

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 (διά, "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 came death came also by
G1894 G1063 G1223 G444 G3588 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.

