

1 Corinthians 15:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits;
afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Analysis

But every man in his own order (ἕκαστος δὲ ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι)—The word *tagma* (τάγμα) is military terminology meaning "rank, division, order of battle." Paul envisions resurrection as sequential military campaign, not single event. God's redemptive plan unfolds in ordered stages, not chaos. The phrase **every man** (*hekastos*, ἕκαστος) indicates individual resurrection bodies—each person will be raised, not absorbed into cosmic consciousness.

Christ the firstfruits (ἀπαρχὴ Χριστός)—Christ's resurrection (AD 30) is stage one, the *aparchē* guaranteeing the harvest. **Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming** (ἔπειτα οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ)—Stage two is the resurrection of believers at Christ's *parousia* (παρουσία, "coming, presence, arrival"). This is the rapture/resurrection event of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. The phrase *hoi tou Christou* ("those of Christ") indicates possession—believers belong to Christ through faith.

Historical Context

Jewish apocalyptic expected a single resurrection at history's end. Paul introduces a two-stage (or possibly three-stage, if v. 24 implies a final judgment resurrection) program: Christ's resurrection as firstfruits, believers' resurrection at the *parousia*, then the end. This 'already/not yet' eschatology was revolutionary.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does the military imagery of 'order' and 'rank' indicate about God's sovereignty over history?
2. How does the sequence of resurrections demonstrate God's ordered plan rather than arbitrary timing?
3. What is the significance of belonging to Christ ('those of Christ') for participating in resurrection?

Interlinear Text

ἕκαστος	δὲ	ἐν	τῇ	ἰδίῳ	τάγματι·	ἀπαρχὴ
every man	But	at	they that are	his own	order	the firstfruits
G1538	G1161	G1722	G3588	G2398	G5001	G536
Χριστοῦ	ἔπειτα	τῇ	Χριστοῦ	ἐν	τῇ	
Christ	afterward	they that are	Christ	at	they that are	
G5547	G1899	G3588	G5547	G1722	G3588	
παρουσία	αὐτοῦ					
coming	his					
G3952	G846					

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:29 (References Christ): And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Isaiah 26:19 (Parallel theme): Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:52 (Parallel theme): In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:20 (References Christ): But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

2 Corinthians 10:7 (References Christ): Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 (References Christ): For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

Galatians 5:24 (References Christ): And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.