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The Question of Resurrection; 1 Cor 15:12-22

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Introduction – The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the fulcrum point of historic, orthodox, biblical Christianity. Everything we believe about God, man, sin, Christ, salvation, and eternity truly hangs on the legitimacy and reality that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day as recorded in the Scripture.

That's really the point that Paul is making in 1 Cor 15. Either there is the resurrection of Christ or there is not. If there is no actual, literal, bodily resurrection of Christ everything about our faith comes crashing to the ground. However, if there is an actual, literal, bodily resurrection of Christ, everything concerning our faith is upheld and reassured and made certain. Resurrection means everything to the believer.

That is why Easter is the highest day on the Christian calendar. It means everything to us.

- I. The Devastating Consequences of No Resurrection
 - a. If Christ has not been raised, Christian ministry is meaningless.
 - i. Preaching is futile, Bibles are just another religious book of myths, and churches are nothing more than another social group. There's no need to evangelize if there's no way to have life beyond death. There's no need for missions if every religion or no religion has the same ending. There's no Easter, there's no Lord's Day if there is no resurrection.
 - b. If Christ has not been raised, Christian living is meaningless.
 - i. If there is no way to attain life after death, then there is no reason to embrace and live out the faith. If life is not in Christ, then there is no reason to embrace and live for Christ. The only thing we are left with is to live however we wish in the here and now because we have no hope for anything in the hereafter.
 - c. If Christ has not been raised, our message is false and the Bible is not trustworthy.

- i. We don't really know God and we can't trust the Bible. We know Christ has been raised because we read it in the Bible. But if the Bible is wrong on that point, how would we know the Bible is accurate on any point?
 - ii. A resurrection-less Christianity is a godless Christianity and a Bible-less Christianity, which is no Christianity at all.
 - d. If Christ has not been raised, there is no answer for sin.
 - i. The resurrection of Christ authenticates and proves the work of Christ is sufficient and complete. The Father has been pleased by the sacrifice of His Son. Redemption has been accomplished. Salvation is complete.
 - ii. But if Christ has not been raised, then there is no satisfactory payment for sin. There is no redemption. The ransom has not been paid. The debt of sin remains on our record.
 - e. If Christ has not been raised, there is no hope for eternity.
 - i. If the death of Christ has not achieved the Father's approval, as attested in the resurrection, then there is no possible reconciliation with God.
 - ii. There is no life beyond death, there is only death beyond death.
 - iii. If the resurrection vanishes, hope vanishes along with it. Life is meaningless. Only judgment and condemnation await. Heaven is sealed shut. There is no reunion of saints and loved ones. The presence of God is forever blocked. The words eternal life have no meaning.
 - f. If there is no resurrection of Christ, the consequences are utterly devastating. But praise be to God, Christ has been raised!

II. The Reality of the Resurrection

- a. The opening verses of ch15 are Paul's defense of the actual, literal, bodily resurrection of Christ.
 - i. First, the risen Christ appeared to Peter.
 - ii. Second, He appeared to the disciples.
 - iii. Third, He appeared to more than 500 believers at one time.
 - iv. Fourth, He appeared to James.
 - v. Fifth, He appeared to the other apostles.

- vi. Sixth, and finally, Paul, reflecting on his conversion, says the risen Lord appeared to him
- b. In other words, Paul's affirmation and confirmation of the resurrection of Christ rests on the testimony of over 500 eye witnesses!
 - i. One eye-witness might be questionable. Two or more might be a conspiracy theory. If it were just His disciples, you might could argue that they are just trying to save face.
 - ii. But 500 eye-witnesses removes any doubt!
 - iii. And then there is Paul. Unlikely Paul. If anyone would deny and refute the resurrection of Jesus, it was Paul. His name used to be Saul, and he hated Jesus and every one of Jesus' disciples. He didn't believe their testimony. He didn't believe in the resurrection. And then Jesus met him on the Damascus road, the living Jesus spoke to him, and everything changed. He couldn't deny it anymore. Jesus was alive!
- c. Don't dismiss eye-witness accounts too quickly. If the disciples were lying and didn't really see the risen Lord, then every one of them were tortured, punished, and died for something they all knew to be a lie. Not a single one of them reversed his testimony.
- d. It's very difficult to dispute the claim of 500 witnesses. You just need two to establish fact in court. How is it not a fact when 500 say so? Some have suggested they all had a hallucination. It's impossible for 500 people to have the same hallucination at the same time. What is they all were lying? Then even in the midst of great persecution, they held on to what was nothing more than a lie.
- e. People don't die for lies; they die for truth.
- f. But then there's Paul. His life was transformed to such a degree that the persecutor of Christians became a persecuted Christian. Saul became Paul. The despiser of Jesus became the lover of Jesus. What brought about all this change? He saw the risen Lord!
- g. And that's why Paul declares with unflinching confidence in v20 – But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.

- III. How the Resurrection is the Promise of Our Resurrection
- a. Now if that's true – if the resurrection of Christ is an actual, historical fact – everything lost without a resurrection is gained with a resurrection!
 - i. Christian ministry means something, for life and eternity.
 - ii. Christian living means something, for life and eternity.
 - iii. The Bible is trustworthy, and we can know God.
 - iv. There is an answer for our sin.
 - v. The hope of eternal life has been won for us.
 - vi. And more!
 - b. If Christ has been raised, and we are in Christ, we shall be raised too.
 - i. If life is in Christ, proven by His resurrection, then if we are in Christ, we have life in Him!
 - c. We are born in Adam. Adam sinned and brought death. So being in Adam, we sin and we die, physically and spiritually and eternally.
 - d. But Christ came, and He did not sin. He was not guilty. He had no record of debt against Him. Death had no power or claim or authority over Him.
 - e. So just as Adam brings death, Christ brings life!

Conclusion – And so it is on Easter Sunday, we look back in time to the actual, historical, literal, bodily resurrection of Christ, and because Christ has been raised, we know with absolute certainty that the Bible is true and forgiveness and life and salvation are in Christ – for He has been raised.

But we also look forward in time to the coming day of the Lord. When He returns to destroy every ruler and authority against Him and deliver the everlasting kingdom over to the Father – He will bring those who belong to Him, with Him.

His resurrection in history guarantees our resurrection in the future!