

Subject: *The Resurrection of Christ and Christians – Part 2*

Scripture: *1 Corinthians 15:12-20*

One of the hardest things in life is the reality of death. As we go through life we come to grips with it. Looking back, some of the first thoughts I had about death came from visits to my grandparents and uncle in Johnson City. My uncle Jerry was a funeral director and later owner of the funeral home. Most of the time we visited he was at work and I can remember my grandmother saying, “Jerry’s got a body,” which meant he is serving a family. My first real hard encounter with death came when I was at Marine boot camp in Quantico in 1974 and got a call from the Red Cross notifying me that my grandmother in Bristol had died of a heart attack. It hit me really hard because we were really close. Then through years as a pastor I’ve been around death and bereavement a lot. I can remember the first time I rode in a hearse with a funeral director and how strange that felt. Death makes us feel uncomfortable, makes us sad, sometimes shocks us, and sometimes relieves us.

Just think how awful if there was no hope after death, no life after death, no comfort when death comes.

That’s why the resurrection of Christ is so important and this chapter in God’s Word is so precious to us. Paul begins this great chapter reminding us of the gospel (good news) that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. That is the best news. Paul speaks of our confidence in the gospel (vs. 1-2), the content of the gospel (vs. 3-4), and the confirmation of the gospel (vs. 5-11). In verses 12-20, he reminds us about the importance of Christ’s resurrection. If Christ didn’t rise from the dead, nothing else really matters. But if Christ did rise from the dead, nothing else but that really matters. Truth matters. Biblical truth really matters.

1. Paul raised an alarming concern (vs. 12)

Some people in the church at Corinth were confused. Obviously they were saved. He calls them brethren (vs. 1) and refers to their salvation (vs. 2), so they believed that Christ rose from the dead, but apparently they doubted whether Christians would rise from the dead. Why would people doubt or deny the resurrection?

False ideas about life after death

A. The false idea of Greek philosophy (dualism)

This idea can be traced back to Plato. It taught that everything spiritual was good and everything physical was basically evil. This philosophy taught that the body was like the prison house of the soul and at death the soul was liberated. It held to the immortality of the soul, but opposed the immortality of the body in any form. Paul preached the resurrection of Christ to some philosophers in Athens who probably held this view because they began to sneer and mock what he taught.

Acts 17:32 *And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.*

B. The false idea of Jewish teaching (Sadducees)

The Sadducees accepted only the first five books of the Bible as Holy Scripture, and so rejected any kind of resurrection. The word resurrection is not found in the Old Testament, but it is taught in Job 19:25; Psalms 17:15, Ezekiel 37:1-14, and Daniel 12:2.

Acts 23:8 *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.*

C. The false idea of annihilation

This is the view of materialism. Nothing human survives after death. Death is final.

D. The false idea of reincarnation

This view teaches that when a person dies, the person is recycled from one form to another. He may return in another life form.

2. Paul stated a logical conclusion (vs. 13)

If there is no resurrection (of anyone from the dead), then the obvious conclusion is that Jesus did not rise again. The resurrection of Christ is at the heart of the gospel and the Christian faith. Paul wants them to consider the impact of denying the resurrection.

3. Paul revealed the terrible consequences (vs. 14-19)

In a very logical and reasonable way, Paul shows the importance of Christ's resurrection. Apparently, there were some within the Corinthian community who questioned if a resurrection was possible at all (see vs.12). Notice the repeated use of the word "if" (vs.12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19). There are six terrible consequences if Jesus did not rise from the dead:

Terrible consequences if Christ did not rise from the dead

A. If Christ is not risen, preaching is pointless (vs.14)

Some people think preaching is pointless anyway, but we know that preaching of the gospel is God's ordained method of saving sinners from their sins. The power is not in the preacher, but in the truth of the message. If there is no resurrection, there is no gospel. And if there is no gospel, there is no power to save souls and changes lives (Rom. 1:16). If Christ is not risen, preaching would be a total waste of time.

B. If Christ is not risen, faith is foolish (vs.14)

Faith is no better than its object. The word "vain" means empty, to no purpose. Faith in a dead person is worthless. If Christ did not rise, then the hall of the faithful in Hebrews 11 would be called the hall of the foolish. They would have served for God in vain, and they would have been mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, afflicted and martyred all in vain. All believers would have put their faith in Christ for nothing, lived for nothing, and died for nothing.

C. If Christ is not risen, the disciples are deceivers (vs.15)

Paul and others claimed to be witnesses of Christ after He rose from the dead. If He didn't rise, then they lied. They were not just mistaken, but they willfully lied. That discredits everything else they said or wrote. That means the New Testament is worthless. The Scripture stands or

falls with the resurrection of Christ. The disciples would have testified and preached for something that caused great suffering and even death. A person may live for a lie, but they won't die for a lie.

D. If Christ is not risen, Christians are condemned in sin (vs.17)

Believers would be no better off than unbelievers. Christians would still be in their sins, just like the unbelievers to whom Jesus spoke in *John 8:21*, "you will die in your sins." The reason for trusting Christ as Savior is for forgiveness of sins. We need to be saved, and that is the very reason why Jesus came.

Matthew 1:21 *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Luke 19:10 *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

1 Timothy 1:15 *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

E. If Christ is not risen, dead believers are doomed (vs.18)

Fallen asleep refers to the body. If Christ did not rise, every believer would be dead and without hope. We would write across the tombstone of every Christian: perished. Without the resurrection every person, believer or unbeliever, would go into torment and forever separated from God.

F. If Christ is not risen, God's people are to be pitied (vs.19)

If Christ is still in the tomb, He can't do anything for us. The Christian life would be a bad joke, a mockery and a tragedy. Believers should be pitied because they have lived all their lives looking and waiting for heaven and a better world. If Christ is not risen, then the Christian life is lifeless, meaningless, and hopeless. Someone said, "we would deserve the compassion reserved for fools."

The turning point in Paul's powerful argument is verse 20 (but now). Because Christ has risen all of these negative possibilities are turned into positive realities. Christ has risen from the dead and is the first fruits of believers who have already died. His resurrection is the promise and guarantee that all believers will be raised from the dead. Christ is the first of many more.

Through the centuries believers gathered for worship and confessed their faith in Jesus as their risen Lord. The minister said: "Christ is risen" and the people answered: "He is risen indeed." Let's close our time of worship making that confession of faith from our hearts.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND CHRISTIANS – PART 2

Importance of Christ's Resurrection

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Terrible consequences if Christ did not rise from the dead

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