

1 Corinthians 15:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

Analysis

For since by man came death (ἐπειδὴ γὰρ δι' ἀνθρώπου θάνατος)—Paul introduces Adam-Christ typology, developed further in Romans 5:12-21. The preposition *dia* (διὰ, "through, by means of") indicates agency—death entered human experience through Adam's sin (Genesis 3:19, Romans 5:12). *Thanatos* (θάνατος, "death") encompasses physical death, spiritual separation from God, and eternal condemnation.

By man came also the resurrection of the dead (καὶ δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν)—The symmetry is deliberate: human agency brought death, human agency brings resurrection. But the parallel contains contrast—Adam brought death involuntarily through sin; Christ brought resurrection voluntarily through obedience. Both are *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος, "man, human"), genuinely human. Christ's true humanity is essential—only human can represent humanity.

Historical Context

Jewish theology understood death as consequence of Adam's sin (Genesis 3, Sirach 25:24, 4 Ezra 3:7). But Judaism lacked a clear Redeemer figure who would reverse Adamic curse through his own human obedience. Paul's innovation is identifying Jesus as the Last Adam (v. 45) whose resurrection inaugurates new humanity.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why must Christ be fully human to accomplish resurrection—why couldn't God simply decree it?
2. How does the parallelism between Adam and Christ demonstrate the biblical narrative's unity?
3. What does it mean that Christ reverses Adam's curse—how is resurrection connected to Genesis 3?

Interlinear Text

ἐπειδὴ	γὰρ	δι'	ἀνθρώπου	ὁ	θάνατος	καὶ	δι'
since	For	by	man	G3588	came death	came also	by
G1894	G1063	G1223	G444		G2288	G2532	G1223
ἀνθρώπου	ἀνάστασις	νεκρῶν					
man	the resurrection	of the dead					
G444	G386	G3498					

Additional Cross-References

John 11:25 (Resurrection): Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

1 Corinthians 15:22 (Parallel theme): For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Romans 6:23 (Sin): For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

