

If Jesus Didn't Rise. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 12-26, 50-58

Outline adapted from: Assurances From The Resurrection, by Joseph Mcculley @ SermonCentra.com

*Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of **the good news** that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: **that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).*

You are not normal. Well if you have been raised in Church, or at least have been a long-time Christian, you are not normal. Because you actually believe that Jesus rose from the dead and in a similar way, one day, so will you.

And you believe this without questioning because you have been taught this all your life; you commemorate Jesus' resurrection from the dead every Easter and in some ways every Sunday! But normal people don't really believe that dead people can ever live again, because they have never seen a dead person come back to life. Even in Jesus day, that was the one big thing about Christianity that skeptics had to be convinced of before they converted to the Christian faith: That Jesus actually rose again from the dead. That is why the Apostle Paul in this letter listed out and basically invited those skeptical Corinthians to go interview some of the over 500 people who could still bear witness to seeing Jesus alive again after his crucifixion.

And what was happening in Corinth was not an isolated phenomena. Many people were attracted to this new faith because of the love and devotion displayed by the Christian converts they had previously known. And they were attracted to Jesus because of his great moral teachings. But being modern, educated, Greeks – *they may not have had Ipads and smart phones, but they were just as culturally sophisticated as we are* – they just couldn't bring themselves to believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead; because they had never seen such happen and their medical science told them it couldn't happen (just like today).

So you first need to realize how unbelievable Jesus' return to life from the dead actually was and that its actuality made it THE MIRACLE that would change history as we know it. Also if you believed his claims and accepted the promises Jesus made to you, which were confirmed by his return to life, it would change your world forever... which is mainly what we want to explore today.

But first, let's look at how Paul applied "logic" – a favorite Greek educational exercise – to help his skeptical Greeks reduce their doubts.

First Paul pointed out the two major beliefs of Christianity:

- That Jesus Christ died in payment for our sin
- And that after being buried, three-days later Jesus was seen alive

Then he listed two major proofs that Jesus did return to life:

1. That all this was prophesied in advance by Scripture.
2. That there were over 500 witnesses who can testify to seeing him alive.

Then Paul laid a little logic on them; a series of "if/then" statements. In the face of all this proof he writes, why do you continue to disbelieve that you too, just like Jesus, can return to life after death. Because

A. IF no one can return to life,
THEN Jesus never returned to life

- B. And IF Jesus didn't return to life, THEN
- a. we are liars
 - b. your faith is worthless
 - c. your sins remain unforgiven
 - d. everyone who has died has truly perished
 - e. you would be a fool to follow the Christian faith.

That's how important, how historically significant, Jesus' return to life was. If it is true, then the events of his death and resurrection are the hinge of world history and your personal history. If it was a hoax, then a lot of people have wasted a lot of good time when they could have been out golfing, fishing, or just eating and drinking ... because tomorrow when they died, they would truly perish.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the major foundation stone of the Christian faith, upon which every other Christian promise, belief, and teaching, was ever built. And I don't have to convince you of this truth, because as I pointed out earlier, whether by your thoughtful consideration or merely the constant repetition of hearing it, you already believe in Christ's resurrection.

But perhaps you have not considered all the implications of what his resurrection from the dead actually means about him and about you. Which is where we are now headed. The truth of Christ's resurrection provides us with several powerful assurances of our faith.

1. The resurrection assures us that Jesus Christ was indeed God

Remember, I shared with you two-weeks ago that the Hebrew word "**messiah**" translated into the Greek word "**Christ**" was not Jesus' last name. It is a title, that was

first awarded in Hebrew Bible and then in our New Testament to that one singular prophesied and long waited individual, God's "**anointed one**," who would be

- the seed of Eve, to crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).
- Abraham's descendant to bless all nations (Genesis 12:1-3).
- Another prophet like Moses to lead Israel (Deuteronomy 18:15).
- David's heir to reign on his throne forever (2 Samuel 7:11-13)
- Isaiah's "*arm of the Lord*," who would bring good news to the poor, give sight to the blind, free the prisoners, and then be crushed for our sins, so that by his bruises we would be healed. (Isaiah 53, 61).
- Daniel's "Son of Man" who would rule the world (Daniel 7:13-14).
- Zechariah's "Lord" who would be "king over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9)

All these promises were loaded into that single title "the Anointed One" indicating that one special person for whom all of Israel was looking. And right at the start of his ministry without declaring it outright, but for those who were listening, **Jesus claimed to be that person**. Immediately after his baptism and 40 days in the wilderness, when Jesus walked into that synagogue and read from Isaiah, "*the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has **anointed** me to bring good news*" (Luke 4:16-20), He was claiming that title (Messiah, Christ) for himself.

Jesus also claimed to be God and to have existed since the beginning of time. He told a group of very adversarial Jews that

"Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day." ...
The Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them,
"Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am."
John 8:56-58

Thus, Jesus claimed His existence was uncreated & timeless and He claimed to be an infinite being. Only God is infinite, timeless & uncreated. Then he used those two words "**I am**" which in Hebrew form the personal name that God gave Himself; a name so sacred that no Jew would even say it out loud, but Jesus did (Exodus 3:13-15). The Jews knew exactly who he was claiming to be and that is why the next verse says, "*they took up stones to stone Him*" (8:59).

He also claimed that he and God the Father were the same person.

[Jesus said] the Father and I are one.
So the Jews took up stones again to stone him...
for blasphemy, because you, though only a
human being, are making yourself God.
John 10:30-33

The Father and I are one. The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." John 10:30-33

Many people claim to have a high regard for Jesus, saying He was prophet, or a good man, and a wise teacher, but they reject the very claims he made about himself. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, having existed since the beginning of time, one and the same with God the Father. Either he told the truth or he was a lunatic – there is no middle ground. As C.S. Lewis so famously pointed out,

You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." — C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Jesus' resurrection assures us that He told the truth. His return to life validated every single claim that he made about himself. Jesus was the Messiah, He is God who existed even before Abraham's days, he and the father are one and the same, and he is the Lamb of God who came take away our sins; which brings up our second assurance.

2. The resurrection also assures us of God's forgiveness of our sins (1 Cor. 15:17).

But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us ...
For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.
Romans 5:8-10

*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been **justified** by his blood, will we be **saved** through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were **reconciled** to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Romans 5:8-10*

The fact that God raised up Jesus from the dead proves that He accepted the death of Jesus in our place, that our sins have been paid for in full, and that having been reconciled to God through Jesus, we will be saved.

3. So Jesus' resurrection assures us of our own resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12,13, 20-23, 51-58).

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,
the **first fruits** of those who have died.

1 Corinthians 15:20

Calling Jesus the "first fruits" indicates more will follow; that we, God's children, will also someday be resurrected the same way Jesus was resurrected. Paul wrote, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...*

the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For this perishable body must put on imperishability,
and this mortal body must put on immortality.....

Then the saying will be fulfilled:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

1 Corinthians 15:52-54

So Jesus' resurrection as the first fruits of God's harvest assures us of being resurrected in the same manner someday; because that is what Jesus promised us.

I go to prepare a place for you ... and
I will come again and will take you to myself,
so that where I am, there you may be also.

John 14:3

We certainly do not understand how all this can and will happen, but we can know as the aged Apostle John would write,

what we will be has not yet been revealed.
What we do know is this: when he is revealed,
we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

1 John 3:1-4

So here is your take-home for the day.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a true historical event that has been proven by all sorts of evidence. We can confidently say that it truly happened and celebrate Easter

not as a wishful thought but in honor of that day when God's "Anointed One" changed forever both the world's and our own personal history.

And then remembering the resurrection helps to give us believers several assurances:

- His resurrection proves that Jesus actually is who he claimed to be and can do what he claims he can do: forgive our sins.
- Because Jesus is who he says he was, his resurrection assures us that our sins have been forgiven.
- And because we know our sins are forgiven and we have been reconciled back to God, we can be sure that one day we will rise to a new life – Just like Jesus promised us.

The Apostle Paul closed his argument on the proof of and our assurances from the resurrection of Jesus from the dead with these words:

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable,
always excelling in the work of the Lord, because
you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.
I Corinthians 15:58

It looked like Saturday morning TV time at the Van Pelt household. Lucy and Linus were sitting in front of the television set when Lucy said to Linus, "Go get me a glass of water."

Linus looked surprised, "Why should I do anything for you? You never do anything for me."

"On you 75th birthday," Lucy promised, "I'll bake you a cake."

Linus got up, headed to the kitchen and said, "Life is more pleasant when you have something to look forward to."

Invitation: If you haven't ever seriously considered the resurrection of Jesus Christ, would you please do so today?

You need to trust in who Jesus is – He is God in the flesh.

You need to trust in what Jesus did – He died to pay the penalty for your sins.

You need to accept his offered gift of salvation,

So that you can know that you have been forgiven,

So that you can live now as God's Child

So that one day you too can be raised to a new and eternal life.