

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-7; 12-22 (NLT)

"I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.

But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life."

In this letter, written by the Apostle Paul about 22-25 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, he identified the essential belief that was at the heart of the Christian message. This core belief; what Paul describes as "most important" is that Jesus Christ (Jesus the Messiah) died "for our sins", was buried, and was raised from the dead on the third day. All of this happened "according to the scriptures" meaning Jesus' death for our sins, followed by his burial and resurrection was predicted in the Old Testament.

Paul was addressing Christians who had begun to question or outright deny that there is a future resurrection for Christians who have died. He began by asserting what none of them doubted: Jesus Christ (the Messiah) died and rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures. He reminded them of the reality of Jesus' resurrection, established beyond doubt by the over 500 witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. Paul's reminder of the large number of witnesses to Jesus' resurrection was not an attempt to prove or persuade, but to establish where he and his audience were in agreement; to focus on the common belief they

shared that Jesus had been resurrected following His death and burial. His purpose in this letter was to persuade them that Jesus resurrection secured the resurrection of those who had been united with Him through faith.

Here is Paul's line of argumentation:

IF...there is no resurrection for those who belong to Christ...

THEN...Christ has not been raised.

IF... Christ has not been raised...

THEN...Our sins have not been forgiven, our faith is a sham, our preaching is a lie and a waste of time.

BUT...Christ has been raised....

And He has been raised as the first of many to follow. Paul was arguing that the resurrection of those who belong to Jesus – the literal term is “in Christ” - to eternal life is the necessary consequence of Jesus resurrection to eternal life. It is so much so, that to deny the future resurrection of believers is to deny Jesus resurrection!

The resurrection of Jesus is the central claim upon which Christianity stands or falls as a religion to be believed and followed. Paul confronted the issue head-on. He didn't dance around it. He admitted clearly that whether or not the good news which Jesus preached is real news - not fake news - depends on the question of the historical validity of the resurrection.

Paul's audience might not have needed to be persuaded that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead because, after all, so many of their peers that were still alive encountered him, but we don't have the opportunity to hear directly from scores of living witnesses since we are living 2,000 years after Jesus resurrection. It is much easier to doubt the veracity of an event that happened so long ago. So before I share with you the difference that the resurrection makes for us, I want to begin by answering the question, “Why should we believe the resurrection is an historical fact rather than a fabricated myth?” First understand that the resurrection cannot be proven.

Christianity does require a step of faith, but it does not require a leap of faith!

The reality of the resurrection provides the best explanation for the historical realities that surround its occurrence as well as the historical realities that sprang from it. Yes, I did just use the term historical realities. Both Christian and non-Christian historical scholars agree that we have much reliable

historical information about Jesus and the birth of the Christian movement. They differ as to the degree of historical reliability one can ascribe to the NT literature. Even Bart Ehrman, the most celebrated contemporary scholar whose writings attack the historical reliability of the resurrection, wrote: *"It is a historical fact that some of Jesus' followers came to believe that he had been raised from the dead soon after his execution. We know some of these believers by name; one of them, the apostle Paul, claims quite plainly to have seen Jesus alive after his death."* *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, (Third Edition New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 276.

1. The resurrection narratives in the gospels do not bear the marks of a fabricated story. There is little plausibility for this assertion. The different details in the accounts of the Gospel writers does not undermine their credibility as genuine historical writings. The minor discrepancies – which, by the way do not reveal contradictions between the gospel writers, only the contrasting perspectives of the writers - actually serve as evidence that the gospel writers were not colluding to fabricate a story. Evidence of an orchestrated attempt by multiple persons to fabricate a story is a conspicuous harmonizing of the facts. Another factor that bolsters the historical credibility of the resurrection narratives in the gospels is the consistent recording that the first witnesses of the resurrection were women. The testimony of women did not carry much weight in Jesus' day. Women were rarely allowed to provide testimony in a court of law. If the gospel writers were trying to fabricate a story to persuade their audience that the resurrection were true they would never have recorded women as the first witnesses. That would undermine, not add credibility, to the assertion. If they were attempting to create a legendary Jesus we would expect the authors to have depicted him much differently than they did. We ought to expect them describe him with some superhuman qualities and a glorious appearance, but instead he looks rather ordinary. I would also expect the gospel authors to portray themselves in a better light, but they honestly depict themselves as people who were both slow to understand and believe.

The church did not give birth to a myth of the resurrected Christ, the reality of the resurrected Christ gave birth to the church.

2. The Empty Tomb –For the sake of time, I will just say that all explanations that attribute the empty tomb to other factors than Jesus left on his own have been shown to be implausible. Listen to these words of Gary Habermas:

“But it is precisely since Jesus' grave was located nearby that we have a serious problem if it was anything but empty. Unless Jesus' tomb was unoccupied, the early Christian preaching would have been disproved on the spot. How could it be preached that Jesus had been raised from the dead if that message were starkly confronted by a rotting body? Exposing the body would kill the message and be an easy disproof of Christianity before it even gained momentum. Thus, Jerusalem is the last place for the early Christian teachings to gain a foothold unless Jesus' grave was empty. A Sunday walk to the tomb could have settled the matter one way or another.”

3. The Encounters between Jesus and His disciples.

Some people speak about the appearances of Jesus, but they were more than appearances, they were encounters. They ate with him, touched him, spoke with him. Critics suggest they were either visions, dreams or hallucinations. That might be plausible if these were all individual encounters, but Jesus met with multiple people at a time. People don't dream or hallucinate together!! NT Wright points out that they could have believed Jesus appeared to them in a vision, but they wouldn't have confused that with the resurrection. Paul wrote that Jesus appeared to 500 individuals, most of whom were still living, as a means of stating the undeniable reality of the resurrection.

4. The Transformed lives of the Witnesses

The French mathematician Blaise Pascal said, "I believe those witnesses who get their throats cut." It is very difficult to account for the willingness of the disciples to hold to their belief in the resurrection of Jesus even at the cost of their lives. The more plausible explanation is that they were convinced that Jesus rose again and compelled by it to no longer fear death themselves. Only a real encounter with the risen Jesus can account for the dramatic change in the countenance and courage of the disciples. Before they encountered the risen Christ following Jesus arrest and crucifixion were in despair and fear. Peter - who prior to Jesus resurrection was too afraid to admit that he even knew Jesus - telling the authorities who were threatening him to stop preaching, "We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard."

5. The immediate and dramatic growth of Christianity.

The disciples of Jesus were proclaiming the resurrection in and around Jerusalem in a span of weeks after the resurrection, causing a stir and angering the Jewish leaders. They could have easily shut the disciples up by

producing the body or pointing to the tomb that was still sealed. People with political power might be in a position to deceive the people by forcibly shutting down any opposition, but the disciples were a persecuted minority devoid of political power or military might. Adrian Warnock in his book, *Raised with Christ* (pg. 47) writes, "Within a couple of centuries this novel faith had conquered the then known world without a sword being drawn."

Listen carefully to this video as Tom Wright very concisely sums the reason for belief in the resurrection.

PLAY VIDEO – [Historical Resurrection of Christ](#)

Here are links to a couple of videos for those of you who want to dig deeper into the reasons to believe in the resurrection.

[The Resurrection Argument by Gary Habermas](#)

[Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead by NT Wright](#)

Please understand: The Christian faith is a reasonable faith. It requires faith in addition to reason but it does not require you to abandon reason. It requires a step of faith, not a leap of faith!!

Let's go back to Paul's answer: "But Christ has been raised!" The resurrection changes everything.

Paul explained the significance of the resurrection for us in negative terms: If Christ is still dead...

1. The hope of forgiveness died too. We are still in our sins. Jesus did not achieve a victory over sin!
2. The hope of an eternal future died. Jesus did not defeat death!
3. The hope of new life in the present, empowered by the presence of God's Spirit in our lives is a sham.

The crucifixion is no benefit w/o the resurrection.

Paul's explanation is that death came through Adam but resurrection comes through Christ. He wrote, "Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life."

That is explained in Romans 5:12-17.

Romans 5:12 "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. **Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.**"

Vs. 17 *"For the sin* of this one man, Adam, *caused death* to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and *his gift of righteousness*, for all who receive it will live in *triumph over sin and death* through this one man, Jesus Christ."

When Paul wrote about what was most important; that which was essential to the good news of the Christian faith he began with this phrase: *"Christ died for our sins."* Here is the point: Death is the result of sin, so when Jesus defeated sin *for us*, he subsequently and consequentially defeated death *for us!* Romans 4:25 puts it this way, *"He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God."*

BUT...CHRIST...HAS...RISEN, and this changes everything!! Jesus' resurrection vindicated Him as the One with the power and authority to forgive us, to justify us before the Father, and to grant us eternal life! Because Christ has risen we not only have eternal life in the future but a new abundant life in the present.

"And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives." - Romans 6:4

"I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms."

- Ephesians 1:19

You can reject the resurrection but you can't ignore the resurrection. The evidence for it compels our attention. Belief compels our devotion. There is something about Jesus that compels me to believe; that compels me to follow; that compels me to worship.

The resurrection changes everything!!

If Jesus fulfilled his promise to rise again, I can trust all His other promises.

If Jesus rose again, having defeated death, then I will rise again too, because I am in Christ.

If Jesus rose again, having overcome the power of sin, then I have the hope of overcoming sin.

In Romans 6 we read, *"We are sure of this, because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again"*.

Jesus rose again in a glorified body, an incorruptible and imperishable body. And he promises to raise us up in the same manner!

That is why late on in 1 Corinthians Paul tells us that we will rise again in glorified, incorruptible and imperishable bodies.
Jesus resurrection means no more sin and death so it also means no more suffering and no more sickness.
If there is no more sin, sickness, suffering or death, than it means I have nothing to fear!

The resurrection of Jesus means we don't have to be "in Adam" anymore. I don't belong to Adam anymore. By faith I belong to Christ. I am "IN CHRIST".
And when we are in Christ...

Our guilt is gone... because **In him** we have become the righteousness of God.
In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins

Rejection is no longer an issue for us... because "We have been chosen **in him**"

We have a bright future... because **In him** we have obtained an inheritance

We have a glorious present...because **In him**, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

We have a beautiful family....because **In him** you and I are being built together into a dwelling place of God.