

## Risen 1 Corinthians 15

1,980 years ago Jesus rose from the dead. But why should you care? What relevance does His resurrection have for your life? According to 1 Corinthians 15, it's everything! His resurrection is the basis of your hope and the foundation of your future; and without it, Christianity is nothing but a colossal waste of your time!

**September 19, 1961, James Webb, director of NASA**

- New Manned Spaceflight Center would be built in Clear Lake, Texas
- To most of you – completely forgettable trivia
- But it's not trivial to me!
  - o Grandfather worked in space industry in Alabama
  - o Reassigned to Clear Lake – brought my dad
  - o Adjacent to Webster – where my mom lived
  - o Met summer after the move – dated, got married, had me
  - o If Webb hadn't picked Houston... dad would have married an Alabama girl and I would have never been born!
- Seemingly trivial piece of history had major ramifications for me!!

**Countless events have occurred in the history of the human race**

**And the vast majority are absolutely trivial to us**

- because no ramifications on our lives as far as we can tell
- History without relevance is just trivia
- If no connection from event to your life – will never be more than trivia to u

**Today is Easter: remember historical event that happened 1980 yrs ago**

**This morning – not going to try to prove the historicity of the resurrection**

- will simply assume that it did indeed happen
- but if you'd like to wrestle with the evidence, see my paper (see below):  
“Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ”
- If you read it and still aren't convinced, please come talk to me
- Contact me @GraceBibleBlake

**This morning, I'm not going to focus on the historicity of the resurrection...**

**I'm going to focus on the relevance of it...**

**Why does it matter to us whether or not Jesus actually rose from the dead?**

**What ramifications if any does that have on our lives, 1,980 years later?**

**Turn to 1 Cor 15**

- much to say about the relevance of the resurrection
- **Paul begins with the bare facts of the gospel**
  - o **read 15:3-4**
  - o rehearses the events
- **But the second part of the gospel was proving unpopular in Corinth**

- **Gentiles objected to the concept of resurrection**
  - seemed laughable to them
  - 1<sup>st</sup>: never seen it happen
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>: wondered why would anyone want to be resurrected!
    - body is broken and limited, feels pain, suffers, decays
    - why would you want this back??!
    - body = “prison” of our spirit – a “tomb” that shackles us
  - **Acts 17:31-32**
- **Resurrection was an unpopular belief in Paul’s day, just as it is today**
  - In our modern, scientific world – this belief has come under fire
    - Science can’t replicate it – can’t observe in a lab
    - So society doubts it & even ridicules it – a myth
- **And whenever the church is faced with hostility over a particular belief**
- **What are some Christians tempted to do?**
- **Compromise the truth in some way to make Christianity more palatable**
  - That’s what the Jesus Seminar has done
  - **One of their members, Marcus Borg**
- **The offending parts of the gospel dropped to make Christianity palatable**
- **That’s what some people in the church in Corinth were doing**
  - Felt embarrassed by this teaching about Jesus’ resurrection
  - Either said it never happened
  - Or redefined the word – a metaphor to describe spiritual change
  - Either way – taught that Jesus couldn’t have literally risen from the dead because, as all Greeks know, bodily resurrection is ridiculous.
- **Paul’s not okay with that compromise!**
  - The resurrection was important to Paul, to put it mildly!
  - So he spends the rest of ch15 defending the truth of the resurrection
- **He begins with historical evidence**
  - **Read v5-8**
  - Lists out those who saw Jesus... hundreds
  - Most were still alive – invited the Corinthians to go ask them!
- **Gives historical evidence, but spends most of his time on the issue of relevance.**
  - Wants them to understand why it matters that Jesus rose
  - Why they must hold to this truth
  - Jesus’ resurrection is not just an interesting historical event!
  - It’s foundational to your life, relationship with God, future
  - Can’t surrender the resurrection because it means everything to us!
- **Paul would agree with John Updike’s "Seven Stanzas at Easter"**

**The resurrection of Jesus is essential to us...**

**And Paul gives us 3 reasons why in 1 Cor 15**

**3 reasons why it’s relevant to our lives 1980 years later**

## **WHY DOES THE RESURRECTION MATTER?**

**Because on that day...**

### **1) Sins became forgivable**

- **Paul states it in the negative here in 1 Cor 15...Read 1 Cor 15:17**
  - If Jesus did not literally rise from the dead...
  - then this whole Christianity thing is a colossal waste of time!
  - Your faith in Jesus is worthless if He didn’t rise

- **Why? Because regardless of your faith, you're still in your sins!**
  - o If Jesus did not rise, then there is no forgiveness for your sins
  - o God cannot forgive you if Jesus didn't rise
- **Back to 15:3 – Jesus died “for our sins”**
  - o Talked about that last week
  - o Died to redeem us from sin – deliver us from sin's penalty
- **He paid for our deliverance from sin with His own blood...**
- **But it's the resurrection that proves that the payment was sufficient!**
  - o Jesus' resurrection proves that His sacrifice was accepted by God.
  - o Think of it this way... Target
    - When does the stuff belong to you? Not till receipt prints!
  - o That's the resurrection: God's receipt that the death of was sufficient to pay for our sin.
  - o If He did not rise, then that proves the payment wasn't sufficient.
  - o If He did not rise, then sin won! Sin had the last word. Sin proved greater than Jesus.
- **And that leads Paul to the conclusion of v18...read 15:18**
  - o **If we're still in our sins, then when we die, we perish**
    - perish = to die separated from God – to be utterly, completely, and hopelessly lost
    - **helpful to compare this verse to John 3:16 - read**
    - If Jesus didn't rise, then that verse is a lie! You will perish!
    - Eternal life is a pipe-dream if Jesus didn't rise!
  - o **Back in elementary... friend who got hold of parents' checks**
    - \$1 million dollars! I'm rich!
    - No, I'm not – check is only as valuable as \$ in the bank
    - They didn't have \$1M in the bank
    - So check was nothing more than a worthless piece of paper
- **The death of Jesus was just as worthless if He didn't rise..**
- **But He did... and that proves that our sins can be forgiven.**
  - o **Here's how Paul puts it in Rom 4:25**
    - Died for our transgressions / sins
    - But it's not His death, it's His resurrection that makes our justification possible
      - = to be declared “in the right” = to be acquitted of sin
    - o His resurrection is what proves that God can justify sinners like us.
- **The resurrection is what makes forgiveness possible.**
- **So thank God Jesus rose!**

## 2) Death became temporary

- **I came across some statistics about the fear of death:**
  - o According to Nat'l Inst of Mental Health in 2012
    - **68% of people surveyed reported a strong fear of death**
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> only to glossophobia = fear of public speaking = 74%
      - Funny to me. People fear getting up here more than dying? Really? Trust me, it's not that bad!
  - o **Personally, I think the stat on fear of death is way too low.**
    - I've never talked to anyone who was comfortable with idea of dying!
    - It is human to fear death.
    - Famous American writer Jack Kerouac (Keróack)...
  - o Natural to fear death because the statistics on death are so impressive: 1 out of 1!
- **We will all die**
- **And if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then it is right to fear death**
  - o Because if death beat the Son of God – then it will surely beat us!
  - o Death will be the end of us, if He didn't rise...

- **But He did! He beat death! His death was only temporary...**
- **And as a result, we, too will beat death – our death will only be temporary**
  - o **read 1 Cor 15:20-22**
  - o What does His resurrection mean for you? It means you will be resurrected!
    - Death entered the human race through the sin of Adam
    - But death became temporary through Jesus
      - His resurrection brings life!
  - o **Jesus' resurrection guarantees our resurrection.**
- **But what exactly does that word “resurrection” mean?**
  - o What does it mean that we'll be resurrected?
  - o **Turn to 2 Cor 5**
  - o **Let's talk about what happens when you die...**
    - **2 Cor 5:8**
      - Instant a believer dies – immediately at home with Jesus
      - Awake, aware, worshipping Him
    - **The moment you die: at home with Jesus... but you're bodiless**
      - At death – spirit separated from body – what death means
        - body into the grave; spirit into the presence of Jesus
      - Paul is clear – that will be an improvement!!
        - It's better than staying here in a fallen body...
    - **But it's not best – 2 Cor 5:2-4**
      - “house” and “clothing” = your body
      - to be bodiless will be kind of like being naked.
      - Your spirit and body were meant to be together
        - death / separation not what God intended
      - To be at home with Jesus but bodiless is better than this life, but not best, because you were meant to have a body!
  - o **God will fix that deficiency in the resurrection**
    - Resurrection: when your spirit is joined once again to your body
    - But not the body you have right now
      - v2: the “dwelling from heaven” – a new body created by God
- **Learn more about this heavenly body back in 1 Corinthians...**
  - o **read 1 Cor 15:42-43**
  - o **Resurrection is not a reanimation of our current bodies**
    - current bodies: perishable, dishonorable, weak
    - new bodies: immortal; glorious; powerful
    - when Jesus raised Lazarus – that was NOT resurrection!
      - got the same body back – could get sick, hurt – still died
  - o **There's actually only 1 resurrection that has ever happened – Jesus'**
    - Not a reanimation of His previous body
    - a new creation of a perfected body
  - o **To know what your resurrected body will be like – look at Jesus'**
    - **It was a real body!**
      - Wasn't a ghost – had flesh and bones
      - You will have a real body – organs, blood, skin, nerves
    - **It was functional**
      - He asked for food and ate
      - Don't know the details
      - But know we will eat, move, talk, sing, work
    - **It was immortal**

- We're told explicitly that He could never die again.
  - You will be immortal – can't be injured or become sick
  - Rev 21 – never feel pain again
- **It was recognizable**
  - His disciples knew by sight who He was.
  - So we will be recognizable to one another – know "that's Blake"
  - Age wise – will appear at our physical peak
    - no lingering traces of old age or decay
    - even babies will be full grown – know & worship God
- **Our resurrection bodies will not be like these bodies.**
  - They will be perfect, immortal, powerful, and glorious!
- **That leads Paul to the conclusion:**
  - **read 1 Cor 15:54-57**
  - **We have no reason to fear death!!**
    - It will not have the final word - it will not win
    - Because Jesus rose, death has lost its sting
    - **It will be nothing more than a temporary inconvenience!!**
  - **That's why Paul calls death "sleep" 4 times in this chapter**
    - a common euphemism he used for death
    - Why? because for believers, death is as temporary as sleep.
    - It will not last. We will be resurrected.
    - After we die, we will awaken to a new and unending dawn
      - immediately at home with the Lord
      - and then glorified and perfected in the resurrection
- **Ben Franklin's epitaph...**

When Jesus rose from the dead, our sins became forgivable and our death became temporary. And third...

### **3) Life became meaningful**

- **negative: 1 Cor 15:19,32**
  - As followers of Christ, we make many sacrifices in this life.
    - sinful pleasures we must avoid
    - legitimate pleasures we give up to serve God and others
  - The Christian life is a life of sacrifice.
  - **Paul wants us to understand... if there's no resurrection, all of that noble sacrifice is a waste!**
    - We will die; everyone else will die – and then no one will care!
    - Selflessness is meaningless without resurrection.
    - If no life after this one, then sacrificing this life is stupid!
    - That's why Paul says: if no resurrection, we are to be pitied above all!
    - We should have lived by the motto: "Eat, drink, and be merry..."
    - As Malcolm Forbes put it, "He who dies with the most toys wins."
    - If there's no resurrection, then YES!
- **Eat, drink, and be merry because life is meaningless if Jesus didn't rise**
- **But He did rise!**
  - And that's what makes life meaningful - makes sacrifice reasonable
  - He rose guaranteeing that we will rise as well, to enjoy the reward of our sacrifice forever
- **That's what leads Paul to the positive conclusion of v58... read 1 Cor 15:58**
  - Know that your toil in this life is not in vain!
  - Why? Because you will be resurrected and rewarded in the next life.
  - So live sold out for Jesus!
    - Abound in the work of the Lord because you will spend eternity with Him!

- The promise of spending the next life with Jesus gives meaning to this life.

**So why does the resurrection of Jesus Christ matter? Why is it more than just historical trivia?**

Because without the resurrection of Christ, our sins are unforgivable, our death is permanent, and our lives are meaningless.

But He did rise, 1,980 years ago. And because Jesus rose from the dead, sins can be forgiven, death can be defeated, and life can be meaningful.

**And God offers you all of that to you as a free gift if you simply believe.**

- All of the benefits of Jesus' death are credited to you the moment you believe

**What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you?**

- Just a piece of historical trivia - a story you tell your kids this time of year?
- Or do you get it?! Do you see that it's everything to you!!

# Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

## 1) First we must prove that Jesus both lived and died as recorded in the gospel accounts.

### a] Did a real man named Jesus and called the “Christ” live in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine? Even the vast majority of scholars today would answer “yes” based upon:

- The reliability of the New Testament as an accurate record of the history of Jesus
  - (1) If the NT is proven a reliable record of history, then the facts of Jesus’ life recorded in the NT are also reliable. While many non-Christian scholars reject the accounts of miracles in the Bible and contest some of the teachings ascribed to Jesus, few if any deny that they at least prove that a real man named Jesus lived in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine.<sup>1</sup>
- Early extra-Biblical references to Jesus such as:
  - (1) **Josephus**, the preeminent historian of 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish-Roman interaction wrote *Antiquities* completed ~93 AD
    - (a) “He [the high priest Ananias] convened a meeting of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ, and certain others.”
    - (b) “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, *if indeed one ought to call him a man*. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and Greeks. *He was the Christ*. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. *On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him*. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.” [italicized text is debated by scholars and is likely later additions by Christian copyists]
  - (2) **Tacitus**, the most important Roman historian of the first century wrote in 115 AD, “Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus [Latin for Christ], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome...”
  - (3) **Pliny the Younger** in 111 AD confirms that the “Christian” community worshipped a man called “Christ” as if he were a god.
  - (4) **Seutonius** in his *Life of Claudius* confirms Claudius’ expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 49 AD because of their bickering over Chrestus [Latin for Christ].

### b] Did this Jesus die on a cross as described in the gospel accounts?

- The above evidence also proves that Jesus was executed by the orders of Pontius Pilate.

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<sup>1</sup> To validate the truthfulness of the NT, see my “The Reliability of the New Testament.” For a copy, contact me by email at blakejennings@grace-bible.org or by Twitter @GraceBibleBlake

- Yet some scholars say that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but merely fainted, later awaking in the cool of the grave. Almost all scholars reject this “Swoon” theory for the death of Christ for it fails to explain the following.
  - (1) John 19:34 states that a soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a spear “bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.” This is actually a very accurate medical description of what occurs when a person’s pericardium, the sac surrounding the heart, is pierced. Such a wound would bring certain death.
  - (2) How could a man weakened by beatings, scourging, crucifixion, and finally a stab to the chest gather the energy to roll a large stone (probably weighing 1-1/2 to 2 tons) away from the tomb that even a healthy man would fail to budge?
  - (3) If Jesus was in such poor physical shape, obviously in need of medical attention, why did his disciples worship him and claim he was the risen Lord instead of calling a physician to treat him?
  - (4) The Swoon Theory neglects historical accounts about the cruelty and finality of crucifixion. A guard who failed to execute his prisoner would pay for the failure with his own life (see Acts 12:18-9 for the penalty a guard faced for failure). Fortunately for the guards it was easy to tell if a crucified victim had died. The only way to breathe while crucified was for the victim to push himself up on his nail pierced feet, relieving the weight from his chest and allowing him to inhale. When he fatigued of lifting himself up and remained motionless, he quickly suffocated.
- c] **Conclusion:** As almost all scholars would agree, a real man named Jesus and called “Christ” lived in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine and was crucified as described in the gospel accounts. But did he rise from the dead? If not, Christianity is of little value. Yet if he did rise from the dead, then he has proven that he has power even over death, that he is the promised messiah, and that he is the divine Son of God as he claimed to be.

## 2) Did Jesus actually rise from the dead?

- a] The following **6 facts** are considered virtually beyond question by critical historical scholars, including those who are non-Christians. Adding them together, we have substantial factual proof that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, as recorded in the gospels.
  - (1) **Jesus’ death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope.** What we want to point out here is that instead of expecting his resurrection, they scattered when Jesus was arrested (Mathew 26:56) and even disbelieved the first accounts of his resurrection (Luke 24:4-11). Such behavior makes little sense if they planned to fake Jesus’ resurrection.
  - (2) **Yet later the disciples claimed to both see and touch the risen Jesus** and preached and wrote consistently about this experience (Acts 2:32, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8).
    - (a) Hallucinations offer no explanation for modern science has proven that they are neither collectively experienced nor contagious.
    - (b) These claims were made in Jerusalem, the very city where Christ was crucified. If he did not rise from the dead, why did the Jewish rulers who opposed Christianity not parade Jesus’ body down the streets of Jerusalem to silence the rumor? Could the disciples have stolen Christ’s body? That’s highly unlikely, since the disciples would have had to defeat the Roman soldiers guarding Jesus’ tomb. Only the resurrection can adequately explain the failure of the Jews to produce Jesus’ body for display.

**(3) Because of these experiences, the disciples were transformed** from doubters who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold proclaimers of his death and resurrection.

- (a) Notice the change in Peter between denying Christ just before the crucifixion (Mark 14:66-72) to boldly proclaiming Christ in public despite risking beatings and imprisonment (Acts 2:14-36; 3:11-4:22). The other apostles likewise spoke with great boldness even in the face of severe persecution.
- (b) Would these men endure hardship, torture, and death for a message that they knew to be untrue, or at least strongly doubted to be true? No, these men must have truly believed that they literally experienced the resurrected Christ.

**(4) As a result of this preaching, the church was born and grew.**

- (a) Within the first few chapters of Acts, literally thousands of Jews join the church. Not long after, the message extended to Samaritans and Gentiles as the church spread throughout the Roman world.
- (b) This growing church consistently viewed Sunday as the primary day of worship because this was the day Christ rose from the dead. This affirms that Christ's resurrection was at the center of Christian doctrine and practice.

**(5) James, the brother of Jesus, who had been a skeptic (John 7:3-5), was converted** to the faith when he saw the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15:7). His transformation was so complete that he later served as leader of the Jerusalem church and finally lost his life as a martyr.

**(6) A few years later, Paul (also called Saul) was converted** by an experience which he also believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus. This is a particularly important fact for the following reasons:

- (a) Paul was a high-ranking, zealous Jew (Philippians 3:4-6) with Roman citizenship (Acts 22:27-8). From a human perspective, he had nothing to gain and much to lose by renouncing Judaism and joining the heavily persecuted Christian church.
- (b) After the resurrection as the church grew, Paul started out vehemently opposed to Christianity, persecuting many of its followers (Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-2). He was certainly not sympathetic to their beliefs or to the claims of Jesus.
- (c) He claims to have seen the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-9) and from that point forward, his life was radically changed. He became the preeminent missionary to the Gentiles proclaiming a message that was consistently focused on the resurrection of Christ. For his new faith he suffered greatly (2 Corinthians 11:23-28), finally being martyred by Nero.

Only the resurrection can adequately explain all of this evidence. Yet few people reject Christianity because of evidence! Faith is, ultimately, a heart issue. Therefore, use these arguments whenever you have an opportunity, but always saturate your conversation in prayer for only God can change the human heart.

## Bibliography

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