

Closure of Gifts of the Spirit

1 Corinthians 14:37–40

1 Corinthians 14:36 “Did God's word originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?” (BSB) The text returns to the context of 1 Corinthians 14:32, discussing prophesying at church. As an apostle, Paul felt strongly about who could speak for God. He also understood and hoped that the Spirit would witness to many saints.

1 Corinthians 14:37–38 “the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” Paul suggests that if anyone of the Corinthians saints claimed a prophetic gift, they could practice it by acknowledging that his writing was a divine commandment. Furthermore, if one does not recognize Paul's apostolic decrees, he should not be followed.

1 Corinthians 14:38–39 “my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly” (NIV) Paul heartily encouraged prophesying, while speaking with tongues was permitted with caution. His underlying council is valid not just for the church at Corinth, but is generally good advice: all things should be done in order and help to build up the church.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION

In keeping with Greek philosophy, some of the Corinthian saints taught that there would be no physical resurrection. To combat this, Paul offers his longest defense of the Savior's physical resurrection.

1 CORINTHIANS 15

The Resurrection of Christ

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 “I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you” (BSB) Paul reminded the Corinthians that he preached the message of the gospel—and they received its saving message!

1 Corinthians 15:3-5 “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve” (BSB) This is the earliest “credo” in Christianity. (It was lengthened into the Nicene Creed in AD 325 when Catholicism was formed.) Early Christian fathers indicate that church members recited these verses at baptisms and on Sundays. It was probably a formula passed onto Paul and he was reciting it from memory. The repeated use of the word “that/*hoti*” (repeated six times) identifies a Greek statement of belief or fact. As the earliest account we have in the Bible of Jesus’ passion and resurrection (most scholars find the Gospels as written after the earliest Epistles), Paul expresses his belief that Jesus’ death was planned by God. Paul emphasizes that Jesus had to die for our sins—it was not a tragic death. He stresses four important points:

1. Christ died for our sins (a doctrine also taught in 1 Corinthians 5:7; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:24–26; Isaiah 53:12; and many times in the Book of Mormon—see footnote 1),
2. He was buried (fulfilling Isa 53:9),
3. He was raised (written in the Greek perfect tense, this means, “having been raised from death by God, he is alive evermore”),
4. He appeared in a resurrected body to many.

1 Corinthians 15:4 “He was buried” In the early church, the baptismal ordinance symbolized Jesus’ burial: the new Christian stepped down into the water, symbolizing Jesus’ death and burial. He or she was then underwater, representing Jesus’ time in the tomb. The convert then rose up of the water, clean and a new person, symbolizing the Lord’s Resurrection Easter morning.

1 Corinthians 15:5 “He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve” (BSB) Paul reports that Jesus first appeared to Cephas, the rock (the Aramaic name for Peter) and then to the ten other Apostles. Paul’s record is the oldest we have, closest in time to the Resurrection, and appears consistent with Luke’s list of Christ’s visits after His Resurrection (see Luke 24:34). The other three Gospels do not share these details. Paul’s wording does not negate John’s account, where Jesus appears first to Mary at the garden tomb before meeting Peter and the Apostles (John 20).

1 Corinthians 15:6 “He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once” (BSB) Paul reminds his audience that the resurrected Jesus appeared in His *body* after his 40-day resurrected ministry to over 500 men (only men could stand as legal witnesses in Judaism—hence Paul includes the number of men, not women). Paul may have heard this account from Peter during their 15 days together in Jerusalem (see Galatians 1:18), or from other eyewitnesses, he met during his previous 20 years working with the Apostles. Just as it is today, “fallen asleep” is a euphemism for death.

1 Corinthians 15:7–9 “he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also” Scriptures record additional eye-witnesses of Jesus’ physical Resurrection after his 40-day ministry, including James the half-brother of Jesus (a Bishop or leader in Jerusalem) and “newer” apostles such as Matthias (Acts 1:26), Barnabas, Andronias, Junia (Romans 16:7), and Paul, who was “born out of due time” (or converted after the Resurrection).

1 Corinthians 15:10 “by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain” Grace here also can be translated, “forgiveness/merciful kindness.” Perhaps Paul felt driven or obliged to work harder than anyone else because he had persecuted the church and felt he needed more forgiveness or to give more service?

The Resurrection of Christ by Hendrick van den Broeck, 1571. Image via Wikimedia Commons.



1 Corinthians 15:11 “**this is what we preach, and this is what you believed**” (NIV) From Paul’s perspective, the belief in Christ’s physical resurrection was the foundation of Christianity.

The Resurrection of the Dead

1 Corinthians 15:12–28

1 Corinthians 15:12–19 “**how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?**” Paul addresses the false belief that some Corinthians had passed on denying the physical resurrection. Paul then gives six “if ... then” statements. Each one further proves his thesis that the physical resurrection is part of God’s plan. Paul felt that salvation could not exist without the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:20 “**now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept**” Jesus’ resurrection becomes our guarantee that we, too, will rise again from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:21–22 “**since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead**” George Frideric Handel made these verses famous in his oratorio, “The Messiah.” Paul compared Adam and Jesus using parallel construction. The Gospels do the same thing, highlighting Jesus as the second “son of God” with Adam as the first (Luke 3:22, 38). Adam represents the mortal father of the human race and Jesus represents their spiritual Father. Adam led the creation as Michael, and now Jesus leads the new creation (see Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). In Hebrew, Adam can be plural, meaning humanity (v. 21). In verse 22, however, Paul uses the Greek, singular name to make sure his audience understands exactly what he is teaching.

1 Corinthians 15:23 “**every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming**” The scriptures refer to Jesus’ Second Coming as “His coming”. The phrase appears 38 times in the four-standard works. We do not find the phrase “second coming” until AD 150 when St. Justin the martyr used it. “Second Coming” appears only once in modern scriptures (D&C 34:6).

1 Corinthians 15:24 Jesus “**hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power**” (BSB) This verse does a great job of describing how God the Father and the Son are separate beings but work together. The temporary usurper, Satan, claims to “rule” but ultimately will be “put down” or bound (Revelation 20:6–13).

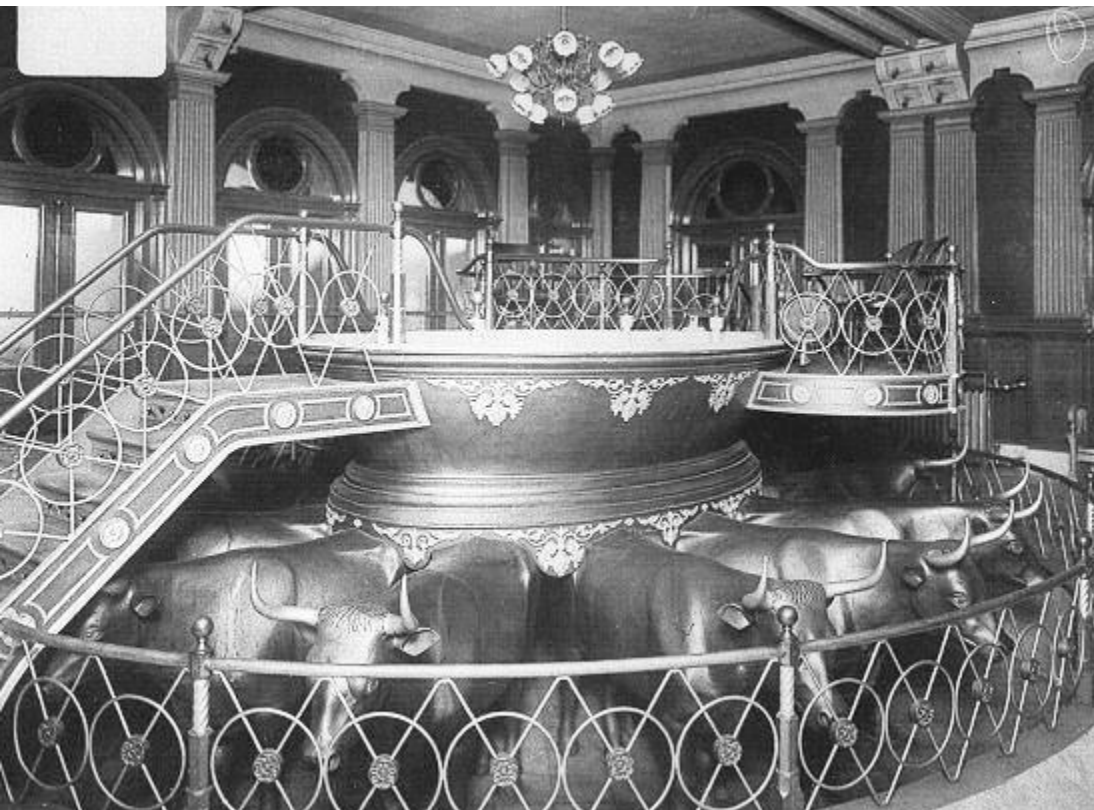
1 Corinthians 15:25–26 “**he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet**” Jesus will reign and have all power in His control after His coming including power over death, as mortals will be “twinkled” during the Millennium.

1 Corinthians 15:27–28 “**he hath put all things under his feet**” Paul quotes Psalm 8:6 with hints of 110:1.

Baptisms For The Dead

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

1 Corinthians 15:29 “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” Paul continues to give logical evidence of the physical resurrection by turning to the practice of baptism for the dead. The Resurrection would not be universal unless the dead who passed on without a knowledge of Jesus had the opportunity to accept Him (This is why most Christians believe in a limited atonement; they do not understand proxy work for the dead). The ancient Greek and Romans had cults for their dead. They took food to the cemetery for their dead to eat. Christians who celebrated “All Saints Day” believed that the Saints came to put the dead back in their graves. Egyptian tombs were filled with food and items for the afterlife. Forms of this doctrine were familiar in the ancient world. This verse confused Joseph Smith, so he prayed about it. The Lord’s answer is recorded in D&C 128:16. The restoration of this doctrine fits seamlessly with the plan of salvation and our understanding of the nature of God (as one who is no respecter of persons, see Romans 2:11).



Photograph of the baptismal font in the Salt Lake temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1909. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

1 Corinthians 15:31 “**I protest**” Other translations read, “I swear it by my pride in you, my brothers—for in Christ Jesus our Lord I am proud of you” (NEB). “I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord” (NIV). The JST clarifies this verse by adding the context of Jesus’ resurrection, which gives it a whole new meaning:

KJV

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

JST

I protest unto you the resurrection of the dead; and this is my rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord daily, though I die.

1 Corinthians 15:32 “If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die” Paul uses reverse logic to make his point. Colloquially he is saying, “Hey, I wouldn’t be trying so hard here in Ephesus as a missionary if there were no resurrection. Heck, if there is no resurrection, then I’d say go ahead and just eat, drink and be merry, for on the morrow we are going to die.” He may be using the “beasts” imagery to figuratively describe the spiritual enemies that he fights. As a Roman citizen, Paul would not have literally fought with wild beasts in a Roman arena.

1 Corinthians 15:33 “Bad company corrupts good character” (NIV) Paul quotes Menander’s Greek comedy, *Thais*: “Bad company ruins good morals.” He warns his audience that evil associations and communications corrupt us. The Spirit cannot abide when evil is present. (Recall Martin Harris’ experience as one of the three witnesses.) The JB translates the phrase as “bad friends.”

1 Corinthians 15:34 “Come back to your senses as you ought” (NIV) No names are mentioned, but Paul probably has a specific group in mind (not the whole congregation) when he charges them to “come to their right mind and sin no more” (KJV).

Resurrected Body

1 Corinthians 15:35–39

1 Corinthians 15:35–39 “But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” (BSB) Paul now turns to a second part of their questions, addressing the timing and nature of the resurrection. He responds with an example from the law of the harvest: a seed will produce the same kind of plant that it came from. Animals likewise reproduce their own kind. In verse 36, “quicken” means to come to life again, or be resurrected.

The Kingdoms In Heaven

1 Corinthians 15:40–55

1 Corinthians 15:40–41 “There are also celestial bodies . . .” Paul explains to the Corinthians that there are different states in the resurrection or heavens. He repeats his thoughts in 2 Corinthians 12. The JST adds the name of each of the three kingdoms of glory and describes three kingdoms, not just two.

KJV

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial:
but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the
terrestrial is another.

JST

Also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial,
and bodies telectual; but the glory of the celestial, one;
and the terrestrial, another; and the telectual, another.

A Christian scholar described these verses: “By using the imagery of the sun, moon and stars, Paul is emphasizing the infinite variety that reigns in the world which God created: why then should it be supposed that there can be only one kind of human body?” (F.F. Bruce, p. 131). The early Christian Father Irenaeus (Bishop in Lyon, France in AD 170) said, “As the elders say, then also shall they which have been deemed worthy of the abode in heaven go there while others shall enjoy the delight of paradise, and others shall possess the brightness of the city; for in every place shall the Savior be seen, according as they shall be worthy to see him.”¹⁷

Sun Shining Over Earth and Moon by Kevin Gill. Image via Flickr.



1 Corinthians 15:42–43 “the resurrection of the dead...is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power” What a blessing; we sow corruption here on earth, in our weaknesses, but if we have repentant hearts, Jesus will raise us in incorruption and power.

1 Corinthians 15:44 “it is raised a spiritual body” Joseph Smith refers to “spiritual bodies” as “glorified bodies” (D&C 88:27).

1 Corinthians 15:45–49 “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit... The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven” Paul continues to point out parallels between Adam and Jesus. “Adam/man” was the first son of God made from the earth; Jesus is the second Son of God from heaven. We all have a “natural” or physical body from Adam, and likewise we can have the glorified image of the “Man from heaven.” The NEB translates the word “*earthy*” (v. 47) as “was made of the dust of the earth” (NEB).

1 Corinthians 15:50 “neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” Paul continues to address the Greek-Christians who are hung up on the physical resurrection, teaching that our bodies will be changed—but not entirely.

1 Corinthians 15:51–52 “we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” Paul expounds a mystery to them about the “twinkling” that will occur to those who die during the Millennium, “[Those] that liveth in righteousness shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye” (D&C 43:32; 63:51; 101:31). Paul taught the saints in Thessalonica “by the word of the Lord” about the fate of those of their number who died before the Second Coming: they would suffer no disadvantage, since at the Second Coming, the dead would rise with Christ. Now, Paul further teaches that the “dead in Christ” will rise with spiritual bodies, and those who are still alive at the Second Coming will not die, but will be changed—in split-second speed, they will receive spiritual/resurrected bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:53–58 “thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (BSB) This summarizes our most beautiful doctrine: Jesus Christ saved us eternally. The bigger picture of the eternities is humbling: even the sun and stars are not immortal, but we are! His call to “always excel in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” encourages us to work with God to accomplish His purposes on earth.

1 Corinthians 15:55 “O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?” Paul quotes Hosea 13:14 and provides an extra link to Isaiah 25:8.

1 CORINTHIANS 16

Question about Welfare Contribution for Jerusalem

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

The last question Paul addresses in this Epistle deals with a welfare contribution for the saints in Jerusalem. According to Acts, while Paul and Barnabas were in Syrian Antioch, they helped with an earlier welfare-relief collection for the Jerusalem saints struggling with a famine (Acts 11:30). Now again, at the end of Paul's third mission, he gathered a welfare collection for the poorer Jerusalem saints. He does not give much space to his request in this letter, but he returns to the same plea in his next Epistle to them (2 Corinthians 8 and 9).

1 Corinthians 16:1 “Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do” (NIV) It sounds as if the Corinthians knew of the welfare donation, or financial collection, from an earlier period through Paul, the Galatian Christians, or elsewhere (Galatians 2:10). Paul had given instructions to the Christians living in Galatia that he asked all to follow. They were all following the example of the Savior and earliest Christians who strove to have “no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34, NIV). “The result likely strengthened the bond between those at the Church’s center and those of the surrounding areas. . . . [And] from the Old Testament . . . nuanced the moral act at the center of being a covenant people.”¹⁸

He refers to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem as “God’s dedicated people” (AB), or “saints” (KJV). There is something significant in Paul’s use of “Lord’s people.” It acknowledged the “spiritual debt” owned by the gentile churches to the founding saints, as well as unified the Christians as they helped one another across nationalities.¹⁹ The donation may have been seen in a similar light to the Israelite temple tax—in that all helped.

1 Corinthians 16:2 “On the first day of the week, each of you should put aside some money at home in proportion to what you have earned” (NR) Every week, on Sundays, some freewill offering was put aside; a type of tithes/offerings were saved to be collected when Paul arrived. In the KJV, it is difficult to discern that the amount donated was determined individually according to “a proportion of his weekly income” (NIV), but the Greek is clear.²⁰ Donations were a tangible demonstration of their faith, which included the Jewish saints’ awareness of the gentiles’ commitment. The Christian Sabbath was celebrated on the first day of the week church wide, no longer with the Jewish seventh day (Genesis 2:2; Exodus 35:2).

1 Corinthians 16:3-4 “when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem” (NIV) Paul promised that the delegates who collected the donations from Corinth would receive his introductory letters for the powers that were in Jerusalem, or, alternatively, he hoped to travel with them to Jerusalem, which he did (Acts 24:17).

Paul's Travel Plans

1 Corinthians 16:5–9

1 Corinthians 16:5–9 “I will come to you . . . I do not want to just see you in passing, but I hope to spend some time without, if the Lord should permit it . . . for a great and effective door has opened for me” (NR)

Paul knew the adversary worked against the Kingdom of Heaven, but he also saw the Lord's hand open many doors. He expressed his wish to spend the next winter in Corinth (around AD 58). The book of Acts details how that happened (Acts 20:2–4, 16, 22). Paul began this letter from Ephesus and left after Pentecost (Acts 16:8). Paul repeats again that all of his plans depended on the Lord's will (1 Corinthians 4:19). So too, we plan, with the open mind and heart of “God willing.”

Specific News on Timothy and Apollos

1 Corinthians 16:10–12

1 Corinthians 16:10–11 “When Timothy comes . . . he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am” (NIV) Paul planned to send his beloved convert and adopted “son,” Timothy, to help the Corinthian saints (as he did previously in 1 Thessalonians 3:2; and again in Philippians 2:19). Paul tenderly asked the Corinthians to be kind to him so that he would not fear them and be free to join Paul again.²¹ This gives us a hint that Timothy's personality was not forceful, or that he was still young (1 Timothy 4:12).

1 Corinthians 16:12 “As touching *our* brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come . . .” Paul's tone sounds very friendly with Apollos—assuring us that the divisions caused by the Corinthian saints were not initiated by the missionaries. Paul had hoped that Apollos could also visit them, but at that time, he was too busy (or he did not want to). I presume Apollos' reticence was related back to the beginning of the letter regarding the factions within Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:12; 2:4–6; 4:6). We have no evidence (yet), that Apollos visited them.

Conclusion

1 Corinthians 16:13–20

1 Corinthians 16:13–14 “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love” (NIV) Paul summarizes his Epistle by exhorting the saints to be firm in their faith, and to apply charity to everything they do. The KJV, “*quit you like men,*” mans to “be courageous” (RSV) or “valiant” (NEB), and “brave” (JB).

1 Corinthians 16:15–16 “The household of Stephanas . . . have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, to submit to such people” (NIV) Paul mentions Stephanas and his household as those he had baptized personally (1 Corinthians 1:16). He was probably the first convert in Achaia (southern Greece), and had church meetings at his house. He points the Corinthians to examples who “really worked hard” (JB) and were exemplary to follow.

1 Corinthians 16:17–18 “For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such” Paul must have received another letter from the Corinthian saints via Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (Greek names often end in “us”). They must have brought good news.

1 Corinthians 16:19–20 “The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you” Paul’s fellow saints in and around Ephesus (modern Turkey) were referred to as “the churches in Asia.” The “churches” referred to groups that gathered in homes. Aquila and Priscilla used to live in Corinth. We read about these two dynamic examples of early Jewish-Christian converts from Rome, first as fellow tent makers (or leather workers) in Acts 18:2, 18–19, 26; Romans 16:13; and again in 2 Timothy 4:19. These early missionaries were joined by other close friends with Paul in sending greetings.

“Greet ye one another with an holy kiss” Paul includes this admonition in the ending of four Epistles (also, 2 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). It was offered as a “concrete manifestation of the unity and fellowship of Christians, no matter what their social status might be. . . . in time it became known as ”the kiss of peace.”²² It became a public sign of their faith.

Post Script

1 Corinthians 16:21–24

1 Corinthians 16:21 “The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand” Paul’s routine practice authenticated three other letters too (Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

1 Corinthians 16:22 “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” or “be under a divine curse. Come, O Lord!” (BSB) Paul’s ending with a curse is unique to this letter. It represents the Aramaic of Paul’s mother tongue. His last words are either a prayer for the resurrected Lord to make himself known or felt among the Corinthian saints, or an expression of hope that the Second Coming will speedily come to cleanse the earth.

Header Image: Image portraying the glory of the sun and the earth. Image by qimono via Pixabay.

ENDNOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:3–10; 9:5–2; 11:4–5; Jacob 4:11–13; Mosiah 3:16–18; 4:2–8; Alma 7:11–15; 34:5, 8–16; 36:17–19; 42:11–29; Helaman 5:9–12; 3 Nephi 11:11–14; Moroni 8:19–26.
2. Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, *Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 682.
3. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:215–216. The quote continued, “and that constitutes a prophet; and any man who says he is a teacher or preacher of righteousness, and denies the spirit of prophecy, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and by this key false teachers and imposters may be detected.”
4. *Ibid.*, 5:31–32.
5. For example in Smith, *History* from December 26, 1841: “Sunday evening Sermon on the purpose of the gift of tongues: The public meeting of the Saints was at my house this evening, and after Patriarch Hyrum Smith and Elder Brigham Young had spoken on the principles of faith, and the gifts of the Spirit, I read the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, also a part of the 14th chapter, and remarked that the gift of tongues was necessary in the Church; but that if Satan could not speak in tongues, he could not tempt a Dutchman, or any other nation . . .” (*Ibid.*, 4:486). Again another warning was given in a sermon to the women of Nauvoo on April 28, 1842: “If you have a matter to reveal, let it be in your own tongue; do not indulge too much in the exercise of the gift of tongues, or the devil will take advantage of the innocent and unwary. You may speak in tongues for your own comfort, but I lay this down for a rule, that if anything is taught by the gift of tongues, it is not to be received for doctrine.” The summary notes recorded by Eliza R. Snow added: “The Spirit of the Lord was poured out in a very powerful manner, never to be forgotten by those present on this interesting occasion” (*Ibid.*, 4:602, 603, 607).
6. *Ibid.*, 4:486; also 2:162; 3:379; 3:392.
7. Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright* (1856 Reprint, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 225. In the early 1840s, A Methodist minister, Cartwright, reported a meeting with Joseph Smith once in Springfield, Illinois. According to him, their conversation focused on the gifts of the Spirit: “On a certain occasion I fell in with Joe Smith . . . we soon fell into a free conversation on the subject of religion and Mormonism in particular. I found him to be a very illiterate and impudent desperado in morals, but, at the same time, he had a vast fund of low cunning. . . . He believed that among all the Churches in the world the Methodist was the nearest right, and that, as far as they went, they were right. But they had stopped short by not claiming the gift of tongues, of prophecy, and of miracles, and then quoted a batch of Scripture to prove his positions correct. Upon the whole, he did pretty well for clumsy Joe.” Their “high debate” ended when Joseph invited him to visit Nauvoo: “Now,” said he, “if you will go with me to Nauvoo, I will show you many living witnesses that will testify that they were, by the saints, cured of blindness, lameness, deafness, dumbness, and all the diseases that human flesh is heir to; and I will show you,” said he, “that we have the gift of tongues, and can speak in unknown languages, and that the saints can drink any deadly poison and it will not hurt them.” He closed by saying, “the idle stories you hear about us are nothing but sheer persecution” (*ibid.*, 226). Cartwright’s recollection of their conversation sounds exaggerated, but it unmistakably provides his impressions and perception.

8. Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ's Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: GP, 2015), 199–122. Much of my explanation here is adapted and slightly changed from my book, thanks to the recent feedback and edit from Michael Rhodes.
9. In addition to the dozen verses listed in the preceding paragraph, Paul explicitly supported female co-workers, including Chloe, Phebe, Lydia, Priscilla, the sisters in Philippi, and his yokefellow. If we add the positive examples in the book of Acts and the Gospels, the examples multiply. There are 30 named women who were positive disciples in the New Testament, as well as several unnamed.
10. Draper and Rhodes, *Corinthians*, 716.
11. Welch and Hall, *Charting the New Testament*, 2002, 15–15.
12. For more information on the Joseph Smith Translation see, Robert J. Matthews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible—A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University), 1975
13. Draper and Rhodes, *Corinthians*, 718.
14. Gordon D. Fee, *First Corinthians, 2nd Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 697–710.
15. *Mishnah*, *Ketuboth* 6.6; *Gittin* 9.10. Jewish women were not allowed to speak in their worship or synagogue, nor in any public gathering. In fact, a husband could divorce his wife for speaking to another man.
16. Dianne Bergant, Robert J. Karris, ed., *The Collegeville Bible Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 1129.1.
17. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 127.
18. Draper and Rhodes, *Corinthians*, 829.
19. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (London, England: Oliphants, 1971), 158.
20. Bruce, *Corinthians*, 158.
21. Timothy's mother and Grandmother, Unis and Lois, were Jewish, but his father was a Gentile. Paul figuratively adopted him as he helped his conversion. For more on Timothy see commentary on Acts 16:1–6.
22. Joseph Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians*, 629.