



This Foolish Faith ... Resurrection??!

1 Corinthians 15:13-20

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Today is Easter. Resurrection Sunday. But it is also April Fool's Day, which raises an interesting question I want to ask in a few moments. But just in case you need some April Fool's ideas, I have some suggestions. I'm sure the very first April Fool's joke was two cavemen sitting around a fire and included a whoopee cushion. But in case you need some ideas to participate in this annual fun, here are some suggestions.

- for your adorable children, remove the white filling from Oreos and replace it with toothpaste
- or, if your kids love caramel candied apples, I'm sure they would love caramel candied onions
- or, since April Fool's Day falls on a Sunday, take some donuts to the office tomorrow, but first fill them with mayonnaise
- or fill up your boss's office with balloons
- or cover the youth pastor's car with post-its
- or fill up your wife's car with 11 million pieces of Skittles, one guy actually did that!
- or draw a spider on a roll of toilet paper
- or my favorite, place Pop-Its under the toilet seat, then carefully let the seat down, and wait for your wife to go to the bathroom ... this promises to provide a lasting memory in your marriage

The fact that Easter falls on April Fool's Day raises an interesting question. Are we fools to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Resurrection is impossible. Dead people stay dead. So, this morning, I want to talk about *this foolish faith* of ours.

Easter is a great time of year. Flowers are blooming and everything is turning green. But ... Easter is not about springtime! We are not celebrating the return of spring. Spring is an actual illustration of the Gospel, of the promise of death to life. The picture of this flower popping out of the snow is a picture of resurrection. In the cold of winter, we wonder if life will ever return, but it always does. God's promise of resurrection is just as certain for those who believe in Christ. That's the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul wrote most of the New Testament, and he conceded to the critics, that without the resurrection, the Gospel crumbles. He said, "If there is no resurrection of the dead," if resurrection is impossible, "not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:13-14). If the resurrection did not happen, there is no Gospel. ***If the resurrection of Jesus never happened, it would be foolish to believe it. But if it did, it would be foolish not to believe it!***

As Christians, we choose "this foolish faith." We believe Jesus is alive. We believe that He actually, physically, and supernaturally rose from the dead proving to be the Son of God and proving that everything He said is true. We believe, that through faith in Him, we can be forgiven

of everything we've ever done wrong. We believe He will walk with us through everything we face in life. And, we believe that one day we will see Him face to face and spend eternity with Jesus in heaven. That's why we're here today. To affirm our faith, to celebrate our faith, and to renew our commitment to live like we believe it.

THE GOSPEL CLAIMS

First Corinthians 15 is the fullest explanation of the resurrection in the Bible. Paul made clear that the Gospel rests on the resurrection. In this chapter, he held up "the gospel," which has been preached for generations and which has been believed by people all over the world. He said, this is the gospel "in which we stand and by which we believe we are saved" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

And here it is. "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared ..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-5, NAS).

The Gospel is about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. "*Christ died for our sins.*" Jesus did not merely carry our sin and nail it to the cross. He became our sin. He absorbed our sin and nailed Himself to the cross. And by doing so, He became our substitute and died in our place. The Bible says that Jesus became "sin on our behalf" ... that He "bore our sins in His body on the cross" ... that "He gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us."¹ And it was all an act of love. Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us ... while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

"Christ died for our sins," and "*He was raised on the third day.*" Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:25, NAS). And the Bible promises that "the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in us. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to our mortal bodies" (Romans 8:11, NLT). And that new life, that eternal life, is ours if we declare our faith in Him. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9, NAS).

The Gospel is that Jesus died on the cross as our substitute. He died in our place. He paid the penalty for our sins, making it possible for us to be forgiven of everything we've ever done wrong. And then, He rose from the dead, proving to be the Son of God and proving that everything He said is true. And the moment you believe that, you will experience peace within and peace with God, He will become your Father and you will become His child, and you will have the assurance that one day you will see Jesus face to face and live with Him forever in heaven.

That is the Gospel, and it rests on the miraculous, many say foolish, resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospel demands that we believe in the impossible. The Gospel demands that we believe in the miracle of a dead man coming back to life.

BUT RESURRECTION IS IMPOSSIBLE

But resurrection is impossible. Paul realized it was hard to believe. He realized the demand of the Gospel. And he conceded that without the resurrection, the Gospel crumbles. He admitted that we would be fools to believe, follow, and preach Jesus, if the resurrection never happened.

Paul said, “If there is no resurrection of the dead,” if resurrection is impossible, “not even Christ has been raised” (1 Corinthians 15:13). ***If there is no resurrection, then Jesus is dead and He is no one’s Savior.*** Without the resurrection, Jesus is just a good man who taught people to love, who taught the Golden Rule, “treat people the way you want to be treated,” and that’s all. Without the resurrection, Jesus is just an inspirational figure who taught us to be kind. If there is no resurrection, then Jesus is dead and He is no one’s Savior.

If there is no resurrection, we are fools to preach the Gospel, because there is nothing to say. Paul did not hesitate to admit that. “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Vain, hollow, empty. Without substance. Foolishness. Without the resurrection, there is no good news. Without the resurrection, we have nothing to say. We have nothing to offer.

Paul went to say, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14). ***If there is no resurrection, there’s nothing to believe.*** Without the resurrection, Jesus is just a good man who taught people to love. So did Ghandi. So did Mother Theresa. So does every other religion. Without the resurrection, there is nothing unique about Christianity.

But it gets worse. ***If there is no resurrection, there is no reconciliation with God and there is no relationship with God.*** “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Without the resurrection, Jesus’ death does nothing for us. If there was no resurrection, He did not conquer sin and death, and there is still something wrong between us and God. We’re still in the same place we were before Jesus died. We are no closer to God than we were before. Without the resurrection, there is no forgiveness of sin, there is no victory over death, there is no reconciliation with God, and there is no relationship with God.

And without resurrection, Paul said, “Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Corinthians 15:18). The biblical phrase “fallen asleep” is a reference to death. Paul was saying, if there is no resurrection, when you’re dead, you’re dead. ***If there is no resurrection, we will never see our loved ones again, and there is no such thing as heaven and no reason for hope.*** Go back to the cemetery where one of your loved ones is buried. Go back to the grave of a parent, a grandparent, a spouse, or even a child. Remember the pastor comforting you by saying you will see them again. If there is no resurrection, you won’t.

Paul conceded. If there is no resurrection ...

- then Jesus is dead and He is no one’s Savior
- we are fools to preach the Gospel, because there is nothing to say
- there’s nothing to believe

- there is no forgiveness of sin, there is no victory over death, there is no reconciliation with God, and there is no relationship with God
- we will never see our loved ones again, and there is no such thing as heaven and no reason for hope

Paul had the intellectual integrity to admit that. Without the resurrection, the Gospel crumbles.

BUT WHAT IF IT REALLY HAPPENED

But he actually believed in *this foolish faith*, and so do we. “But now Christ has been raised from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20, NAS).

But how can we believe the impossible? Because “He appeared.”² The Bible records the testimony of eyewitnesses who saw Jesus dead and who saw Him alive again. Seven New Testament authors record the appearances of Jesus. Ten different appearances are mentioned. The appearances were spread over a forty-day period. He appeared in different places. He appeared to different people. He appeared to one person, then to two, then to a dozen, and then to more than 500 people at one time.³ Their eyewitness accounts was the spark that created the church. And the emergence of the Christian church, millions of changed lives, and people willing to die for their faith, is all evidence that something phenomenal happened.

And we believe that Jesus Christ actually, physically, and supernaturally rose from the dead proving to be the Son of God and proving that everything He said is true.

MIT professor Ian Hutchinson believes it. “I’m a professor of nuclear science and engineering at MIT, and I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. So do dozens of my colleagues ... We really believe in the bodily resurrection of the first century Jew known as Jesus of Nazareth ... We believe that a literal miracle like the resurrection of Jesus is possible.”⁴ Of course, as a scientist, Hutchinson acknowledges that science explains what normally and naturally happens. But because he believes in existence of God, he also believes that anything is possible with God. “Science is not the only means for accessing truth. In the case of Jesus’ resurrection, we must consider the historical evidence, and the historical evidence for the resurrection is as good as the evidence for any other ancient event.”⁵ A scientist from MIT agrees with the Apostle Paul.

So does a heavy metal singer. Lacey Sturm is the lead singer of Flyleaf. Listen to Lacey share her story of why she believes in Jesus. [\[Video\]](#)

Jesus saved Lacey’s life, in more ways than one. And resurrection makes it possible. The miracle in her life was possible because of the miracle of resurrection. And we’ve experienced the same thing. Jesus has changed our lives. We know how it feels to be loved by Jesus. But without the resurrection, Lacey would have no story, no comfort, no hope, and neither would we.

Here’s why I believe in the resurrection. When I look at the majesty and the complexity of the universe, it all points to a creator. The Bible says, “What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible

qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that we are without excuse” (Romans 1:19-20). I’m willing to believe in the miracle of the resurrection, because of the miracle of creation, of the grander miracle. If God could create the universe with a word, then He can raise the dead to life. And for me, the resurrection proves that Jesus is the Son of God and proves that everything He said is true.

Another reason I believe in the resurrection is because the Bible records the eyewitness testimony of those who were there. Hundreds of people saw Jesus alive again. I believe the Bible is true. I believe it is God’s word to us. It makes sense to me. It explains the world I see. I buy the story.

And the story touches my heart. My heart tells me it’s true. The cross of Jesus convicts me of my sin. It stirs up a craving for God. I want to know this God who loves me so much that He would sacrifice His son for me. “God demonstrates his own love for us ... while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, NIV). The story of Jesus, the love of Jesus comforts me and gives me a sense of peace.

Lacey’s story, my story, and your story, all rest on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

APPEAL

If you’re not a Christian at this point in your life, it’s natural to be skeptical. I realize that resurrection is an incredible, impossible claim. So I understand if you need some time to think about it. But at some point, you’ve got to make up your mind. If the resurrection never happened, I agree, it would be foolish to believe it. But if it did happen, you’d be foolish not to believe it.

The Gospel claims that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that He took our place and paid the penalty for our sin, so that we might be forgiven of everything we’ve ever done wrong. The Gospel also claims “that He rose from the dead on the third day,” conquering sin and death, freeing us from the bondage and shame of our sin, and removing the fear of death. The Gospel claims that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, proving that He is the Son of God and proving that everything He said is true.

And this is what He said. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6, NAS). There are many other voices in culture declaring there are many ways to God. But Jesus predicted His own death and resurrection, and then pulled it off. And He says there is only path to God. He also said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies” (John 11:25, NAS). And then Jesus asked the ultimate question, “Do you believe this?” (John 11:26, NAS).

It’s natural to be skeptical of the miracle of resurrection, but at some point, you have to make up your mind. You have to answer His question. “Do you believe this?”

All you have to do to become a Christian is “confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you shall be saved” (Romans 10:9). And the moment you do, you will be forgiven of everything you’ve ever done wrong. You will

experience peace within and peace with God. And you have the assurance that one day you will see Jesus face to face and live with Him forever in heaven.

If the resurrection of Jesus never happened, it would be foolish to believe it. But if it did, it would be foolish not to believe it!

Today is April Fool's Day. It's also Easter, Resurrection Sunday. So who is the fool? The one who believes, or the one who does not?

Today, I choose ***"this foolish faith."*** As Christians, we believe Jesus is alive. We believe that He actually, physically, and supernaturally rose from the dead proving to be the Son of God and proving that everything He said is true. That's why we're here today. To affirm our faith, to celebrate our faith, and to renew our commitment to live like we believe it.

NOTES

¹ See 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:24, and Galatians 1:4.

² See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

³ See Paul Little's *Know Why You Believe*, pages 55-56, where he refutes the claim that the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus were nothing more than hallucinations.

⁴ Ian Hutchinson, "Can A Scientist Believe in the Resurrection?" The Veritas Forum, March 25, 2016.

⁵ Ibid.