

What If There Is No Resurrection?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Code: 90-408

Now I know tonight we're going to be looking at 1 Corinthians 15 as we continue through this great resurrection chapter. But to begin with, I want you to turn in your Bible to the seventeenth chapter of Acts...the seventeenth chapter of Acts because I think it gives us a good setting for what we're going to see in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

In the seventeenth chapter of Acts, the Apostle Paul comes to the religious focal point of the ancient world of his day. He comes to Athens. And it is in Athens that there are many philosophers and many religions, and many gods. In fact, in verse 16 of Acts 17 it says that, "He observed the city of Athens and that it was full of idols." There were in Athens, along with all the idols, there were the priests and priestesses that were associated with those idols and their various religions. And on top of that, there were all kinds of philosophers, as verse 18 indicates. There were Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as well as many others.

Now Paul walks into this milieu of religions and what he says to them is very, very important. Verse 18, "And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, 'What would this idol babbling be?' Others, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities.' Why? 'Because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.' And they took him and brought him into the Areopagus saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?'" What he was proclaiming was resurrection. For them with all their myriad religions and philosophies, this was new teaching. In fact, they go on to say, "You're bringing some strange things to our ears, so we want to know what these things mean."

Down in verse 22, "Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.'" Then in verse 23 he refers to the fact that they even have an altar identified as the altar TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, just in case in all of them they missed one. "He introduces them to the true and living God, the God who made the world and all things in it, the One who is the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him though He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and exist as even some of your own poets have said, for we also are His children. Being then the children of God, says Paul, we ought not to think of the divine nature, like gold or silver

or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man, therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to all men to all people everywhere that they should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Now he's been preaching the resurrection. This is new to them, a physical, literal, bodily resurrection, that is new to them. Of all the religions that are there, apparently none of them declared a resurrection. It was new teaching.

And then he says, “The One who is the leader of this religion, the representative of God Himself, the Creator, is a man who has been appointed to this task of being the judge and furnished proof has been rendered on His behalf by God, raising Him from the dead.”

Then verse 32, “When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer. But other said, ‘We shall hear you again concerning this. So Paul went out of their midst but some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with him.”

And then the next verse, chapter 18, verse 1, “And after these things, he left Athens and went to Corinth.”

Corinth was a city under the influence of Athens. Athens was the great religious focal point of the Greek world, the Mediterranean world and Corinth was in its shadow. Whatever kinds of religion were popular in Athens would find their way to Corinth because it's just down the road. I made the trip on a number of occasions. Clearly neither people in Athens, no matter how religious they were, nor people in Corinth, no matter how religious they were, believed in a physical resurrection. And with that in mind, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, a church established in a place where people don't believe in the resurrection. And I'm not talking about the resurrection of Christ. Of course they didn't believe in that. They didn't believe in the idea of a bodily resurrection. So that when Paul came to Corinth and with him came trailing the fact and he repeated it again that the resurrection was a reality and essential to the Christian faith, they were reluctant to believe that. There were, in fact, in Corinth people who said, “Dead men don't rise.” That is not to say that they didn't believe in an afterlife. Many religious affirm an afterlife. Most religions affirm an afterlife. And certainly the ones familiar to the Corinthians and the Athenians would for the most part have affirmed an afterlife. But what they did not believe was in a physical or literal resurrection. This is new.

They believed in immortality of the soul, but not bodily resurrection. Plato, for example, had taught that the human body is a prison and what you want to do is get out of the prison, which is what

happens at the time of death. A resurrection of the body would be, according to the Greek philosophers, would be a descent into the second kind of hell, this life being because of its bodily restraints and restrictions a first kind of hell. They said the body is a tomb. I am a poor soul, shackled to a corpse. Statements like that come out of the ancient philosophers and religionists.

Sinica, for example, said, "Death resolves things into their ancient elements, that is dust to dust." You go back to dust and that's it. The Epicureans and the Stoics are mentioned here and the Stoics reinforce the denial of resurrection. The Epicureans and Stoics denied resurrection, but the Stoics reinforced it by saying this...this was part of their religion, they said, "Deity is a fiery spirit, purer than anything on the earth. And that which gave man his life was a spark of this divine fire dwelt in man's body, a spark of God." That's where that idea, that notion that all of us have a spark of divinity in us, came from.

To the Stoics, death then was what they longed for in one sense because when a man died, his body simply dissolved into the elements of which it was made, but the divine spark then returned back into God. And so you were absorbed back into the deity from which you had come. For the Greeks, immortality lay precisely in getting rid of the body because the body was a corpse, the body was a prison, the body was a restraint, was a limiter. The resurrection of the body was to them then unthinkable.

There was also that dominant philosophy that we call dualism which said the spirit is good and matter is evil, philosophical dualism. The body then is some part of what is evil and needs to be eliminated. The spirit is good and needs to live forever.

Two hundred and twenty years into the era in which we live, after Christ, Celsius had a similar view saying this, "The bodily resurrection of Christians is the hope of worms, for what soul of a man would any longer wish for a body that had rotted in the ground?" That was his response to Christians claiming that one day their bodies would be raised and they would be joined with their bodies and enter in to the eternal state. He thought that was ridiculous.

Now the Corinthian believers are coming out of this kind of philosophy, out of this kind of milieu of thought in which there's a rejection of physical resurrection. So they're familiar with the fact that people think the dead don't rise. And, you know, if you check somebody's grave, there would be some reason to think that. If you check it soon enough, you see the decay begin. If you check it long time after death, you see that it has pretty much resolved itself into the elements as they thought. And since they didn't have any accurate divine revelation to tell them about a future resurrection, it wasn't actually too hard to come to that conclusion. And furthermore, they had never met any resurrected people either.

So Paul has an uphill battle as all Christians did in the Gentile world. And that is to make the Christian gospel clear in the sense that it is a gospel that includes the eternal life of the soul and the body...and the body. This is a distinctly Christian perspective.

But he's got some folks who are having a hard time swallowing this and they're saying this doesn't happen, we reject that. And so he writes this chapter to help arm the Corinthians to be able to defend the resurrection of the body as an essential component of the Christian gospel.

And by the way, I don't think I need to remind you that that is the essence of the promise that we have, that we will live in heaven forever, not only as spirits, but in glorified bodies. Philippians 3:20 and 21, we'll have a body like unto His glorious body, like His resurrection body and we have a very good description of His resurrection body, don't we?, in the gospels. And so that's the kind of body we will have. It will be different than this one and we'll see how as we work our way through the chapter.

Now let's pick up the account at verse 12. "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead," and by the way, he just preached that in verses 1 through 11 as we saw last time. This is the heart of the gospel, central to Christian truth as shown in verses 1 through 11. If we preach Christ that He has been raised from the dead, if that's essential to our gospel, and it is, by the way, because Romans 10:9 and 10 says that if you confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved. So in order to be saved, you have to believe in the resurrection, therefore we preach that Christ has died and risen again, even as we saw in the book of Mark how our Lord continued to repeat the importance of that to His Apostles. So if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, if you're going to accept that, how do some among you say there's no resurrection of the dead? You've got a problem here. You have confessed Christ as Lord, you have believed in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, now why are you denying a bodily resurrection for believers? This would indicate that some in the church who had professed Christ were struggling to shed themselves of the influences of the philosophy and religion that had been so much a part of their life.

Literally the resurrection of corpses, the resurrection of corpses is that phrase. Why are you denying the resurrection of corpses? There's no article in the Greek. Why are you denying physical resurrection from the dead? Why are you saying the afterlife is only spiritual?

So to that, Paul replies in this section. What if there is no bodily resurrection? You've got to think through the implications of this. If you say there is no bodily resurrection essentially, you have destroyed the Christian faith. He really...he marshals a really, really heavy-duty argument here. He has just spent eleven verses reaffirming their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no gospel without the resurrection, what is the gospel? He says what the gospel is, it is this that Christ died for our sins, verse 3, according to the scriptures, and verse 4, that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the

Twelve and then to 500 brethren, and then to James and then the Apostles, and then to me. He appeared in a resurrected, physical, visible, touchable form.

If you deny that there is a resurrection, if you deny bodily resurrection, which you just said you believed in the case of Christ, you deal a death blow to Christianity. That launches him into a series of progressive arguments, seven disastrous results of denying bodily resurrection...seven disastrous results of denying bodily resurrection, and they are progressive. They build on one another. And, of course, they connect our resurrection with the resurrection of Christ.

Now there's a lot we could say about resurrection, as I told you this morning, the Old Testament saints believed in a resurrection, the psalmist refers to it in Psalm 16, Job refers to his own resurrection, Daniel refers to a general universal resurrection in Daniel 12:2, there are other references to it in the Old Testament. The idea of resurrection isn't new with Christianity, the Old Testament saints understood that to a very general degree.

But when you come in to the New Testament, the truth that all believe in Christ and all who are redeemed through all the ages will dwell forever in the presence of God in a literally physical form, yes a glorified form but nonetheless physical, as the glorified and physical body of our Lord set the pattern, this becomes much more clear and much more central in New Testament teaching.

Let's go to verse 13. "But if there is no resurrection of the dead," that's the question that launches this progressive argument. "What if there is no resurrection? Then what?" Paul uses a contrary to fact statement and if that statement is accepted as some in Corinth were accepting it, then we've got some serious problems. If you're going to say there's no physical resurrection, then you're going down a path to total disaster. If there is no resurrection, here's the first point, Christ is not risen...Christ is not risen, verse 13. If there is no resurrection from the dead, if there is no resurrection of corpses, literally, not even Christ has been raised. If resurrection isn't a reality, then it didn't happen to him because...and this is very important to say...Christ was fully human. He was a man. He died as other men die. If men don't rise from the dead literally and physically, then neither did He neither could He. Now that argument assumes full incarnation. It assumes that Jesus was fully man, human in the complete sense, sinless but nonetheless human.

This certainly is the testimony of Scripture. This is a very important point to make because if these Greek influenced people think Jesus was some kind of ephemeral spirit, then that puts him in a different category and they don't have to explain a resurrection. If they think He is some kind of transcendental mind, some kind of floating reality, some kind of disembodied spirit, that changes everything. But if they understand that He is fully man in the complete sense, and He rises from the dead, but there is no resurrection, then He didn't rise. That has massive implications.

Just to emphasize His humanity, in Acts 2:22 it identifies Him as a man approved of God, a man approved of God. In Galatians 4:4 He was born of a woman. In 1 Timothy 2:5 He is the man Christ Jesus. In Hebrews 2:17 He was made like His brethren in all things. He was observed to be a man. He is identified in Mark 6:3 as the carpenter's son. He is identified by those who were putting Him on trial in John 19, I think it's verse 5, with these words, "Behold the man." John writes in 1 John 1:1 and 2 that we saw Him, we heard Him, we touched Him. The details of His life indicate His humanity. He was conceived in a woman's womb, carried full term and born, Matthew 1:18, Matthew 1:25. He was circumcised, Luke 2:21. He possessed a human body, John 1:14. He was in a body and yet a body in which God fully dwelt where His glory could be seen. Like all humans, according to Luke 2:52, He grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. In John 11 He is weeping. In Matthew 4 He is hungry. In John 19 He's thirsty. In Matthew 8 He is sleeping. In John 4 He is weary. In John 11 He feels sorrow and grief. In Luke 22 He is beaten with fists. In Matthew 27 He is whipped. In Luke 23 He's nailed to a cross. In John 19 He is seen dying. He has His side pierced in John 19. And having died, He is buried as the gospel record tells us. For example, in Matthew 27 He is a man in every sense a man.

Bodily, physically, seen and known as a man and He rose from the dead. You just affirmed that. In fact, you're not a believer if you don't affirm that. So if Christ then who is fully human rose from the dead, then how can you say there is no resurrection of the dead? You have just affirmed His resurrection. Paul's point is, if there is no resurrection of men from the dead, the man Christ Jesus could not have risen either and if He did not rise, then that is a death blow to the Christian faith...a death blow to the Christian faith.

It really doesn't matter that Mohamed didn't come out of the grave. It doesn't matter that Buddha didn't come out of the grave. It matters a lot of Jesus didn't rise. That's essential to the Christian gospel.

That moves him to a second thought and it's an obvious transition. Verse 14, "If Christ has not been raised since the dead don't rise, if you say the dead don't rise, then Christ is not risen." That's the first thing and if that's true, "Then why do you believe in His resurrection?"

But if Christ, for the sake of argument, has not been raised, then our preaching is vain and your faith also is vain. And drop down to verse 17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, you're still in your sins.

Let's just take the first part of that, the first aspect of it, "Our preaching is... vain means useless... useless." What single message marked the preaching of the Apostles? The death, burial and resurrection of Christ, that is what they preached, the apostolic preaching of Christ in His death and His resurrection. That was their message. They preached Christ crucified and risen again. If Christ is not raised, then apostolic preaching about His resurrection is useless, absolutely useless. If He didn't

rise, then He's not the Savior, He's not the Son of God, He hasn't purchased our redemption, His sacrifice has not been accepted by God, His work was not accomplished. There is no good news to preach if Christ doesn't rise. So our preaching is pointless.

The resurrection, you see, is the validation by God of His saving work. Romans 1:4, "He was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

Revelation 1 similarly says that He is dead once, but alive forever more and therefore He has the keys of death and Hades. The Lordship of Christ is secured by His resurrection. You remember that He humbled Himself, Philippians 2, all the way to death, even death on a cross, but God highly exalted Him, raising Him from the dead, giving Him a name above every name, the name Lord and at that name, we all bow. If He didn't rise, then there's no sense in preaching about His resurrection, there's no sense in preaching about His death because His death was all there was. And there was no divine validation in resurrection. All gospel preaching then is empty, useless, it is a sham, it is a hoax, there is no good news. Jesus did not accomplish our redemption, He did not conquer sin, death and hell, and the angels lied when they announced that His birth, "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy," the news is all bad, just another failure.

The implications of saying there's no resurrection are profound. If you say that men don't rise, then Jesus who is a man didn't rise. And if He didn't rise, then our preaching that He did rise is pointless and our preaching of Him as Son of God and Savior is useless.

And then as we saw, thirdly, faith is empty...faith is empty. You see it there in verses 14 and verse 17 where in both cases it says your faith is vain, your faith is worthless, verse 17. The trust you put in Him as your Savior is meaningless, believing in Him as Lord and confessing that and confirming His resurrection is useless if He didn't rise. The Apostles preached a risen Savior. You believe in a risen Savior, that's essential to His accomplished work, that's the validation by God that His atonement was accepted. But if He didn't rise, then your faith is empty, gospel preachers are useless because people don't rise. And if He's not who we say He is, then you have believed a lie. The faith of the saints is absolutely useless.

And that leads to what I just said, number four, if there is no resurrection bodily from the grave, then Christ didn't rise. If Christ didn't rise, then gospel preaching is pointless because they say He did and He didn't. And if gospel preaching is pointless, faith is equally useless. And that leads, fourthly, to the fact that the Apostles were liars, verse 15. "Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, we're false witnesses because we testified against God that He raised Christ whom He didn't raise if, in fact, the dead are not raised.

All the Apostles had preached the resurrection.

Go back to verse 11. Whether then it was I or they, going all the way back to all the Apostles that He's named from Cephas and the Twelve and James and himself, the least of the Apostles, whether it was I or they, verse 11, we preach and you believe in the resurrection. But if there is no resurrection, we are liars, the Apostles are liars.

To be an Apostle, according to Acts 1:22, required that one be a witness of His resurrection. One of these wanted to take the place of Judas must become a witness with us of His resurrection. That was a requirement for an Apostle. Why? Because they were going to be the first line of preachers of the resurrection, they needed to have seen the risen Christ. That is why Paul added to the Apostles later was given the privilege of seeing the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. They were all eyewitnesses. He appeared to Cephas, then the Twelve, and you saw the rest from verses 5 and following.

But if what they say is a lie, then they're all liars. Now we've got major problems cause we have the people who are responsible for writing the New Testament who are nothing but liars and deceivers, false witnesses. They're saying something that isn't true. They're saying they saw someone they didn't see. They're saying He did something He didn't do.

This is a courtroom analogy. The Apostles here would be pictured as false witnesses against God. God is on trial. They have perjured themselves in preaching the resurrection of Christ if God, in fact, did not raise Him from the dead, if, in fact, men don't rise.

This is a repeated New Testament emphasis, by the way, that's why God is on the dock here on trial because the New Testament repeatedly says God raised Him, God raised Him, as I read in Romans 1:4. God raised Jesus to show His divine approval of His substitutionary atonement on the cross, that He had satisfied, propitiated the wrath of God on behalf of all who would ever believe.

So, by the time we come to this place, in verse 15, where we find that the Apostles are liars because they testified against God, that He raised Christ whom He didn't raise, if in fact the dead are not raised, we've gone through a cycle of logic. The resurrection of dead men, the resurrection of Christ, the preaching of the Apostles, the faith of believers and the testimony of the Apostles form a unit. They all rise or fall together. Either dead men rise, Christ rose, the gospel is true, the faith of believers is valid, and the testimony of the Apostles is accurate. Or, dead men don't rise, Christ didn't rise, preaching is useless, faith is empty and the Apostles are liars. It's a packaged deal.

It never ceases to amaze me how people come up with ways to deny the resurrection. Wasn't it just a year or so ago when they supposedly found the bones of Jesus in an ossuary somewhere, in a phony

grave over in Israel? Supposedly the box had His name on the side of it and they were His bones? That's not a small detail. But if there's no resurrection, then He didn't rise and all of Christianity collapses. The Apostles then, says Paul, are not merely sincere men who got some bad information, they're just liars because they say they saw Him risen. But if the dead don't rise, He didn't rise and they didn't see Him, and they lie and they're preaching a false message and you're believing a hoax.

Little wonder then that modern Liberalism theology attacks the resurrection, cause everything collapses under the weight of such an attack. The first set of deductions then is concluded in verse 16, "If the dead are not raised not even Christ has been raised." You see, you just can't tear the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ out of the middle of the New Testament message without the whole house coming down.

Furthermore, Jesus is a liar because it was He who said, "If you destroy this body, in three days I'll raise it up." It was He who said repeatedly to His disciples, "I will be killed and rise again... I will be killed and rise again... I will be killed and rise again."

So Paul has given us a very strong connected argument, but he's not finished. He adds some more disastrous results. If there is no resurrection, Christ is not risen, gospel preaching is useless, faith is empty, Apostles are liars, and number five, sin's power is unbroken...sin's power is unbroken. Verse 17, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins."

Listen, if Christ didn't rise, then sin killed Him, death held Him, God did not validate His work on the cross, He is Himself condemned, and He certainly can't provide salvation for you. What is it that the gospel offers? The forgiveness of sins. How is it that the gospel offers forgiveness of sins? Because our sins were paid for in full by the death of Christ. We know it was the satisfactory offering before God because God validated His work on the cross by raising Him from the dead. But if He didn't rise, then there's no divine validation. He is captive to the sphere of death and so are we. All our sins still cling to us and they accuse us before God like so many wolves waiting to tear us to shreds. We need a Savior to free us from sin. We need a Savior to satisfy the just wrath of God against sin. We need a Savior who defeats sin. If Christ didn't rise, then sin won. If there is no resurrection, Paul says, there is no forgiveness. There is no penalty paid. There is no reconciliation provided. There's no justification, no salvation, no eternal life, no heaven cause the New Testament says, Romans 4:25, "He was raised for our justification." That's the validation for the world to see and for all human history to know by the record of the New Testament.

If God raised Him from the dead, then that indicates that His sacrifice satisfied God. Only because of that satisfaction and that resurrection can we in Christ be justified. And we heard that again tonight, didn't we, Romans 6:3 to 11, buried with Him in His death and we rise in His resurrection. That's the symbolism of baptism. We're united with Him and His death and resurrection. We die in the penalty of sin, as He pays it on our behalf, we die in Him in that sense, and we rise in Him to newness of life.

But if He didn't rise, we have no new life, we're still in our sins. Only as a resurrected Christ can He become to us wisdom and sanctification and righteousness and redemption, to borrow Paul's words in the first chapter of this letter.

And by the way, if He didn't accomplish our salvation, no one else can. There is no other Savior. There's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we might be saved, Acts 4:12. Christ not risen then dooms the whole human race to enslavement to sin forever....forever. And the words of Jesus to the Jewish leaders in John 8:21 apply to everybody. "You shall die in your sins...you shall die in your sins...you shall die in your sins."

When we understand the gospel, we understand that Christ died on the cross, He was the penalty for our sin, took it all on Him and won. And the reason we know that is because of His resurrection. He conquered sin for us.

In the fifth chapter of Acts, just a quick reference, verse 30, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus," there again is that emphasis on God raising Him up to vindicate, validate His atoning work, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as an *archegos* and a Savior to grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Do you understand that the forgiveness of sins is connected then to the validation of the Father on the work of the Son through the resurrection.

By the way, that word *archegos* is translated prince there in verse 31. It could be translated a lot of ways, originator, author, pioneer, leader, forerunner. I found an interesting use of that word in the maritime vocabulary, ships had an *archegos*. This was a crew member who was the strongest swimmer and if anything happened to the ship, he tied a rope around his waist, dove in and swam to shore. After attaching the rope, he would then go back and help everybody come along the rope to the shore. In a very real sense, Jesus swam the waters of death and anchored the line to rescue all of us. Beautiful usage of that word. But if he drowned in the waters of death, then there is no line and we're all doomed...we're all doomed. If He didn't rise, then we're still in our sins.

Number six, consequently the dead in Christ have perished. Verse 18, "Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." They're in hell. That's the logical connection. Their faith is vain because the gospel is not true, because Jesus didn't rise. They're still in their sins and if you die in your sins, the Scripture says you're going to hell. Peter, James, John, Paul, Stephen, everybody else are already and forever in eternal torment if there is no resurrection. And all the Old Testament saints are in hell, too, because their salvation depended on the same sacrifice. Hell holds everybody. Satan wins universally and God loses universally if Christ doesn't rise because men don't rise.

That's contrary to all that we believe. Philippians 1:21, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is...what?...gain." Second Corinthians 5, tremendous hope, "We know that if the earthly tent which is

our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” “We don’t want to be unclothed,” verse 4 says, “but clothed.” We’re going to be clothed with a different body. We’re going to have a different tent, a building from God, not made with human hands, not made in the normal human way of generating bodies, children. But if Christ doesn’t rise, then everybody’s in hell. And when all the believers who had believed in Him closed their eyes in death, full of hope to open their eyes to see Jesus, they opened their eyes to see nothing, but blackness cause they were all damned.

This is a crushing argument. Paul shows the horrible consequences which occur if you just deny bodily resurrection. Christ is not risen, gospel preaching is useless, faith is empty, Apostles are liars, sin is unforgiven, and dead believers are damned.

And there’s one more. Christians are the world’s most pitiful people. Christians are the world’s most pitiful people. Verse 19, “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we’re of all men most to be pitied.” Poor souls. If you have hoped in Christ in this life only, you are really a pitiful person. The word “only” there, *monon*, comes at the end of the Greek clause, so it applies to the whole thing. If Christ is only good for this life, you know, maybe make you a better person, more ethical, more moral, you’re pitiful cause Christians have come to Christ not on the basis of what He’s going to do for them in this life, but on the basis in the promise of what He’s going to do for them in eternity. If there’s no resurrection, we should have all been Hedonists. If there’s no resurrection, we’ve wasted our entire lives. That’s pitiful. We literally lived an illusion, all the way to death, only to end up in hell. Here we fight against temptation and struggle against sin, seek to please Christ, obeyed the Scripture, bear the cross, suffer reproach. And in the end, for what?

Let me say it’s a noble way to live. Oh, okay. But if Christ didn’t rise, then it’s only for now and it has no implications for the future...none. That is pitiful.

Well that is a very, very strong argument, isn’t it? More to be said about it, of course we can dig a lot deeper. If you read through the 1 Corinthians commentary on that section, you’ll find some other things that will enrich your understanding. But I don’t want to stop at verse 19, that’s why verse 20 comes next. “But now Christ has been risen from the dead.” And you can’t deny it. You cannot deny it. Why? Because of verses 1 to 11. You can’t deny it because Scripture predicted it, verse 3 and 4, witnesses saw the risen Christ, Cephas, the Twelve, 500, James, the Apostles, and Paul. The resurrection is a reality and if Christ the God/Man rose from the dead, then men do rise and if men do rise the gospel is true, your faith is valid, the Apostles are preachers of the truth, you will not perish, you will have everlasting life and you are most to be envied. Now is Christ risen, a perfect tense form, rose on a certain day in the past, and continues to be the risen Lord, all evidence confirms it...all evidence. And verse 20, “Is the firstfruits of those who are asleep.” Perfect participle that extends to all who would ever die in Christ, sleep refers to the body and not the soul. Simple statement that we all understand, Christ did rise and He is the leader, the firstfruits, the initial one of all who will one day

rise as well.

And then he goes on to say. "Since by one man came death, by one man also came the resurrection of the dead." The act of one man affected us all. When Adam sinned, we all fell. When Christ rose, all who believe in Him rise in Him. For the child of God then, death is not the end, there is a resurrection, it's a physical, literal resurrection. Jesus said in John 14:19, "Because I live, you shall live also." And as I said in the wonderful third chapter of Philippians, even describes the fact that we're going to have a body like unto His glorious body.

When we read Acts 17, let's go back to it to conclude. This was new information. But verse 32 sums up their response. "Some began to sneer, some mocked, others said, 'We'll hear you again on this.' They delayed. But some...verse 34...as Paul left them joined him and believed.. Among those who believed were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them."

The question is, how about you? What group are you in? I trust you're among those who believe because if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Father, we thank You for a wonderful day. Such a rich and glorious truth that one day we will leave this world, our spirits will ascend to you upon the moment of our death and we will be in Your presence, just men, justified men made perfect, justified women made perfect and then in the future, at the Rapture of the church, the day of resurrection, we will receive glorified bodies in which we will live forever in Your presence, like our Savior in glorified physical form, a real and true and glorious resurrection. This is our hope. This means we will be persons, not just floating immaterial spirits, identifiable, visible, audible. We'll continue to have relationships, we'll continue to be useful to You in service that we can't even imagine. We will be everything that You desired from the beginning when You created Adam, when You gave him a physical form in which He could give You glory in a very special way that even angels couldn't do and one day You'll restore that to us.

We also know, Lord, that there is a resurrection for the unjust, there's a resurrection unto judgment. Daniel 12:2, John 5, resurrection unto condemnation, even the ungodly will be given a resurrection body fit for eternal punishment. Father, we thank You that by Your grace we will receive that body like unto His glorious body in which we will live forever in perfection and in joy and in usefulness to You throughout eternity. This is our hope and this is our message. We thank You. We have no words to describe because eye has not seen or ear heard nor has it entered into the heart of man the things that You've prepared for those who love You. Part of that is a glorified resurrected body. How wonderful that will be, free from sin, free from corruption, free from limitation, free from restraint and free from death. We thank You for this and we thank You that the resurrection of Christ guarantees it for us. We pray in His name. Amen.

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