

He is Risen Indeed! (1 Corinthians 15)

He is risen! Thank you for that ministry of music to glorify Christ and let's continue our worship in the Word of our risen King. Turn to 1 Corinthians 15 and if you're using the pew Bible on the seat in front of you, you'll find it on **p. 624**. If you don't have one, take it.

14 years ago, March 2001, I heard John Piper preaching in person, and he gave an illustration that still stands out to me to this day. It was 2 weeks after Richard Wurmbrand died, of Voice of Martyrs: 'He told the story...about a Cistercian monk, that's the order in the Catholic Church that it's always quiet. They don't talk to each other and the radio interviewer ... asked this Abbot of this Cistercian monastery, "what if it were for you to realize that at the end of your life atheism is true and that there is no God? Tell me what if it were true?" [In other words what if there's no resurrection, this life is all there is?] The Abbot replied "holiness, silence and sacrifice are beautiful in themselves even without the promise of reward. I still will have used my life well." Paul would have given the exact opposite answer because he did give the exact opposite answer.'¹

1 Cor 15:14 says '*if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is **in vain** and your faith is **in vain*** [or your translation may say it's '**empty**' or '**useless**,' there's **no value** if the resurrection isn't true] ...¹⁷ *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is **futile*** ...
...¹⁹ *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be **pitied*** [fools, they'd pity us fools, as Mr. T used to say]

We of all people would be the most pitiable fools of all if our hope in Christ is in this life only, if it's not true Christ is raised and all in Christ will be raised after this life. If the resurrection isn't a fact, if Jesus rising from the dead didn't really happen, or if this life is all there is and there's no resurrection and afterlife for us, living a life of faith in Christ isn't profitable, it's futile. Being a Christian if it's not true, that's not valuable, that's vain and of no use, it's useless! Paul doesn't say 'even if Christianity is false, living a life like this would still be worth it,' he says 'it would be worthless, a waste.' It doesn't say it would still be a joy, it says we would be a joke, a sad one, all a futile pitiable pitiful laughable miserable bunch of losers.

²⁰ *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits ...* That's a word from the OT Scriptures. Look at v. 4 where Scripture is the first line of evidence. v. 4 says Jesus died and '*was buried, he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scripture*' (v. 4)

It's a fact that Christ has been raised (v. 20), the first reason is v. 4
'...he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scripture'

First Point: OT Scripture Proves He is Risen Indeed

What Scripture from the OT has to do with rising on the 3rd day? You could study later Hosea's cryptic prophecy '*On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live...*' (6:2). There the 'us' being raised is believing Israel, but Hosea also seems to present Jesus as true Israel, embodying faithful Israel as He represents them and is raised for them on the third day, all in Him will also rise with Him.

But there's another OT Scripture in the Law, that uses the word in v. 20 '*firstfruits*' that may be especially in Paul's mind by using the term '*firstfruits*.' Leviticus, probably your favorite book, or maybe not, Leviticus 23 talks about the firstfruits of the harvest. The first part of their harvest crop was to be offered to the Lord. It would be cut down before the Sabbath and brought before the Lord and the day after the Sabbath, *on the 3rd day* the priest stands before God with the firstfruit and its offering to the Lord for a pleasing aroma. It all started a countdown to a feast 50 days later called Pentecost.

Colossians 2 tells us the OT feasts and festival days like that were all shadows that pointed to the reality of Christ to come. Firstfruits in particular foreshadowed Christ as the first one of a great harvest to rise. He was cut down in death the day before the Sabbath and on the day after the Sabbath, on the third day Jesus stood as Priest before God, His offering accepted and pleasing so we can be too. It was on Pentecost, 50 days later, that Peter argues from the OT that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), quoting also from Psalm 16 and 110.

In Lk 24 the resurrected Christ met with His disciples and it says: *'he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations...[He said] everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* Jesus proves His resurrection on the third day from the OT Scriptures, the Law (like Lev 30) and the prophets (like Hosea) and the Psalms (like the ones Peter quoted).

The proof is in the Scriptures, and Jesus said the point is that others can also be raised to life in the end if they repent of their sins and receive forgiveness through the name of Christ alone. It is written.

Peter heard Jesus say that in Lk 24. On the day of Pentecost Peter began to obey what was written by proclaiming forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus to people from all nations who would repent. And His proof was the Scriptures, most notably he quoted Psalm 16, which prophesied of Messiah the body of the Holy One would not undergo decay. We know from the story of Lazarus in John 10 Jews knew that by the 4th day after death bodies corrupt and decay (in the old KJV Martha says about Lazarus *'he hath been dead four days...by this time he stinketh'*). But Peter quotes Ps 16 in Acts 2 of the resurrection of Jesus to prove Jesus is the Holy One who wasn't allowed to undergo decay. David wrote of one greater than himself

Jesus rose the 3rd day and did not decay. Listen to Peter in Acts 2: *God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: '...you will not abandon ... to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.'...Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But...seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life*

...

Exhibit A of Christ's resurrection: OT Scripture Proves He is Risen Indeed. There's a 2nd exhibit, or 2nd line of evidence Paul argues as a lawyer a 2nd point: **NT Witnesses Prove He is Risen Indeed**

In Mt 28:7 an angel says to the women *'tell His disciples that **He is risen ... indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him'*** (NKJV). In Lk 24 Jesus made an undercover appearance to 2 men on the road to Emmaus and when they realized they had been talking with the risen Lord they later said to the other apostles *'**the Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!**'* (v. 34)

Look at 1 Cor 15:4 where it moves from the Scriptures to this: He was buried and raised on the 3rd day according to the OT Scripture and v. 5 says then *'he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.'* The name Cephas was Jewish-Aramaic for Simon Peter. Jesus appeared to the apostles and their witness was written down in Peter's letters, and the gospels like John and Matthew, v. 7 mentions James who wrote the NT book of James, and v. 8 mentions Paul, writing this. Their witness of His resurrection is recorded in the NT writings as proof of what happened, the gospel of Luke begins with that thrust, and the last book of the NT, Revelation, completes their testimony

If you look at v. 6 it says the resurrected Christ appeared to more than 500 Christians at one time, many of whom were still alive as Paul wrote, and could verify the resurrection not just as witnesses, but as eyewitnesses who put their lives on the line to testify of this. As one poet said if there's 'no resurrection, Christianity would have never spread. The disciples weren't stupid guys who would ruin their lives and choose to die for what they knew was a lie. That would be beyond ridiculous, the issue is a risen man seen by 500 eyewitnesses. Imagine 500 people in a court of law, each of them taking the stand, reporting what they saw. If their stories lined up and made sense, the evidence would have to leave you convinced'²

So not only OT Scripture, NT Witnesses Prove He is Risen Indeed.

3rd line of argument: **Changed Lives Prove Jesus is Still Alive**

In v. 8, the resurrected Lord appeared to Paul and changed his life. He transformed Paul, persecutor and legalist, to preacher of grace. Paul describes that experience in v. 8 as being one untimely born, he was born again at that time later than the rest of the apostles. He was last and he considered himself least in v. 9 because of his sin, but he says in v. 10 God's living grace is what transformed his life to be a new person, v. 10: *But by the grace of God, I am what I am* ...2 Cor 5:17 says everyone in Christ is a new creation, new person. Are you? Are old things passing away, new things coming in you?

Peter at Pentecost preached the Lord is risen and they asked 'what shall we do?' He said 'repent, be baptized...' Have you, my friend? 1 Cor 15 begins by saying this is the good news, the gospel, and v. 2 says we're saved if we hold fast to it, but the end of the v. 2 says it's possible to believe in vain. It's possible to know it in your head but for that to be a vain empty belief that's not faith in your heart. The NT call isn't intellectual assenting, it's repenting and obeying in baptism and obeying all that Jesus commanded us. We can't earn salvation, grace by definition is undeserved, unmerited, unearned, but if that grace is in us it makes us a new person living for Christ.

¹⁰ *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.*

Faith works. Saving faith isn't by cheap grace it's a changing grace. The grace of God within us saves us through faith alone in Christ alone, but it's not alone or in vain, it's with us and working in us, moving us to work for the Lord, live for Him by this living grace.

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today.
 I know that He is living, Whatever men may say.
 I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer;
 And just the time I need Him, He's always near.
 He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! [the chorus ends ...]
 You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.¹³

One way to know He's alive is if He's alive in us, we serve a living Savior whose grace is not in vain in us. We see His hand of mercy in our life as He walks with us and talks with us through His Word. We know He lives in our hearts because He gives new hearts and a new life, a heart alive to things we were once dead to. Preaching or reading from Scripture once was dull and dead, but now it's alive. I don't always love or live as I should but His life has given me life. His life has made me alive to things others are dead to, it awakens me and changes me and makes me desire more of His life in mine. I still have a long way to go, I'm not yet where I want to be, I'm not yet what I should be, but by God's grace I'm not what I used to be!

Changed lives prove Jesus is still alive, that's the 3rd argument we can see. 4thly finally: **His Risen Life Proves All in Him Will Rise**

²⁰ *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* That's a metaphor for those who die in Christ, for those who die as Christians it's like they're asleep but one day they will wake up. One day they'll rise just like Christ rose as He's the firstfruits, He's the first installment of the future harvest

Just like OT believers sacrificed the first part of their crops to God and trusted in the future there would be a greater harvest to come, Paul says Christ's resurrection is the first part and by faith we trust in the future all in Christ will have a resurrection at His 2nd coming as the full harvest is gathered up (Rev 14 uses the same language).

v. 23: *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* This is the word for "coming" in Mt 24 for the 2nd coming of Christ. It's the same word Paul uses in 2 Thess 2:8 for the Lord's "coming" that will put an end to anti-Christ. 1 Thess 3:13 says it will be a "coming with all His saints" and the next chapter says "the coming of the Lord" will be when "the dead in Christ will rise first...we who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..." Christ is the firstfruits, the first one resurrected to never die again.

A few people in the OT and NT were brought back from the dead, resuscitated is the word some use, but Christ was the first to rise in a glorified eternal body that can never die. At His coming, all who belong to Christ, another way to say those in Christ, dead in Christ, they will be resurrected also in glorified eternal bodies never to die

v. 51 says this transformation will also affect believers living then: *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep [that's the sleep of death], but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*

[v. 50 says that must happen to inherit God's final kingdom]

At the last trumpet dead in Christ and alive in Christ get glorified eternal bodies. Revelation has many trumpet but at the last trumpet of the seven the kingdom of man becomes the kingdom of God and it says there the dead will be raised and saints will be rewarded. In Rev 19 there's a final vision of that coming of the Lord and then in Rev 20:5 it says the dead in Christ come to life and will reign with Christ, and it says there *"this is the first resurrection."* I take that as the actual first resurrection of the dead in Christ who reign for a time till v. 24-26 here, v. 24 says *'then comes the end (Rev 20-22).*

At His coming those who belong to Christ are raised with Christ to join His reign till v. 24-26 says He will destroy the enemy of death as it says after Rev 20, in 21:4 *'there will no longer be any death.'* Look down at v. 24 here: *Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death... ⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'*

This is the final and ultimate application of Christ's resurrection. We sang earlier Christ the Lord is Risen Today: 'Lives again our glorious King, where O death is now thy sting? Dying once He all doth save, Alleluia, Where thy victory, O grave? A-a-a-leluia!'⁴

Do you know Christ as your glorious King? If not, bow to Him as King in faith. Come under His feet, under His reign, and under His grace. Believe this good news that begins in v. 1, v. 2 says it saves. Submit your life under the banners behind me: that Jesus is Lord, He Has Risen, He Now Reigns, and He Will Return. Turn from the sins that have been reigning in your life to the Savior who reigns.

He is Risen, indeed! OT Scripture proves Christ is risen indeed. NT witnesses prove Christ is risen indeed. And from Paul's times to our times, changed lives prove Jesus is still alive, and His risen life proves all in Him will rise. May our lives prove these realities.

God sent His Son - they called Him Jesus
 He came to love, heal and forgive
 He lived and died to buy my pardon
 An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives

The empty grave proves it, and our full hearts prove it. How does the resurrection help those who have regrets about the past, worry about tomorrow, or have fears about today, or wonder about the future in its uncertainty? How does the reality of the risen living Lord practically apply to a mother of a little baby in the mundane moments of life, or parents concerned for older kids in this world that is so sinful, or a suffering older saint at the other end of life?

How sweet to hold a newborn baby, and feel the ... joy he gives
 But greater still, the calm assurance
 This child can face uncertain days because He lives ...
 And then one day I'll cross the river
 I'll fight life's final war with pain
 And then as death gives way to victory
 I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
 Because He lives, All fear is gone
 Because I know He holds the future
 And life is worth the living Just because He lives⁵*

He is risen. He is risen indeed!

¹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/conference-messages/live-to-die>

² Shai Linne, "Jesus is Alive," Atonement album.

³ Alfred Ackley, "He Lives."

⁴ Charles Wesley, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today."

⁵ Bill and Gloria Gaither, "Because He Lives."