

# *“What IF?”*

## **1 Corinthians 15:12-20**

East Berlin Community Church

Pastor Keith A. Mosebrook

April 9, 2023

### Introduction

- Our choices and the choices of others affect the course of our lives.
- What IF you made different choices? What impact?
- Jesus Christ staked His claims of being the Son of God, the promised Messiah on His bodily resurrection from the dead.
  - Matthew 16:21-- *“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”*
  - Matthew 12:40-- *“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*
    - You can test death
    - You can test the length of burial-- three days.
    - You can test a bodily resurrection.

## **What IF there is no resurrection?**

### **A. The Possibility: What if no resurrection?**

- 1 Corinthians 15:12-- *“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”*
- 1. Different beliefs as to what happens to human beings after death.**
    - a. “Soul sleep”
    - b. Death is final, no afterlife.
    - c. Reincarnation or the recycling of the soul
    - d. Absorption into the ultimate mind or being
  - 2. In Paul’s day, the prevailing view was the Greek philosophy of Dualism**
    - a. Dualism-- the belief that everything spiritual is good, everything material is bad
      - 1) Foundational teaching of Gnosticism that had infiltrated the early church
      - 2) Believed in the immortality of the soul, but strongly opposed the resurrection of the body
    - b. Paul’s encounter with the philosophers on Mars Hill--
      - Acts 17:31b-- *“He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”*
      - Acts 17:32a-- *“when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked,”*
  - 3. IF there is no resurrection, then Jesus has not been raised.**
    - 1 Corinthians 15:13-- *“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.”*
      - a. Some at Corinth had bought into Dualism
      - b. The gospels portray Jesus as being fully human with a human body.
        - Luke 24:39-- *“for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have..”*
        - Luke 24:42-43-- *“they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.”*

## B. The Impact: *What if Jesus has not been raised?*

- 1 Corinthians 15:14-19-- *“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”*

### 1. **Our Preaching would be empty.-- v. 14**

#### a. **Paul declares to them the “Good News”**

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-- *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand.”*
- 1) This “good news” saves
    - 1 Corinthians 15:2-- *“by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*
  - 2) Unless they have “believed in vain”
    - a) Not an inferior kind of personal faith
    - b) But due to a deficient gospel

#### b. **Paul delineates the “Good News”**

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-6-- *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.”*
- 1) **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.**
    - a) Example of Scriptural support
      - Isaiah 53:5-6-- *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*
    - b) PROOF: He was buried for three days
  - 2) **Christ rose from the dead according to the Scriptures**
    - a) PROOF: He was seen by many eyewitnesses
    - b) The importance of believing the true gospel
      - Romans 10:9-- *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

### 2. **We are all false witnesses!**

- 1 Corinthians 15:15-- *“Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.”*
- a. **The central message of both Peter and Paul**
    - Acts 2:31-32-- *“He, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”*
    - Acts 13:26-30-- *“Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have*

*fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead."*

- b. **If no resurrection, then our preaching would be a BIG, BOLD FACE LIE.**
  
3. **Our salvation would only be imaginative, a state of mind without corresponding reality.**
  - 1 Corinthians 15:17-- *"And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"*
  - Romans 4:25-- *"who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification"*
  
4. **We are still in our sins. We have no salvation!**
  - 1 Corinthians 15:17-- *"And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"*
  
5. **Those who died trusting in Jesus have perished. No hope!**
  - 1 Corinthians 15:18-- *"Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."*
  
6. **We are to be pitied because we've suffered and sacrificed for a lost cause.**
  - 1 Corinthians 15:19-- *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."*
  - 1 Corinthians 15:32-- *"If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"*

**BOTTOM LINE: NO Gospel, NO Faith, NO Salvation, NO Hope!**

**C. The REALITY: *But now is Christ risen from the dead!***

- 1 Corinthians 15:20-- *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."*
1. **Our gospel message has substance! It's true!**
  
  2. **As the "first-fruit", Jesus Christ assures the resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous!**