

Christians Gone Wild!
1st Corinthians, week 13
Our Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12–34)
April 2, 2006
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And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.
1 Corinthians 15:17

Christianity is the largest religion in the history of the world. Billions of people worship Jesus Christ as God because, unlike the founder of any other religion, He declared Himself to be God. Furthermore, Jesus proved His divinity through His resurrection from death as the only person to ever defeat the grave. Thus, the entirety of Christianity is built upon the historical fact of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Simply, if Jesus did not rise from death then Christianity is not merely a well-intentioned error, but in fact a disgusting, deceitful delusion, as countless people have given their lives and trusted their eternity in vain folly.

What if Jesus did not rise from death?

¹²But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

Paul correctly reasons that if Jesus did not rise from death then there are several dire consequences:

- No one will ever beat death.
- The apostles' preaching is a worthless lie.
- The Christian faith is worthless.
- Sin cannot be forgiven.
- Christians who died in hope of rising like Jesus were stupid fools.
- There is no hope beyond the grave.
- Christians are pitiful fools.

What if Jesus did rise from death?

²⁰But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet [Psalm 110:1]. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For he "has put everything

under his feet.” [Psalm 8:6] Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. ²⁸When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

Since Jesus did rise from death, Paul says that there are several blessed implications for those who trust in Jesus:

- We will rise like Him.
- We belong to Jesus instead of Adam.
- We will live forever in His Kingdom.
- Satan, sin, and death have been conquered.
- Jesus is our Lord who rules over all creation forever.

Why does it matter if Jesus rose?

²⁹Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? ³⁰And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? ³¹I die every day—I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³²If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” [Isaiah 22:13] ³³Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” ³⁴Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

Paul spells out why the historical fact of Jesus’ resurrection must be clung to continually as the central truth of our life. In so doing he speaks of being baptized for the dead, which has tragically led to a heretical practice among Mormons. They wrongly believe that someone who is living can be baptized as a proxy for a deceased loved one, thereby enabling their salvation after death. The exact meaning of Paul’s comment has been subject to divergent interpretation. But it seems that Paul is simply saying here that some Christians had already died and that their friends and family were brought to faith by the testimony of their life and death—another tragic deception, if there is no eternal life. Also, the apostles who suffered and died for the resurrection could have spent their short lives on gluttony, debauchery, and perversion without fear of eternal consequence.

Paul’s concluding remarks in this section reveal the true nature of the problem surrounding the resurrection. Resistance to the resurrection was not grounded in an academic objection, but a love of sin. Some were denying the resurrection so that they would not need to repent of their sin but could live a debased life without fear; they deluded themselves into thinking that they would not need to stand before Jesus for judgment in the end and face an eternity in hell. Therefore, we see that behind most false teaching is simply a desire to be our own little god and do whatever we want without consequence. The issue is a hard heart more than an unconvinced mind.

Verses for next week: 1 Corinthians 15:35–58