In verse 23 Paul emphatically links the eschatological resurrection to Jesus’ parousia: those of Christ will be raised at his second coming. Paul then continues by giving a succinct scenario of the end of time of which the defeat of death (v. 26) is the climax. This eschatological scenario will be examined first (section a). Subsequently, Paul’s ideas about the defeat of death will be analysed (section b).

a. Paul’s scenario of the last events

(1) By connecting the eschatological resurrection to Jesus’ future coming Paul places the Christians’ resurrection in an eschatological framework. His reason for doing this is clear: he wants to stress that the resurrection is an event which will take place in the future. He thereby argues against the Corinthian view that spiritual immortality is to be received directly after death. Within the eschatological framework of the events to come, the defeat of death forms the climax. The mention of the defeat of death also fits Paul’s attack on the Corinthian view on life after death. Death, which entered the world at the time of Adam, will not be defeated before the end of time. Thus, Paul’s presentation of the events at the end of time (vv. 23-28), particularly his linking of the eschatological resurrection to Jesus’ parousia and his mention of the defeat of death, forms a most relevant part of his argumentation.

(2) Jesus’ final appearance marks the end of time. Paul simply calls it ‘the end’ (τὸ τέλος). The announcement of ‘the end’ (v. 24a) is followed by two dependent clauses, both beginning with διὰ (vv. 24b and c), which describe what will happen at ‘the end’: Jesus will hand over the kingdom to God and destroy every rule, authority, and power. Because of the parallelism between the two clauses (vv. 24b and c) Jesus must be the subject in both the first and the second clause. The fact that Jesus is the subject in the first clause (v. 24b) is absolutely

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1 See chapter I, p. 38.
III. THE RESURRECTION AND JESUS’ PAROUSIA

clear. God is the one to whom the kingdom is handed over and this can only be done by Jesus, as is also stated in verse 28b. The notion that Jesus is also the subject of καταργήσω in verse 24c has been disputed by various scholars. They argue that the one who destroys every rule, authority, and power (v. 24c) cannot be Jesus due to the fact that the following verses (25b and 27) describe how God subjects all enemies under Jesus’ feet. Therefore, God must be the subject of καταργήσω in verse 24c, too. Others have turned the argument around. If Jesus is the subject in verse 24c on the basis of the fact that he is already the subject in verse 24b, then he must also be the subject in verses 25b and 27, where the subjection of the enemies is described with the help of the citations from the Psalms. It is not God who subjects the enemies under Jesus’ feet, they argue, but Jesus who subjects them under his own feet.

However, the idea that Jesus destroys every rule, authority, and power (v. 24c) is not necessarily in discord with the idea that God places the enemies under Jesus’ feet (vv. 25b and 27). Paul certainly regards God as the subject of the subjection of the enemies under Jesus’ feet (vv. 25b, 27). This can be deduced from verse 28. Thus, there is a change of subjects, from Jesus to God, between verses 25a (δεί βασιλεύειν) and 25b (θη), where Paul quotes or refers to Ps. 110 (109):1. The idea, expressed with the help of the quotations from the


4 In verse 28 it is said that in the end the Son will subject himself to ‘the one who put all things in subjection under him.’ The ‘one who put all things in subjection’ (τοῦ ὑποτάξαντος) can only be God. Since God is the subject in verse 28, he must also be the subject of the same action described in verses 27 (ὑπέταξεν, ὑποτάξαντος) and 25b (θη). For many more arguments to consider God as the subject in verses 25b and 27, see U. Heil, ‘Interpretation’, pp. 29-35.

5 The correspondence between verse 24a (παραδίδω τὴν βασιλείαν) and verse 25a (δεί βασιλεύειν) suggests that Jesus is the subject in verse 25a.

6 If one argues that God is the subject of verse 24c, as Heil does, there would be a double change of subjects in verses 24 and 25: παραδίδω: Jesus (24b), καταργήσω: God (24c), δεί αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν: Jesus (25a), and θη: God (25b). This is needlessly complicated. One must take into account a change of subjects somewhere between 24b (παραδίδω, Jesus) and 25b (θη, God). A change at the beginning of the quotation (v. 25b) is the most simple and plausible solution.