

Risen 1 Corinthians 15

Approximately 1,985 years ago Jesus rose from the dead. But what relevance does that bit of history have for your life? According to 1 Corinthians 15, it's everything! His resurrection is the basis of our hope and the foundation of our future; and without it, Christianity is nothing but a waste of our time!

If you have your Bibles – turn to 1 Corinthians 15

Countless events have occurred in the history of the human race

Vast majority are trivial to us because they've had no effect 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 you

Today is Easter: remember historical event that happened approx. 1985 yrs ago

- Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God, was crucified and then rose from the dead
- Certainly interesting bit of historical trivia – nothing like it happened before
- But is it more than trivia?

Why should it matter to you whether Jesus actually rose from the dead 1985 yrs ago?

What ramifications if any does that event have on our lives today?

Answer in 1 Cor 15 – The whole chapter is about the relevance of Jesus' resurrection to YOUR life

- **Paul begins with the bare facts of the gospel – read 15:3-4**
 - o rehearses the events of Jesus' death and resurrection
- **Problem: The resurrection part of the gospel was proving unpopular**
 - o **Gentiles found the idea of resurrection – laughable**
 - o 1st: never seen it happen
 - o 2nd: 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
 - o Why when Paul talked about resurrection in Athens – **Acts 17:31-32**
- **Ridiculed for an unpopular belief: some Christians in Corinth simply abandoned it**
 - o Said it never happened or redefined the word metaphorically
- **But Paul was not okay with that compromise**
 - o To Paul the actual resurrection of Jesus is absolutely essential to Christianity
 - o It's foundational to your life, your relationship with God, your future
 - o Without the resurrection, we have nothing... and all we're doing this morning is just a waste of time!
 - o Can't surrender the resurrection because it means everything to us!
- **Paul would echo the words of John Updike**
- **To Paul the fact of the resurrection of Jesus was everything – we have nothing without it**
- **So he rehearsed the historical evidence - Read v5-8**
 - o Lists out those who saw Jesus... hundreds
 - o Most were still alive – invited the Corinthians to go ask them!

- One of my passions: help people see that Christianity is an evidence-based religion!
- We're not Christians because it makes us feel good, but because the evidence leads us to believe
- **There's actually a ton of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus!**
 - I've discussed that many times before – wrote an article on the historical evidence
 - Top 5 historically verifiable reasons we believe the resurrection happened:
 - **There were many men who claimed to be "messiah" in 1st Cent**
 - they all died and were forgotten... why not this 1?
 - **Women were the 1st witnesses – radical in 1st Cent**
 - wouldn't make that up if you're trying to fool people
 - **The Apostles looked foolish – denied Jesus, cowards, doubted resurrection.**
 - why say embarrassing things about yourself if making it all up?
 - **Jesus' enemies never brought out the body – would have been easy!**
 - but maybe the disciples stole it, right... but then why...
 - **The disciples CHOSE to suffer and die for this story**
 - 11 of 12 disciples martyred for allegiance to Jesus
 - Why would you do that if you made it all up?!
 - Here's the deal: no one can prove that it did happen or didn't happen
 - None of us were there – can't reproduce it in science lab
 - We're all making a faith decision – either believe it did or didn't
 - So which is MORE REASONABLE to believe?
 - IMO – easier to believe it did happen than didn't based on historical data
 - So, decide for yourself! Dig into the data.
 - <http://www.grace-bible.org/resources/faqs/how-do-we-know-that-jesus-actually-rose-from-the-dead>
 - If you read it and still aren't convinced, please come talk to me

Paul gives historical evidence, but then spends most of chapter on the issue of relevance

- Wants them to understand WHY it matters so much that Jesus actually rose
- Why is this event so foundational to our religion, our hope, our future?

WHY DOES THE RESURRECTION MATTER? Paul gives us 3 reasons...

Because on that day...

1) Sins became forgivable

- **Paul states it in the negative in v17...Read 1 Cor 15:17**
 - If Jesus did not literally rise this whole religion is a complete waste of time
- **Why? Because regardless of your faith, you're still in your sins!**
 - If Jesus did not rise, then there is no forgiveness for your sins
 - God cannot forgive you if Jesus didn't rise
- **Back to 15:3 – Jesus died "for our sins"**
 - Talked about that last week
 - 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 His payment was sufficient!**
- **Jesus' resurrection proves that His sacrifice was valuable enough to pay for all sin**
 - Think of it this way... **Target**
 - When does stuff belong to you? Put in basket? Scan? Not till receipt prints!
 - The resurrection = God's receipt that Jesus' death was sufficient to pay for our sin
 - If He did not rise, then the payment wasn't sufficient
 - If He did not rise, then sin won! Had the last word, proved greater than Jesus

- **And that leads Paul to the conclusion of v18...read 15:18**
 - o “fallen asleep in Christ” = believers who have died
 - o **If we’re still in our sins, then when we die, we perish**
 - o perish = die separated from God – to be utterly, completely lost
 - o If Jesus didn’t rise, then John 3:16 is a lie! You will perish regardless of belief!
- **Back in elementary... friend who got hold of parents’ checks**
 - o Wrote a check to me for \$1 million dollars! I’m rich!
 - o No, I’m not – check is only as valuable as \$ in the bank
 - o They didn’t have \$1M in the bank – so check was worthless piece of paper
- **The death of Jesus was just as worthless if He didn’t rise... but He did!**
- **That proves that our sins can be forgiven**
 - o **Here’s how Paul puts it in Rom 4:25**
 - o Died for our transgressions / sins
 - o 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
- 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**
 - 2nd 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!
 - Means death will not be permanent for you
 - o **Jesus’ resurrection guarantees our resurrection**
- **But what exactly does that word “resurrection” mean for us?**
 - o **Let’s talk about what happens when you die... read 2 Cor 5:8**
 - Instant a believer dies – immediately at home with Jesus
 - Awake, aware, worshipping Him
 - o **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...
 - o **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
 - **So death = being home with Jesus – better than this life but not best**
 - because you were meant to have a body
 - **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...**
 - **read 1 Cor 15:42-43**
 - **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
 - **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
 - **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’ll eat, move, talk, work
 - **It was immortal**
 - We’re told explicitly that He could never die again
 - You will be immortal – can’t be injured, become sick, no more pain
 - **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... but perfect & 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” 4x 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...**

3) Life became meaningful

- **negative: 1 Cor 15:19,32**
 - o 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
 - o The Christian life is a life of sacrifice.
 - o **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 foolish!
 - 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 he's right!
- **Eat, drink, and be merry because life is meaningless if Jesus didn't rise**
- **But He did... and that's what makes life meaningful and sacrifice reasonable!**
 - o He rose guaranteeing that we will rise to enjoy the reward of our sacrifice forever
- **That's what leads Paul to the positive conclusion of v58... read 1 Cor 15:58**
 - o Know that your toil in this life is not in vain!
 - o Why? Because you will be resurrected and rewarded in the next life.
 - o 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 1985 years ago matter?

Because only through it are our sins forgivable, our death temporary, and our meaningful

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

Why I Believe Jesus Rose

by *Blake Jennings*
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The Bible claims that a man named Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead in ancient Israel nearly two-thousand years ago. Few scholars doubt the first two claims. There is just too much evidence both in the Bible and in 1st and 2nd Century Jewish and Roman literature verifying His life and death. What they doubt is the resurrection, because while life and death are common in this world, resurrection is not!

So how do we know that Jesus rose from the dead? Is the resurrection simply a blind leap of faith, or is it based on solid historical data? I believe the latter. God has provided abundant evidence for the resurrection. And based on that evidence, here are the top five reasons why I believe that it is *more reasonable* to believe that Jesus rose from the dead than that He did not. These five lines of historical evidence are why I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus really did rise bodily from the dead two-thousand years ago.

How do we know that Jesus rose from the dead?

1) Jesus wasn't the only "Messiah"

- **read Acts 5:34-39**
- It might surprise you to learn that Jesus wasn't the only man in Israel in the 1st Century who claimed to be the Messiah. There were actually *many* of them! They each attracted a crowd of followers and built a movement... and then they died. And as soon as they died, their movements died out and their followers went home.
- None of their followers, not a single one, claimed that their messiah rose from the dead. No one built a religion around any of these guys.
- Why? Because in the minds of 1st Century Jews, the death of a "messiah" proved that he wasn't the messiah! Death was proof that he was a fraud.
 - o **Matthew 16:21-22**
 - o Peter, like all 1st Century Jews, could not conceive of a messiah who would die. The messiah would be God's King. How could God's King die? That just didn't make sense.
- Skeptics of Christianity often claim that the apostles made up the resurrection story and people bought in to it because everyone in the 1st Century expected miracles like resurrection to happen. They were pre-modern. They lived before the scientific age. They were conditioned to see miracles in everyday life so it was no big deal to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.
- No! That is a naïve and insulting view of 1st Century people. No one expected a body to rise from the dead. Gentiles found the concept of resurrection laughable. Jews thought there may be a resurrection at the end of time when God comes to earth. But no one expected a body to rise. They weren't idiots. They knew that when a body dies, it stays dead.
- That's why it's not at all surprising that all the other messiahs were forgotten as soon as they died. What's surprising is that *this* Messiah was not forgotten. His followers did not disband. His movement did not die out... it grew exponentially around a claim that no one

had ever made before for any of those other messiahs, the claim that *this* messiah rose from the dead.

- How do you explain that Jesus' followers didn't disband? How do you explain this ridiculous, unheard of claim that they make – that a messiah who died – which should prove that he was a fraud – had actually risen from the dead?
- The only reasonable explanation is that their claim is true – that they really did believe that they had seen the risen Jesus with their own eyes.

2) Women were the first witnesses

- read **Luke 23:55-24:7**
- In all four Gospels the first witnesses of the resurrection were women.
- That might seem trivial. But here's why it matters:
 - o In the first century, women were not eligible to testify in a Jewish court of law.
 - o Josephus, a first century Jewish writer, explained that even if multiple women claim to have seen the same thing, their testimony should be rejected, "because of the levity and boldness of their sex."
 - o Celsus, the second-century critic of Christianity, mocked the idea of Mary Magdalene as an alleged witness of the resurrection, referring to her as a "hysterical female . . . deluded by . . . sorcery."
- First century Jewish and Roman views of women were incredibly chauvinistic. Non-Christian society assumed that women were unintelligent, unreasonable, and unreliable.
- So that forces us to ask, if you were making it all up, inventing this story of the resurrection to try to get people to buy into your new religion and follow you, why would you choose witnesses who were regarded as unreliable and ridiculous in the eyes of your culture?
 - o For illustration sake, imagine that I'm trying to fool you into buying into a fake investment so I can make money off of you. I'm not going to tell you, "Hey I've got this great investment opportunity, it's a guaranteed win, my 4-year-old told me all about it!" No. 4-year-olds aren't thought of as reliable judges of investment opportunities! If I want to fool you I'm going to tell you it's an investment that I read about in the Wall Street Journal. I'm going to quote a witness you believe to be reliable if I'm trying to deceive you.
- So if the apostles were trying to deceive their contemporaries, why did they choose witnesses whom their society assumed to be unreliable?
- The only reasonable explanation is that they're not making it up. It really happened this way. The women really were the first to see the resurrected Jesus.

3) The Apostles looked foolish

- If you were going to make up a religion to get people to follow you, presumably you would make yourself look good in that story. If the apostles, the men who wrote the NT were making it all up, we would expect them to cast themselves in a favorable light.
- That's why it's shocking to see just how foolish the disciples looked throughout the Gospels, including right after the resurrection. Let me give you a few examples.
 - o Right after Peter told Jesus that the messiah could not die... **Matt 16:23**
 - If I'm making it all up... I'm going to leave that out!
 - o Or how about this one from the night Jesus was arrested... **Matt 26:69-75**

- Peter's a coward in that story. He's no hero. He's scared of a young servant-girl. He betrays Jesus and runs away crying.
 - If I'm making this all up... I certainly wouldn't include that!
 - But it's not any better even after the resurrection!
 - The women witness the resurrection and come and tell the Apostles, but... read Luke 24:11
 - Luke 24:36-38
 - The women come across in a favorable light, but the Apostles look foolish and weak! Not only were they not expecting the resurrection – they don't even believe it when they're told it's happened. They don't even believe it when they first see Jesus.
- If I'm making up a religion to get people to follow me, I'm going to make myself look good, strong, wise, and smart. That's precisely the opposite of what we have in the Gospels. The Apostles present themselves as weak, cowardly, and doubting. They present themselves in a very unfavorable light. Why? The only reasonable explanation is because it's true. This is what really happened. They were actually weak, cowardly, and doubting – they're not making it up. They are faithfully, accurately telling us the real history surrounding the resurrection of Jesus.

4) Their enemies never brought out the body

- **Acts 4** – Peter and John stir up all of Jerusalem with their claim that Jesus had risen from the dead, and 5000 men believe. The church in Jerusalem grows massively overnight. That terrifies the religious leaders. They'd just crucified Jesus to maintain their hold on power, and now they feel it slipping away. It seemed as though the entire city was converting to Christianity overnight.
- So they ask themselves, "What shall we do with these men?" What shall we do to silence their teaching about Jesus?
- If the Apostles made it all up, then there's an extremely easy answer to that question: just bring out the body!
 - It had only been a few weeks since Jesus' death. The body would still be recognizable. Everyone in Jerusalem had seen Jesus during His trial and crucifixion. Just bring out the body and everyone would know: these guys are making it all up.
- And yet as Christianity grows and spreads in Jerusalem, in Judea, and throughout the Roman world, the enemies of Christianity – the Jewish and Roman authorities – never brought out the body! That would have ended Christianity, instantly! It would have been game-over for our religion.
- So why didn't they bring the body out and parade it through downtown Jerusalem? The only reasonable explanation: they couldn't find the body! The tomb was empty. There was no body to parade through the streets.
- Now critics of Christianity have an answer ready: the reason there was no body to parade through the streets of Jerusalem was that the disciples stole the body. They stole it so they could claim Jesus rose from the dead and gather lots of followers and lots of attention for themselves. Seems like a reasonable answer until you realize that...

5) The apostles chose to suffer and die for their claim

- Acts 5 – Peter and John were flogged ("to beat, to whip")
- Acts 12 – James, the brother of John, was beheaded

- Acts 14 – Paul was stoned. They literally pummeled him with stones till he fell unconscious, at which point they assumed he was dead.
- Acts 16 – Paul was beaten with rods.
- Shortly after writing 2 Peter, Peter was crucified upside down.
- Shortly after writing 2 Timothy, Paul was beheaded.
- Eleven of the twelve disciples were martyred for their allegiance to Jesus. The only one to escape martyrdom was John and he was imprisoned and tortured for his faith.
- Now if I had made up this whole story of about seeing the resurrected Jesus, why would I choose to be beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and executed for something I knew was a lie?!
 - o If I was Peter and I saw soldiers coming to crucify me, that’s when I would throw up my hands and say, “Fellas, fellas, there’s been a huge misunderstanding! That whole story about Jesus rising from the dead... yeah, I made that all up. Sorry. I thought it’d make me popular. Obviously I was wrong! So can we just forget about all of this?!”
- Who willingly chooses to be persecuted, beaten, tortured, and killed for something they knowingly made up?!
 - o Before Paul was a Christian he was a high-ranking Pharisee with Roman citizenship. He was a man of privilege and wealth. From a human perspective he had nothing to gain and everything to lose by becoming Christian. Yet he willingly chose to suffer and die because he claimed to have seen the resurrected Jesus.
- There’s no way to explain the apostles’ willingness to suffer and die unless they really believed that they themselves had seen the resurrected Jesus.

These five verifiable facts are why I believe that Jesus truly rose from the dead. There’s simply no other reasonable explanation for all the historical data. Two-thousand years ago on that first Easter morning something happened that had never happened before and has never happened since: a man who died conquered death and rose from the grave. That’s not just a fairytale we tell our children. It’s not just a metaphor for spiritual rebirth. It’s not just a story we’ve inherited from our forefathers. It’s a historically verifiable FACT.

On my darkest days this is what I cling to. I hang my whole life, my reality, my actions, my thoughts, my attitudes, my hopes on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It really happened. He really rose from the dead! And because He rose, everything God promised us in the Bible will one day come true. Sin will end, death will be cursed, the world will be made right, and love will win!