

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“The Importance of Resurrection”**

November 11, 2018 - 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Objective: To help people realize the Importance of Jesus’ resurrection.

Opening prayer

Turn to: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

WHY...

do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front?

... why do banks leave vault doors open and then chain the pens to the counters?

... At the drive-up ATM machine, why is there Braille lettering?

... why don't you ever see the headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery'?

... why is 'abbreviated' such a long word?

... why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food?

... why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes?

... why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

Things that make you ask, “Why?”

Some things in life don't make much sense, but the Christian faith is not one of those things. The Christian faith is supported with logic and reason.

There are certainly things within Christianity which are difficult to understand - and there are paradoxes within the faith:

- God's sovereignty and human free will
- First will be last...last will be first
- The humble are exalted
- Freedom is found by becoming a bond-slave to Christ
- Strength is found in our weakness
- We live by dying to ourselves

For many people throughout history, the Christian teaching about bodily resurrection doesn't make sense. They can't imagine how anyone with a brain could believe such things.

I mentioned last week how the Greek culture - from Plato around 450 B.C. through the 2nd century philosopher Celsus - they abhorred the idea of bodily resurrection, and this was likely the reason some in the Corinthian church were starting to deny the gospel of resurrection which Paul had preached, which they had believed and was saving them (15:1-2).

ComRes surveyed 2,010 British adults about their belief in the resurrection of Jesus (February 2-12, 2017). The research was commissioned by BBC local radio for Palm Sunday.

The survey found:

- 17% of all people believe the Bible version of Jesus' resurrection
- 31% of Christians believe Bible's version of the resurrection, rising to 57% among "active" Christians (*those who go to a religious service at least once a month*)
- Exactly half of all people surveyed did not believe in the resurrection at all
 - 46% of people say they believe in some form of life after death and 46% do not
 - 20% of non-religious people say they believe in some form of life after death
 - 9% of non-religious people believe in the Resurrection, 1% of whom say they believe it literally

“An article in the Soviet Encyclopedia asserts that the concept of the resurrection is in “decisive contradiction with scientific natural knowledge” (Smith 1999, 455)

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/265-growing-doubts-about-the-resurrection-of-the-dead>.

I completely agree! Of course it is! That's what makes it so amazing...such an amazing work of God...that He has broken through the normal, natural way of life and death...and He brought back to life the dead corpse of Jesus Christ. That's why we call this a miracle (*meaning miraculous - unordinary*) - we call it *super-natural* - meaning beyond what is normal and natural.

In the first 11 verses of **chapter 15**, Paul recounts for the Corinthians the gospel he preached to them when he was in Corinth - the gospel which they believed and fully embraced (Christ died for our sins, was buried, was risen, appeared). Now, in **vs. 12-19**, for the sake of argument, he puts forth a hypothetical assumption, and then he logically unfolds what the fallout

would be if the Corinthian doubters were correct in their belief that there was/is no resurrection from the dead. In these verses, Paul goes through a logical progression to help them (*and us*) see if there is no resurrection, the gospel would be totally destroyed. He lists 7 devastating results to the faith if there is no resurrection - and I'll include a few more for good measure.

Read 15:12-19

Vs. 12 presents the major problem in the Corinthian church. There were some who were saying "there is no resurrection of the dead" - which is the exact opposite of what have been preached among them.

If there is no resurrection...then let's unfold this and see what the logical chain reaction is. ***If there is no resurrection, then:***

1. Christ has not been raised. vs. 13

If Christ has not been raised, the implications are legion for the Christian faith. If Jesus is still dead, the whole structure of Christianity collapses. A dead Jesus does not triumph over death or sin. It's not a problem that Mohammed or Buddha never rose from the dead - nor did they claim they would.

But, if Jesus is still dead, there is no gospel - which is what the 2nd point relates to:

If there is no resurrection, then:

2. Christian *preaching* is futile. vs. 14

The Apostles all taught the same thing: the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection was the transforming event in their lives! They were fearful, depressed disciples after Jesus was crucified and buried - in fear for their lives. But when they saw the risen Jesus, everything changed! Peter's first sermon on Pentecost was powerful because of the resurrection!

The joyous announcement of the angels at the birth of Jesus loses all its joy if this little baby ends up being crucified...end of story.

The Greek word translated "vain", "useless" or "futile" is a word which has the idea of being empty. If you take out the resurrection, there is nothing to proclaim from the pulpit - no good news to share with your neighbor.

Preaching becomes nothing but self-help ideas / moral or ethical teaching. But if there's no life after death...if there is no resurrection...if there's nothing after this life...then what's the point of living within Christian morality? What's the point of loving others sacrificially? Why not live according to your own interests...and let others fend for themselves?

If there is no resurrection, then:

3. Your *faith* is useless. vs. 14, 17

No resurrection = cotton candy faith.

Ever put cotton candy in water? It disappears because it's mostly air.

If you have faith in a dead Jesus, then your faith is useless. What is your faith in? You think Jesus can save anyone - if He couldn't save Himself?

You believe He is Lord and sovereign - if He's been in the grave for the past 2,000 years?

If He's dead...He's not coming back...He never left!

There is no next life...there is no power over sin or redemption - no adoption into God's family through Jesus. If He's still dead, your faith is in a fraud.

Your faith is in the empty words of a populist Jewish rabbi of the 1st century who had a small following during His life and His bones are lying in some undiscovered grave.

If there is no resurrection, then:

4. We are *false witnesses* of God. vs. 15

One commentator said:

"...if Jesus was another guru-figure and in fact an impostor, it is nothing short of blasphemy to link the name of God Almighty with such a person."

(The Message of 1 Corinthians, by David Prior, p. 264)

All the Apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus. If He's not raised, the Apostles are liars. They were giving false witness about God.

You can't say they didn't know - they were misled - because they claimed to have seen the risen Christ.

Acts 1:22 (*Choosing who will fill Judas' slot - NLT*)

“Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus’ resurrection.”

Acts 5:30

“The God of our fathers raised Jesus...”

Galatians 1:1

“through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead...”

Ephesians 1:20

“that He (God) worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead...”

Liars.

And these would be the men who wrote the N.T. - and if they lied about the foundational claim throughout the N.T. - you can't believe anything they wrote.

If Jesus isn't raised, then use this book as a doorstep...because that's about all its good for!

If there is no resurrection, then:

5. There is no hope in death. vs. 15b-16, 18

One of the great joys and consolations of the faith is that our believing loved ones who die are with Christ. “to die is gain” Paul said (**Philippians 1:21**). He says to die and be with Christ is “better by far” (vs. 23). **Hebrews 11** is a great chapter - not because those listed were faithful to the

end...but because the end of their life was just the beginning! They were looking beyond the grave!

“For he (Abraham) was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” (Heb. 11:10).

“...they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one.” (11:16)

“Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead...” (11:19)

When I officiate a funeral, I often quote from one of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s sermons.

“Death is grace, the greatest gift of grace that God gives to people who believe in Him. Death is mild, death is sweet and gentle, it beckons to us with heavenly power, if only we realize that it is the gateway to our homeland, the tabernacle of joy, the everlasting kingdom of peace.”

(Bonhoeffer, Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy, by Eric Metaxas, p. 531)

The great Christian hope - our certain hope - is heaven - resurrected to eternal life in heaven.

If there is no resurrection, our hope is a fantasy - one that will never be realized.

If there is no resurrection, then:

6. There is no forgiveness of sins. vs. 17b

Romans 4:25

“... Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

If Jesus wasn’t raised, then our “trespasses” (sins) were not paid for - we are not justified before God - there has been no sacrifice for our sins and we “are still in your sins”.

“All talk of “Christ dying for our sins” (vs. 3) becomes meaningless, if in fact He stayed dead.”

(The Message of 1 Corinthians, by David Prior, p. 264)

Scripture teaches “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) and when Jesus was raised, He conquered sin and death. If there is no resurrection, then sin and death have not been defeated.

We know that the death of Jesus paid the price for our sins. His death was the atoning sacrifice for us.

In **Luke 5**, when the paralytic was lowered by his friends through the roof to be healed by Jesus, Jesus first told the man his sins were forgiven. To prove He had the power to forgive sins, He then healed the man. The supernatural power - miracle working power of Jesus proved He had the power to forgive sins.

Just like **Luke 5**, the way we know Jesus' sacrifice was pleasing to God - and God validated His atoning death was through the resurrection (super-natural work of God). If Jesus wasn't raised, then His sacrifice was not sufficient - it was deficient - and the result is we're still in our sins.

If there is no resurrection, then:

7. We are pitiful in our faith. vs. 19

If there is no resurrection...then Christ has not been raised...then those of us who have faith in Christ - who

look to Him for our present and future hope - we are to be pitied by the rest of the world.

Why?

Because we believe in... we have given our life to a fraud...a hoax.

We believe in promises which have no reality.

We believe in a fantasy.

We're in the same group as those who sent \$ to the multi-millionaire in Nigeria with the frozen bank accounts!

The teaching of Jesus...the teaching of the Apostles falls to the ground and they're revealed as liars and frauds.

Jesus is not God, because He's still dead.

The rest of the world lives their life without the limitations of faith - and the freedom and liberty we claim to have in faith is without reason - it's baseless.

Leon Morris, the great Australian New Testament scholar said, if there is no resurrection and Jesus was not raised, then *"anybody is better off than the Christian."*

Those are the 7 devastating things Paul lists in these verses - and I've added a few more.

If there is no resurrection, then:

8. Jesus was a liar or delusional. *John 11:23-26*

Perhaps the greatest fallout from Christianity - if there is no resurrection - is Jesus. All throughout His ministry,

He talked about His impending death, and His resurrection.

Matthew 16:21

“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

John 2:19

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

(See also John 10:17-18)

If Jesus was not raised, then he was either delusional or a liar. If He was not raised, He is not who He claimed to be - He is not God - He is nobody's Savior.

If there is no resurrection, then:

9. The entire Church is *foolish* and *false*. *1 Corinthians 3:11*

The Church consists of those who have faith in Christ. The purpose of the Church is to make disciples of people from all nations by sharing the gospel with them - the gospel of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. (Matt. 28:19-20)

The purpose of the Church is to share the risen Christ with the world - so more souls can be saved from their sins.

But if there is no risen Christ, then there is no gospel - no forgiveness of sins - we have no Savior - we have no hope of resurrection - and the Church is made up of

fools who should be pitied - because we believe in a false gospel.

The risen Jesus is the foundation - “the cornerstone” of the Church.

1 Corinthians 3:11

“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 2:20

“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone...”

Acts 4:11

“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.”

If Jesus has not been raised - then the entire foundation and purpose of the Church is built on sand.

If there is no resurrection, then:

10. Satan has won, God has lost.

If there is no resurrection, and therefore Jesus has not been raised, then God has not defeated sin and death.

Satan has won.

Sin and death reign.

All those who have believed in God throughout history and all believers in the present day - are all in hell and destined to hell.

The words of Paul in **Philippians 1:21:**

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Is nothing but foolish and delusional. There is no “gain” in death if Christ has not been raised!

Apply it...

Acts 17:32-34

“Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”

33 So Paul went out from their midst.

34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.”

What is your view of the resurrection of Jesus?

Do you mock it?

Do you doubt it?

Or...

Do you believe it?

If there is no resurrection and therefore Jesus was not raised, then the Christian faith is useless...and Christians pitied more than all others.

But if it's true...and Paul makes the case for it in vs. 1-11 - then anything less than faith in Jesus Christ will result in your eternal judgment.

Do you believe it?

If your answer is ‘yes’ - then put your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins - ask Him to be your Savior.

Vs. 20: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead...”

That is good news...great news...and we'll talk about that next week.

Closing prayer

Admit your sins...

Believe in Jesus as your Savior...

Commit each day to the risen Christ!