

# AM 1 Corinthians 15:12-28 No Resurrection - No Salvation

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[ 0 : 00 ] From the New Testament, Paul's letter, or his first letter I should say, to the Corinthians! And we'll be reading from chapter 15.

And it should be on page, if you're using a pew Bible, 1157. 1157.

1157. This is a fascinating letter in some ways.

Because we think it was probably written around 52 AD. Now if you think that Jesus was crucified and rose again around AD 30.

You can see how close this is to the events of Jesus. His crucifixion and his resurrection.

[ 1 : 11 ] Furthermore, Paul begins this chapter, which we're going to read from verse 12. But Paul begins this chapter by indicating that he's only passing on what was given to him.

He doesn't specify when that was. But it's probable that it was even closer to those events that these truths were passed on to Paul.

So even more so than any of the Gospels, this letter to the Corinthians is nearer the events of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And I say that because it is quite remarkable as we start reading in verse 12, which we will do now. Now if Christ, this is him addressing the Christians in Corinth.

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

[ 2 : 29 ] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ, if in Christ we have hope, in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

[ 3 : 48 ] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Amen. And may the Lord add his own blessing to the reading of his word. Let's unite. Let's just pray for a moment just now.

Lord, we pray that you will bless your word for our eternal good and for your glory. Also, Lord, I want to remember Dr. Donald MacDonald's family.

As Dr. Donald MacDonald passed away just one week ago. And we know him and remember him as a great pillar in the church.

One who was bold to state his confession of faith and the values of the kingdom of God.

[ 5 : 00 ] And we pray for his wife. We thank you for her and for her tireless dedication to her husband with all his challenges and health needs.

And we pray for the children, Christine and others. And we ask, oh God, that you would be with them at this time. As they will obviously remember that this is joy for Donald.

And yet at the same time, just as they were weeping at the death of Lazarus, it's a time of mourning. Blessed are they that mourn.

Oh Lord, we pray then. Just be with us now for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen. Millions of Christians across our world today will celebrate on this Easter Sunday the resurrection of Jesus

Christ.

Christians believe that following his crucifixion, God raised him, raised Jesus Christ from the dead. [ 6 : 20 ] So that Jesus is a living saviour and as Christians is our living hope. Many people, of course, today would argue that such a happening and such an event is impossible.

Indeed, some Christian thinkers would argue that the only resurrection that took place was a resurrection in the minds of those early disciples.

Even more surprising is to find some Christians in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians saying that there isn't such a thing as the resurrection of the dead.

So for Paul and those of us who believe and place our hope in the physical resurrection of Jesus, are we to be pitied for believing such claims?

I want to look at two things today. I want to look at how Paul answers, if you like, the claim that there is no such a thing as the resurrection of the dead.

[ 7 : 38 ] When you're dead, you're dead and that's the end. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. So I want to look at what Paul says in these verses.

And then the second thing that I want to do is to share with you four reasons why it is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Firstly, let's look at how Paul tackles this. And it's a lesson in apologetics, if you like. Apologetics, when I say that word, trying to defend your faith against someone who doesn't agree with it.

Paul actually takes the claim or the proposition that there isn't such a thing as resurrection of the dead and shows its consequences. Graphically, graphically and vividly.

Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, this is the proclamation. I remember hearing the late Martin Lloyd-Jones in TV and he was being interviewed.

[ 8 : 58 ] And somebody said to him, one of the interviewers said to him, what was the message that the Christians were preaching? And in his own inimitable way, he said, Jesus and the resurrection.

And this is exactly true. If you read Acts of the Apostles, this is what they were proclaiming and shouting. And down in the streets, in the towns, in the villages, in the valleys, he is risen.

Jesus has risen. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Can you believe it? Can you believe it? So near to the resurrection of Christ, there's actually some believers in a Christian congregation who are saying there's no resurrection of the dead.

Now, I don't want to get into this too much, into the nitty-gritty of that claim, but perhaps they were saying there is no physical resurrection.

[ 10 : 10 ] Perhaps they were saying, remember at the time of Lazarus, and Martha said, oh, I know that he will rise again at the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection of the dead was a kind of item of faith among the Jewish people at that time.

But it was something that was way in the future. And Jesus, of course, said to Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. The resurrection won't wait to the future.

It will come with me. So, but still and all, some of them were saying there's no resurrection of the dead. And Paul says, listen guys, if there's no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

If it's true that there isn't such a thing as resurrection of the dead, if that's a truth, then Christ hasn't been risen. It hasn't been raised.

And he says, if Christ hasn't been raised, then our preaching, our message, our proclamation is finished.

[ 11 : 21 ] It's useless. And so is your faith. Now, just pause a wee minute here. Paul says this, if I can find it without too much difficulty.

Paul says this in Romans 10, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

You cannot really be a biblical Christian until and unless you believe in a risen saviour. That Jesus was raised from the dead.

That's one of the core non-negotiable beliefs of Christianity. So, if there is no such a thing as resurrection of the dead, Paul says, what are the consequences?

This is, our message is useless and so is your faith. But further, says Paul, we are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ whom he did not raise if it is true that there is no resurrection of the dead.

[12:55] And if Christ has not been raised, says Paul in verse 17, he repeats, he's repeating himself, but he adds something else on.

Your faith is futile and listen to this, and you're still in your sins. And you're still in your sins.

There is no declaration. There is no confirmation. There is no yes from God the Father that the problem of sin has been accepted by Christ's sacrifice.

Of course, the cross and the resurrection are two sides of a coin. They are inseparable and they are together.

So, for Paul and those of us who believe and place our hope in the physical resurrection, it is a great necessity apart from anything else.

[14:12] and without it, Christianity collapses like a pack of cards. And if there's no resurrection, we may as well all get up from our seats now and go back to our home.

But of course, Paul knows he himself had seen the risen Christ in Damascus, in the Damascus road.

And Paul says, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep. And this is our great hope that because our Lord and Saviour has triumphed and because his death was the death of death, that he has become, he's the pioneer and the prototype and the leader, if you like, of this new humanity, which will, Christ's body was the same that rose and not the same.

Because remember, he said to Mary or Martha, don't touch me, I have not yet risen. And remember, his body could go in and out of places that a non-raised body couldn't do.

So there's continuity and there is discontinuity. And that is the great hope that we have, that we too will have a body that is transformed and yet it will be the same body and I can't sort of stop to try and go through that a bit more deeply, but that's what the teaching of the Bible is.

[16:13] Hopefully, this sort of halted these incredible ideas that there is no such resurrection. But you know, Peter, moving on to my second point, Peter says in one of his letters, always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within you.

And this is not more important than it is at the resurrection. So we have to be able to answer critics and we have to be able to give a reason for our belief in the resurrection.

resurrection. And I want to suggest to you for that the great German philosopher Kant, Immanuel Kant, he's famous for Kant professed to be a Christian, and by the way, so many of the ancient philosophers all professed to be a Christian.

I'm not commenting on what the level of their Christianity was, but most of them were Christians. For instance, Descartes, who lived about 1600 and odds, who's regarded as the father of modern philosophy because of his great phrase, I think therefore I am.

And that opened the door to rationalistic, if you like, and reason, and all this sort of stuff. And also, the other thing about these philosophers, I'm just putting a wee door, and that is what I read at university philosophy.

[17:59] These people were generally polymaths. So, for instance, Descartes was a scientist, and many other things.

Just as David, humorous Scottish philosopher, was an economist and a historian as well as a philosopher. Anyway, Kant said, faith has its own reasons.

And I'm going to give you four. The empty tomb. The empty tomb. All the Gospels agree that the tomb was found empty sometime after Jesus had been buried there.

we're talking about historical facts now, regardless of whether one is a Christian or not. And while it's true that this fact alone, the empty tomb, in and of itself, does not prove the resurrection of Jesus.

Indeed, the empty tomb by itself didn't even convince the disciples. You remember one of the women that was at the tomb and she saw the tomb was empty and she spoke and she said, where have you laid him?

[19:24] So that didn't catapult her, this empty tomb, into believing in the resurrection. salvation. But the empty tomb, of course, is certainly necessary for such a claim.

The chief priests at the time accepted the tomb was empty and concocted, you'll remember, their own explanation, that his disciples had come and stolen him away.

which of course is totally untrue, but is, what shall we say, it could be an alternative explanation.

And so the empty tomb is accepted as a fact by the religious leaders who wanted rid of Jesus.

The Christian church would have been strangled at birth if all it had left was an empty tomb. If there had been no experience of the risen Jesus, if people had not seen him and touched him and ate with him and conversed with him and there was only an empty tomb, I believe Christianity would have been strangled at birth.

[ 20 : 50 ] The empty tomb is a crucial, unnecessary factor in the claim that he has risen. And the easiest way to have shown that that was a false belief was to have produced the body of Jesus.

History declares otherwise. Surely if that body was in the tomb or anyone else for that matter, Christianity would never have taken off and the Easter faith would have been strangled at birth. So the empty tomb has great credibility even although in and of itself it doesn't prove unequivocally the resurrection of Jesus.

But the second reason is not just the empty tomb but the encounters with Jesus Christ and the experiences of seeing and conversing with the risen Christ and the empty tomb go together. They're inseparable. You can't have one without the other. You can't have an experience of the risen Christ while his body remains in the tomb.

[ 22 : 16 ] That would indeed be a hallucination. and I'm not going to get into all of the ideas that people have stated over the decades and centuries that don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

You can take it from me. There's only one explanation can explain the facts of the birth and origin of Christianity and that is he is risen.

So they had this experience of seeing and this encounter with Jesus Christ.

And that's why the empty tomb and seeing the risen Jesus, as I say, they go together. Now it's true again, we have to be truthful as Christians, just as we can be truthful and say that the empty tomb alone would not clinch the birth of Christianity.

We can also say no person saw Jesus rising. No human being, disciple or otherwise, actually saw him rising.

[ 23 : 31 ] They saw him raised. The disciples never expected Jesus to rise.

That's for sure. as you read the gospels, you can see the hack couldn't comprehend what he was saying because in their brain at that time, a messiah was a soldier, a leader of an army, somebody who would establish a physical and geographical kingdom and empire.

And these things were so foggy in their brain. Remember Mary, as I said, where have you laid him? Remember the two of the Emmaus roads, see the mood of their conversation? We had hoped, we had hoped that it was him that would restore Israel.

Some of them, first time I read this, I was utterly, astonished, at the end of Matthew's gospel, at the end of Matthew's gospel, now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them, and when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

[ 24 : 57 ] Could you believe that? Seeing is believing, is it? Some of them doubted. Hopefully not for long.

Some thought he was a ghost. The women were not believed. They only came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus gradually, and based on an encounter with Jesus.

Last of all, Thomas, unless I see him, I will not believe. my point here, is the accounts of seeing the risen Jesus have the ring of truth.

They do not read as made up things, they read as naked honesty. But here's the \$64,000 question. Are we still in the tomb of our guilt and sin? and have we come to see, not physically, but with the eyes of faith, the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 26 : 22 ] And is he our savior, and is he our hope for time and eternity? there is something mysterious, and Christians shouldn't be frightened to acknowledge that, and otherworldly enveloping the accounts of the resurrection.

Go and read each of the accounts of the resurrection in the four gospels. Read them carefully, read them thoughtfully, read them asking God to help you as you read them.

And you know, it's unsurprising, is it not? Jesus' resurrection body is an enigma. Touch me and see, don't touch me, I am ascending.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is what I would call a trans historical event. It's at the border between history and trans history.

It's the beginning of a new creation. It's something new. It's the new creation. He's the firstborn of that new creation.

[ 27 : 53 ] He's the first fruits, the great harvest is to come. And this is part of our hope, and it's a wonderful hope, and I hope you think it's a wonderful hope.

We're not just going to be disembodied spirits, enjoying the fellowship of the Father and the Son. We're going to be embodied, redeemed people, modeled in the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. The eye has not seen nor the ear heard what God has laid up for those whom he has redeemed. This is a wonderful redemption.

This is a magnificent redemption. This is a redemption that has left no stone unturned. There then is that second reason, that encounter with Jesus Christ.

And if you've not had that encounter, I plead with you. Christ is looking for you, and he's near you, and he wants to have an encounter with you.

[ 29 : 20 ] The third reason, we've looked at the empty tomb, we've looked at the encounter as reasons for our belief. The third reason is the extraordinary transformation of the disciples.

What we need to think about here is this, what best explains the remarkable change and transformation of those first disciples of Jesus that saw him being crucified and heard the mob yelling for his death.

Following the crucifixion of their Lord and Master, they curled up into a little ball, terrified to put their head above the parapet of their association with Jesus.

Remember Peter, your speech gives you away, you're a Galilean, were you not with him? I never knew him. even after seeing the empty tomb, they went back home and locked themselves in the room.

The question then becomes, what made this little band of despairing, dejected, and disbelieving disciples mutate into a fearless believing band of witnesses, flooding the streets of Jerusalem with great courage, with the message, he whom you crucify, God has raised from the dead.

[ 31 : 20 ] Christianity is born. Christianity enters history. What took them out of that locked room into the streets of Jerusalem to boldly proclaim, he is risen, he is risen?

Can any other explanation account for the remarkable transformation of those disciples?

It was seeing the risen Lord and Savior and being given the mission from him that catapulted the community of believers out into the streets of Jerusalem with only one message, he is alive, he is risen.

And we must not forget this, my friends, we want to go out into the streets of Dumfries and tell people I serve a living Savior.

You know, when I was 19, there were two people out in the streets of Clyde Bank sharing their faith and I was on my way to hear a band and they managed to stop me in my tracks and they thought what intrigued me was this.

[ 32 : 57 ] They said we believe that Jesus is alive and not only that, Jesus lives in our hearts and our lives and I could not get my head round that.

And it's that that catapulted those early disciples out into the streets of Jerusalem. What about us? Have we been transformed by an encounter with Jesus Christ? Have we got out of our locked rooms of fear, fear, of guilt, of hopelessness, of despair, of looking and longing for meaning and purpose, or longing for a love that will not let us go?

Blessed are they, said Jesus, whom having not seen, yet believe. in fact, Paul says somewhere, I forget where it is, it's probably in one of his letters, could even be this, could even be this letter, I now know no one after the flesh, not even Christ.

So there's the empty tomb, there's the encounters, and there's the extraordinary transformation of the disciples, as Kant says, these are reasons that we can offer, that anybody can look at, and measure, and judge.

[ 34 : 45 ] And the final one, and not least, is the existence of the Christian church. Perhaps the best evidence of the resurrection, is the existence of the Christian church.

its gestation, the church's gestation, historically, was the empty tomb.

Its birth, seeing, and encountering the risen Jesus. It's inconceivable that Christianity would have got off the ground without the belief that he had risen.

This is what distinguishes Christianity from every other world religion. Every other world religion can speak about prophets.

And by the way, I'm not knocking any other religion. There are good things in all of the religions.

And not only are there good things in all of the religions, all of the religions have what's known as

the golden rule.

[ 36 : 04 ] Do unto others as you would have them do unto yourself. But what distinguishes Christianity is up from the grave he rose.

Death could not hold him. The death of this man was the death of death. And that's why Christ can say to his people, because I live, you also shall live.

There are significant features of the early history of Christianity, of the Christian church, which are consistent with the church's belief in the resurrection.

Number one, Sunday, the Lord's Day. These Jewish people, their Sabbath was Saturday.

But they wanted another day, the day that their Lord had risen, and the day that they had seen him. to be the great memorial day for Christianity.

[ 37 : 35 ] The Eucharist, the communion, in Acts 2 it tells of that they followed in the apostles' doctrine steadfastly, in the breaking of bread.

bread. This is my body which is broken for you. Because the risen one is none other than the crucified one. And you know, in this letter, Corinthians, in chapter 11, you know that at communion, we read often those verses, don't we, in chapter 11, regarding the Lord's supper.

And Paul says there, for I received from the Lord, which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup after supper, the cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me, for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death but wait for it until he comes.

The atmosphere, the ether, that permeates the entire New Testament, is the coming of Jesus Christ.

[ 39 : 12 ] Christ. It's the coming of Jesus Christ. So, these are three pointers.

The existence of the Christian church with its Lord's Day and Sunday, with its breaking of bread and communion, and with its belief in the coming again of Jesus Christ.

Christ. They didn't fall out of it. They were the wolf and wolf of history. I could put it this way to people who doubt.

Could it be that he has indeed risen? Could it be that he has ascended as he said he would to his father?

And could it be that he indeed is the leader of a new humanity? A redeemed humanity? And could it be that he will indeed come back one day and consummate the final phase of his great plan of redemption?

[ 40 : 46 ] And will we be there? Mary was in a hymn singing church for 19 years. I was in a hymn singing church for 15 years.

years. I was four years behind Mary. When the role is called up yonder, I'll be there.

by God's grace and only by God's grace. May I ask as we close, will you be there?

Amen. And may the Lord bless these thoughts to each one of us for his glory.