

# IMAGINE THAT THERE IS NO RESURRECTION

## 1 Cor. 15:12-20

Written in March of 1971, during the Vietnam War, **Lennon** described the **song** as “an ad campaign for peace”, and it is no surprise that his moving anthem is such a beacon for those who long for global harmony even today.

**Lennon** said that **Imagine** was "anti-religious, anti-nationalistic, anti-conventional, anti-capitalistic. . . but because it is sugar-coated, it is accepted."

The problem with his dream, however, is blatantly obvious when one simply takes the time to read the lyrics.

Imagine there's no heaven / It's easy if you try  
No hell below us / Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people / Living for today

Imagine there's no countries / It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for / And no religion too  
Imagine all the people / Living life in peace

Imagine no possessions / I wonder if you can  
No need for greed or hunger / A brotherhood of man  
Imagine all the people / Sharing all the world

In December 1980, shortly before his death he spoke of his intent behind the song again...

“The concept of positive prayer. . . If you can imagine a world at peace, with no denominations of religion – not without religion but without this my God-is-bigger-than-your-God thing – then it can be true.”

How sadly mistaken was John Lennon.

The apostle Paul would have us Imagine something else entirely.

Apparently, there were some members of the church in Corinth who doubted the truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. In this chapter, Paul is writing to remind them that the resurrection is essential to salvation and to any hope of Heaven.

In an effort to awaken the Corinthian believers to the importance of the resurrection, he paints a dismal picture of what life would be like if there had been no resurrection. You see, if there had been no resurrection from the dead, then we would be in sad shape this morning!

Let us take the time to consider what would be true if there had been no resurrection.

## I. V. 12-19 A BITTER ASSUMPTION

If there was no resurrection from the dead, then we have:

*“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? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;”* (1 Corinthians 15:12–13, NASB95)

### A. V. 12-13 No FOUNDATION

—Paul reminds us that if there is no resurrection from the dead then Jesus did not rise again.

*“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised;”* (1 Corinthians 15:16, NASB95)

If He is dead, then everything we believe in come crashing down around us.

If there is no resurrection from the dead, then Jesus Himself is no better than the tens of thousands of others who have claimed to be sent from God.

If He did not rise, then His death was the unfortunate end to a misspent life and His teachings are nothing more than the raving of some maniacal madman!

If it is true, and there is no resurrection from the dead, then the very system of belief that we cherish so deeply is nothing more than just another religion that offers life and hope to no one.

If Jesus is still in that tomb today, then our way of life is a farce and we are among the greatest of fools to have ever walked upon this planet.

For, if Jesus is dead, then our system of belief is dead, our foundations have crumbled beneath us and we might as well go home right now!

**B. V. 14-16 No FAITH**—In these three verses, the great Apostle moves to paint an even more sobering portrait of how things would be if Jesus were indeed dead today.

**He tells us three areas that are truly off base if Jesus is dead.**

*“and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.”* (1 Corinthians 15:14, NASB95)

1. **V. 14 Our PREACHING Is Vain**—Paul tells us that if Jesus is dead, then all the preachers have wasted their words and time proclaiming the message of the resurrection.

From the first witness, Mary Magdalene—[John 20:2](#), to the 500+ hundred mentioned in verses [5-8](#) of our text, to great men like Spurgeon, Wesley, Lloyd-Jones, Edwards, Moody, Criswell, MacArthur, Sproul, Lawson, and millions of others have been fools, if Jesus did not raise from the dead!

2. **V. 14 Our FAITH Is Vain**—Paul tells us that if Jesus is still dead, then we are wasting our time serving Him and worshiping Him.

If Jesus is really still dead, then you would be just as well off worshiping a rock, a tree or an image of some type. If Jesus is still in the grave, then everything we do is false / foolish!

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then all the preaching you have listened to over the years is a lie, all your praying, serving, witnessing, and church attendance have all been a waste of your time.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead then you are the victim of the most cruel hoax ever played on humanity and the Christian faith is the greatest joke of all time.

*“Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.” (1 Corinthians 15:15, NASB95)*

3. **V. 15 We Are False WITNESSES**—Paul tells us that all those who spread the Christian message of salvation through the crucified and resurrected Jesus are liars if Jesus did not in fact rise from the dead.

Every time we open our mouths to sing, to witness, to testify, to preach, or whatever we do in His name, then we are liars if He did not rise from the dead.

Just consider for a moment what a leap of faith this is! Paul was a man of wealth, social standing, influence and great education.

Yet, he was willing to throw all of that away for the cause of Jesus.

He was beaten, imprisoned, assaulted, stoned and left for dead, all for the name of Jesus. Here is a man who was at one time dead-set against Christians and Christianity.

His single purpose in life was to destroy everyone and everything associated with, “that name!” For Paul to turn his back on everything he loved and then devote his life to spreading a lie is simply too much to believe.

If Paul did this, then he was absolutely crazy!

As if things couldn’t get any worse, Paul now tells us that if Jesus isn’t alive, then we are still lost, hell bound and still in our sins this morning.

*“and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.” (1 Corinthians 15:17, NASB95)*

- C. **V. 17 No FORGIVENESS**—The heart of the Gospel message is the great truth that Jesus Christ left Heaven above, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life and died on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. It doesn’t stop there!

The Bible goes on to say that He rose again the third day for our justification, Rom. 4:25.

*“He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” (Romans 4:25, NASB95)*

If Jesus is still dead, then we cannot be justified and we are still lost in sin this morning! If He is dead today, then we are still looking for a redeemer and we are all headed to Hell!

*“Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” (1 Corinthians 15:18, NASB95)*

- D. **V. 18-19 No FUTURE**—Paul now moves beyond this life to consider things of an eternal nature.

He tells us that if Jesus is still dead, then we have no hope for the future at all.

Notice 2 terrible things that are true if Jesus did not rise from the dead.

1. V. 18 **Our Loved Ones Who Have Gone Before Are Gone Forever**—One of the blessings of the Christian life is the knowledge that one day, we will participate in a reunion in Heaven which will include all those we have known and loved who knew the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, Paul tells us that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then everyone who dies is forever lost.

There will be no hope and there is no future to anticipate. If Jesus is still dead, then we might as well live it up down here and enjoy the time we have left. If Jesus is dead, then we are all but dust and when we die, we are gone forever!

Heaven is a cruel joke, mom and dad are gone forever, sons and daughters are gone, brothers and sisters are gone, grandparents are gone, if there is no resurrection from the dead.

*“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”* (1 Corinthians 15:19, NASB95)

2. V. 19 **We Have Lived Our Lives In Vain**—Paul is saying that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then every child of God has wasted his/her life in living for Jesus.

We have believed a lie and are headed to Hell!

If the Bible lied about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, then you and I can believe nothing this Book tells us

—All bitter, cruel lies if Jesus did not rise from the dead!

If there is no resurrection from the dead, then we are all in real trouble and need to seek psychiatric help to be delivered from the delusions that have gripped and enslaved our minds.

But, thank God, aren't you glad that Paul did not stop writing with verse 19?

Verse 20 stands like a majestic lighthouse pointing the way to hope, safety and salvation.

**So, we have IMAGINED THERE's NO RESURRECTION!**

## **II. V. 20 A BLESSED ASSURANCE**

*“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”* (1 Corinthians 15:20, NASB95)

Paul states, for the record, the thrilling fact that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead! He lives this morning just like the Bible says He does.

The stories penned by the Gospel writers aren't just the ranting of deluded men, but are, in fact the truth of God and the means of salvation for lost souls.

When the angel told the women that Jesus was risen, his witness was true! He lives! He lives! Now, because He lives, all of those negatives I spoke about a minute ago are transformed into positives.

You see, before the first ray of sunshine ever broke the darkness on that Sunday morning 1988 years ago, God had already stretched forth His hand and had called the Son to some forth from the grave.

Then, the Father sent the angels to roll away the stone.

Not to let Jesus out, for He was already gone, the stone was rolled away so that you and I might look into the most sublime and powerful event the world has ever known!

Yes Jesus lives and now all our negatives have been placed in the positive column.

## He lives. Therefore:

- A. **Our Foundation Is FIRM**—The bedrock doctrine of our faith is true. Jesus lives and Christianity stands as the only valid means whereby a lost sinner can reach the God of Heaven.
- B. **Our Faith Is GENUINE**—Our preaching has power, our faith is real and our witness is true! Jesus lives and we stand vindicated in our faith and in our claims concerning Him. It is not a waste of time to trust Jesus. It is not an exercise in vanity to believe in the One called Jesus. He lives and because He lives our faith lives also!
- C. **Our Forgiveness Is ACCOMPLISHED**—Because He lives, we are no longer lost in sin, but we have been delivered by His blood and have been justified by His life. Now, all our sins have been washed away as far as the east is from the west. We have been forgiven and we have been redeemed!
- D. **Our Future Is SECURE**—Our loved ones, who died in faith, live on and await our arrival in glory. There is a heavenly home waiting all of God's children on the other side. In this life, we can enjoy the victory, but in the life to come we can enjoy the presence of the One who died in our place on the cross. Yes, negatives have become positives, but despair has also been changed into hope for all men who receive Jesus and trust Him by faith.