

What if there is no Resurrection?

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Date: 04 April 2021

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. My name is Vijay. I'm one of the pastors here and a special welcome to you if you're new or visiting. Happy Easter to everyone, though. Normally, we would preach about resurrection from that Easter story, which Teresa read from us from Matthew.

But instead, we're going to tackle resurrection from a slightly different angle. And so we're going to preach through one Corinthians, which Ily read. And let me begin by asking you a question. What do you think happens when you die?

What do you think happens when you die? What is your version of afterlife? Let me tell you the Bible's view. So Jesus will return and he will resurrect every dead Christian and give them new bodies.

And then he will take all Christians to a new earth. Death itself will be no more. And Jesus will rule this new creation forever and ever and ever. And God will finally be the most important person to everyone and everything.

God will be all things to all people. And if you were paying attention when Ily read that one Corinthians passage, you'll realize that all I did there was borrow from verse 23 to 28 of that letter.

[1:11] And so how does the Bible's view of afterlife match your own view? For those of you who are atheists, maybe you reject the whole idea.

And so for you, when you die, you die. Maybe for you, for others here, your perfect afterlife is more heaven and less earth.

So for you, it's the pearly gates. It's your soul being flying free on some sort of journey. And that is what the Corinthians in our passage thought.

They were an extraordinary church. If by extraordinary, we mean extraordinarily messed up. Their idea is halfway through verse 12. How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Meaning they didn't believe in a physical bodily resurrection. To them, a bodily resurrection was gross and unspiritual. What do you think?

[2:09] We're all going to be corpses walking around like some sort of zombie apocalypse? They prefer the idea of souls flying free, not bodies coming back to life.

But what if they're right? And there is no resurrection from the dead. What if the atheists are right? And when you die, that is all. You stay in the ground.

Because let's face it, on Easter Sunday, we're essentially celebrating that a human being came back to life after three days of being in a tomb.

And Paul says, if there's no resurrection of the dead, that is like a nuclear bomb under all of Christianity. And so what he does in verse 13 to 19, they are logic chains.

They are pillars of Christianity that topple over if when we die, we stay dead in the ground. So walk through the logic with me. Verse 13. If there's no resurrection of the dead, then Jesus can't have been raised either.

[3:17] And verse 14. If Christ has not been raised, the apostles' testimony, that is the New Testament, that is all a lie. Oh, that is useless. And so is your faith.

More than that, verse 15. We, apostles, are false witnesses. We lied about God. If that was too fast for you, Paul works through the logic chain again.

Verse 16. If the dead are not bodily raised, then Christ has not been bodily raised. And that means the Easter story is rubbish. So, verse 17.

Trusting Jesus with your afterlife, that faith is futile. He can't help you. He's still dead in the ground. And that means his dying on the cross on Good Friday to atone for our sin.

That didn't work. It wasn't enough to satisfy God for all the wrong that we've done. So, you're still in your sins. Verse 17.

[4 : 15] And not just us, but verse 18. All Christians who've died before, they are lost. Because they will stay in the ground too. Verse 19. Apostles who endured so much.

That is a pitiful way of life. Do you see how many vital Christian things fall over if there's no resurrection of the dead? You see, lots of people want to debunk our beliefs and point at Christians and call them all stupid.

But the scandals in the church, the idea of, you know, where is God and suffering, how hopeless some ministers are, none of that has slowed us down. The church is still here.

We're all full this Sunday morning. The apostle Paul says, if you really want to blow up Christianity, attack the Bible's view of afterlife. Verse 13.

If there is no bodily resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Jesus is still in the ground on Easter Sunday, that is a nuclear bomb under all of Christianity.

[5 : 19] It means the most meaningful thing we can do today is give one another chocolate eggs. Although I'm not going to get any. But anyway, everything else, says Paul, is useless, false, deceptive, futile, unhelpful, lost, and a pitiful way of life.

Do you see how important resurrection is? Most of us in the room, we're Christians. We believe that Jesus rose to new life. We believe in the resurrection. But is the Bible's view of afterlife what you were hoping for?

Like the Corinthians, do you prefer the idea of heaven where your soul can fly free? Maybe you're disappointed by the idea of another body on another earth.

Because on this earth, it's your body that has really let you down. So, hips and heart, knees and nose, eyes and ears, muscles, memory, mental health.

Maybe it's your body that has limited all you could be. And what you were really looking forward to was your mind and soul being unshackled and set free.

[6 : 32] Verse 20 to 23, it's the link between Jesus' new body and the new body that you're going to get.

This is our second point. What Paul does in these verses, 20 to 23, he takes us back to Genesis chapter 3. During the time of Adam, when, verse 21, death came through a man.

See, God made the world in Genesis 1 and 2 and he made Adam. And he put Adam in charge of the world. But in chapter 3 of Genesis, death arrived because Adam didn't want to serve God.

He wanted to be God. Verse 21, death came through a man. You see, we tend to think of death as human and frail and physical and resurrection as godly and divine and spiritual, but not here.

By a man, Adam, death. By a man, Jesus, we're made alive. Verse 21, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

[7 : 46] If that's too quick for you, Paul repeats the logic again. Verse 22, have a look down. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

It's a parallel cause and effect. Since the time of Genesis 3, all people die. I hope I don't have to convince you of that. That is the sign, if you die, that is the sign that you are born of Adam.

When there's tragedy on the news, when you visit a loved one in hospital, you go to the funeral of someone you know, that is the legacy of Adam. This week, I got glasses and I'm too afraid to wear them in front of you.

So you all look like blurry blobs to me. That my eyes are getting weaker. It's the symptom of a body on its way to death. And if you're over 30, isn't that the easiest thing in the world to believe?

Slow or sudden, if you feel your body declining, you are born of Adam. And death is the family trait that he has passed down to you.

[8 : 55] But just as sure as through one man death, so too, verse 22, all in Christ will be made alive. It's a parallel certainty between two men, Adam and Christ.

And the key illustration is there in verse 20. Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. And the illustration, it goes like this.

In springtime, the farmer, not me, but a farmer, a farmer tastes his first apple. And that apple tells him what the rest of the harvest will be like.

That first fruit is a taster. It's a sample, a sign of what is certainly going to come in the harvest. And the Corinthians in our passage, they are terrible, terrible farmers.

They believe that Jesus was risen to new life, but they think that that is all. And he is the only one. And that is as impossible and as ignorant as a farmer tasting that first apple and then saying, do you know what?

[10:01] I think this is the only apple. There'll be no other apples after this. When behind him, there's a whole orchard bursting with fruit. See, in verse 20 and 23, Jesus is the first apple.

Christ, the first fruits. Then, when he comes, those who belong to him. He is part one of a crop of human beings that God will raise from the dead.

Not as a second or third harvest, part of the same harvest. His resurrection body is the taster. It's the sample. It's the sure sign that what comes after him is a similar fruit, similar taste.

And it is guaranteed for all Christians because we have a real link to him. Verse 18, those who have fallen asleep in Christ.

Verse 22, so in Christ all will be made alive. Verse 23, those who belong to him. If Jesus is risen from the dead, which we all believe, it's impossible and ignorant that that will not also happen to you when he returns.

[11:19] The first fruit idea, that is the crucial link between what happens to Jesus on Easter Sunday and what will certainly happen to you. Verse 22, for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

It's a parallel cause and effect. And what Paul does, he can take this idea of Adam and Jesus and that parallel way beyond just a new body.

In fact, to a totally new world. We don't have time to cover these verses this morning. But verse 24 to 28, they are a parallel to the first creation account.

These verses speak of a new kingdom, a new world. But this time, rightly ordered. God is on top. Under him, a man, Jesus.

And unlike the first man, Jesus is happy to bow the knee and serve God. Unlike Adam, Jesus rightly squashes rebellion to God. He puts it all under his feet, even death.

[12:26] And so unlike Adam, no death in this new kingdom. If you like, what we did there, verse 20 to 28, that is like a Bible overview. First creation, new creation.

First Adam, second Adam. First Genesis, new Genesis. Do you believe that you will get a new body? If it happened to Jesus, it's impossible that it won't happen to you if you trust in him.

If you're not a Christian here today, do you believe in the future that Jesus wants to include you and wrap you up in? And our remaining verses are a test for all of us.

We move beyond belief to a test. A test of our belief. Whether we think the resurrection is true. This is our last point. Verse 29, you can see, it talks about an ancient practice of being baptized on behalf of the dead.

And we're not exactly sure what that is. But either way, Paul hits them with the inconsistency of it. If you don't believe Christians are going to get new bodies, why are you doing this ancient religious practice?

[13:40] It makes no sense. And here are some religious practices of ours that make no sense either, if there's no resurrection of the dead. It's a test of how consistent we are.

So, if there's no resurrection from the dead, stop praying and reading the Bible at funerals. Stop singing songs about Jesus ruling. He's still in the ground. Stop singing songs about his returning, because you won't be there.

Easter Sunday, that's a lie. You all should have gone for brunch. It's a beautiful day. What are you doing in this room? If you don't believe in resurrection, many of our religious practices are pointless, and they make no sense.

It's a test of our consistency. Also, if you don't believe in resurrection, think about full-time Christian ministry. Why would Paul choose the life of an apostle?

He says, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? Verse 30. There's no resurrection. Why would you face death every day? Verse 32. Why would you fight wild beasts at Ephesus with no more than human hopes?

[14:47] How inconsistent. Lots of our mission partners in this church, they risk life and limb if they're exposed in foreign countries. How dangerously inconsistent if they don't believe in resurrection.

We have AFES student ministries here who serve and preach the gospel at the local university campus. Do you know their salaries are just what they can raise?

So essentially, you could say that they're professional beggars. Humanly speaking, why on earth would you do that? For us Christians in the room, if the dead are not raised, why would you use your only life in sacrifice and service of God and his people?

The standards of God are so high. The Christian life is so costly. What do we gain if on top of the regular problems of life, we add trying to follow Jesus as well?

How ridiculously inconsistent of us. And Paul agrees. Verse 32. If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

[15:54] And isn't that logical? I wonder if you think Melbourne life is best described by eat and drink for tomorrow we die. We might turn our noses up at a way of life like that, but at least they're being consistent.

If you're not a follower of Jesus, maybe you've sampled that sort of lifestyle before and you're exhausted by what a dead end it is. You need to know that Jesus is returning, that he will rule over everything and be crowned God's king.

And you too can be part of that future. And that is a better life than the exhausting dead end of eat, drink for tomorrow we die. Paul says, verse 34.

Come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning. Your body has a future. You see, Paul can give his life in the dangerous service of the gospel because he's got another life to come.

The missionaries, the gospel workers, they can risk life and limb and low incomes because they have another future to look forward to. Andrew Price, who I think he's up the back somewhere, he's going on leave for four weeks.

[17:04] If I see him on the property, I'll set the dogs on him. He needs to rest, doesn't he? He needs, and rest is good, but Andrew can push himself to a limit because he'll get another life in that body when Jesus returns.

For the Christians here, for the rest of us, there are so many ways that following Jesus will cost us in this life. It will require us to discipline these bodies.

It might mean giving up financial security for the sake of Jesus. It might mean selling your holiday house so you can have eight more weeks at church in a year.

It might mean foregoing a relationship or a friendship that is toxic to your walk with Jesus. It will definitely mean disciplining these bodies from the urges of anger and impatience and sexual immorality and greed and all these sorts of things.

But if you believe that Jesus will rise again, though these things are costly, at least you're being consistent. A few weeks ago, we talked about loving enemies, didn't we?

[18:15] If there's no resurrection, you would not give 1% of one day, not 1% of your emotional energy to loving enemies.

You would not do that if this was your only life. It's too inconsistent. It's too pitiful and vain and useless. Unless, of course, you have another life to come.

The resurrection makes sense of Christian sacrifice and service in this life. Do you see? And at the moment in this church, there are lots of people struggling with this life and in their bodies.

The glorious truth of Easter is that Jesus is alive. And if we're in him, it's impossible. It's ignorant that you won't get another body like his glorious one.

You need to know that he rose again. That if you trust in him, he's got a new body waiting for you in a new creation. I want to wish you happy Easter.

[19:22] And I can do that because Jesus is alive. And so let's pray. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?

Our Father God, we are so grateful for the Lord Jesus, who is certainly risen and conquering. And we thank you that we belong to him. And so we will get glorious new bodies in a glorious new creation where we will laugh at death.

And Father, every day when our bodies let us down through terrible sickness and declining, please would that make us look forward to that day when he returns and we'll get a glorious body.

Please would we sacrifice and serve. Please would we expend these bodies knowing that we will have another glorious one on that day. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.