

Resurrection: The Hope of Everything; Part II I Corinthians 15:58

FBC Canton, Sunday AM, April 4, 2021 – Bro. Mike Roberson

Introduction: The crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus is proof that **God is the master of showing us that what we think is disastrous is actually designed for our good.**

The most horrible thing that could ever happen was the most wonderful thing that could ever happen.

That with God the test becomes the testimony.

The worst injustice was the one that won grace for those who are justly condemned.

That the loss of life is the beginning of the grace of heaven.

That the suffering does not have the final say.


Hopelessness can always turn to hope.

So be careful...what looks like the end could be the beginning.

What looks like bad can be turned to good.

Now, Here in this one verse:

The Lord motivates us to go to the next level because of the bodily resurrection of Jesus!




WHY DO WE BELIEVE JESUS RESURRECTED? HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

1. **THOMAS ARNOLD:** "No one fact in the history of mankind is proven by better and fuller evidence of every sort than this one: Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead."
2. **JOSEPHUS:** "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works... A teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, the anointed one of God. And when Pilate at the suggestion of the principal men among us had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again on the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold. These and 10,000 other wonderful things concerning him, and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day."

#EASTER14

JESUS IS ALIVE!



Because we believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus:

It means that our bodies will too be resurrected!

That will occur at the rapture of the saints...when the dead in Christ will rise first and we who are alive and remain will meet the Lord in the air in our new resurrected bodies.

- Jesus' physical body was placed in the tomb. On the third day a new glorified body came forth, no longer subject to time and space (Jn 20:19, 26; Lk 24:31).
- What emerges from a seed that "dies" is incomparably more glorious than what was planted.

Chapter 15 declares:

That which is corrupt will put on incorruption.

That which is dishonorable will put on glory.

That which is weak will put on strength.

That which is natural will become spiritual.

- "...raised a spiritual body": Our new, resurrected bodies will be "spiritual," completely Spirit-filled and Spirit-governed. Our bodies have become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19, et al.).

That which is mortal will put on immortality.

That which is from the dust will become that which is from heaven.

- Greek philosophers taught the immortality of the soul but denied the immortality of the body. At the end of his Areopagus address, the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens scorned Paul over this point (Acts 17:31-32).

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Job 19:25-27

- The Jewish rabbis believed that God created man as a body and spirit.

What the scriptures have proclaimed for thousands of years, science has just caught on to....

• Frank J. Tipler, Professor of Mathematical Physics at Tulane University, is a major theoretician in the field of global general relativity, that rarefied branch of physics created by Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose.

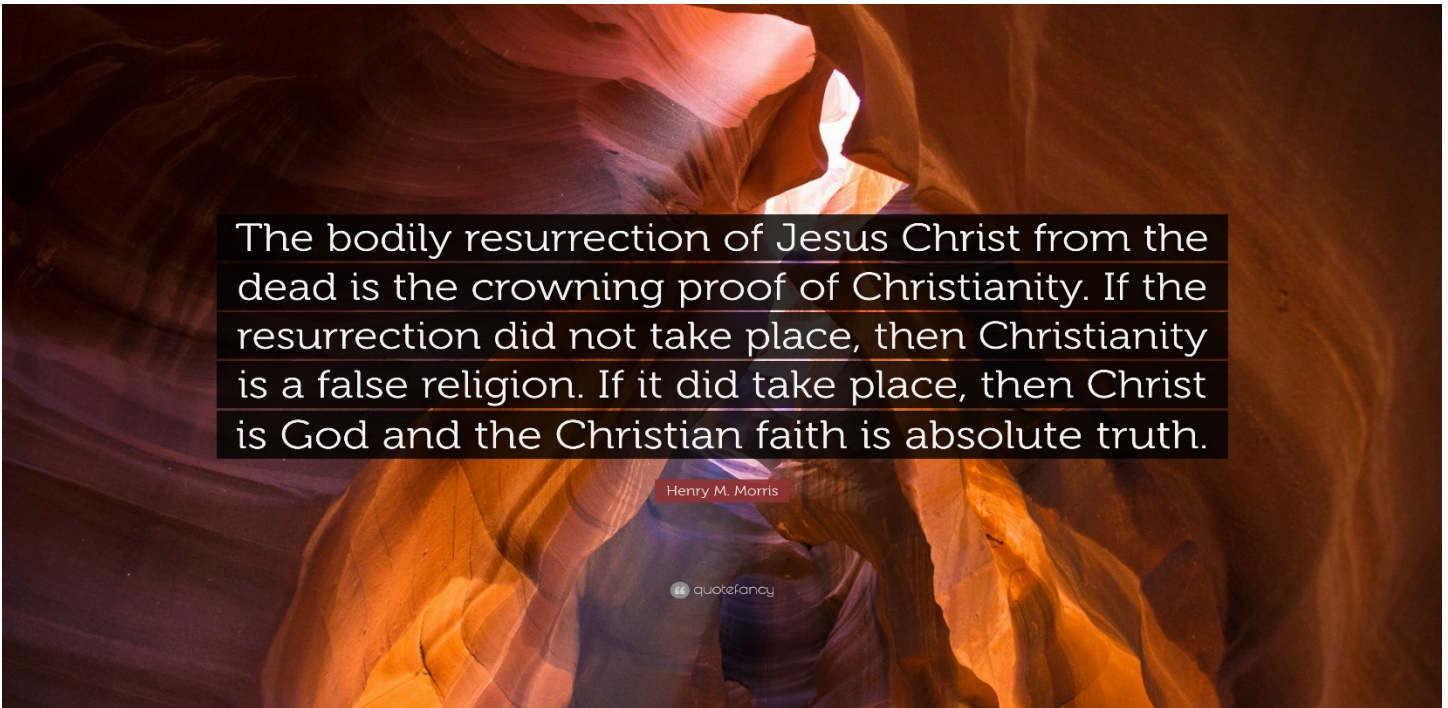
- In devising a mathematical model of the end of the universe, Tipler (a professed atheist) came to a stunning conclusion: Using the most advanced and sophisticated methods of modern physics, relying solely on the rigorous

procedures of logic that science demands, he has created a proof of the existence of God.

- He claims that he arrived at his proofs of God and immortality “in exactly the same way physicists calculate the properties of an electron.”

- Furthermore, he believes that every human being who ever lived will be resurrected from the dead.

- His book explains why he now believes that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, and that these claims are straight-forward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them.



The resurrection is the reason this chapter is here for...i.e. 'therefore.' v. 58

Then...Lord calls believers His beloved brethren, 1 John 3:1-4

3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

That motivates us...to toil, to strike a blow, to work to the point of weariness, and be weary from the amount of exertion we give to the Kingdom.

We are to not become weary *in* doing good, but we will become weary *from* doing the good. Galatians 6:9

Let's stand and read and pray that the Lord will encourage our labor for His kingdom!

- I. Since He rose from the grave, we can rise to the occasion. v. 58**
- a. To be steady. Colossians 1:23**
- i. If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, ^{G1476} and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;
- b. To not move away from our purpose. Matthew 28:16-20**
- c. To always take it to the next level. Philippians 3:14**
- i. Working because it is not empty, meaningless or vain.
- ii. *Philippians 3:14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*
- iii. “You must not only *work*, but you must *labour* – put forth all your strength; and you must work and labour *in the Lord* – under his *direction*, and by his *influence*; for without him you can do nothing.”
(Clarke)

Conclusion: The bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave means we will always take ministry to the next level.

TEN PRACTICAL WAYS TO TAKE YOUR MINISTRY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

January 5, 2017 by [Tim Price](#)

I've heard it asked before, "Have you ever seen a statue of a committee?" Taking your ministry to the next level will probably begin with you. Of course, to accomplish big things, we must rely on others around us, but the seed of change has to begin with an individual somewhere. You, as the leader of your church, ministry area, or department, have the opportunity, by God's grace, to make a difference and help move things forward. One or more of these ideas might be a catalyst for moving your worship team, student ministry team, children's ministry team or church in the right direction of growth.

Here are the ten ideas:

Active, Intentional and Desperate Prayer

All great revivals and movements of God's power have been birthed out of prayer. We can't just say we're a person of prayer, we must be a person of prayer. We must be intentional as we pray for our ministry, our people, and the tenderness of our own heart as we seek God's holiness and God's power. Do we pray out of desperation or do we ask God to bless those things that we are doing in our own strength. If you're not in over your head, trusting God to do mighty things in spite of you, then you might need to go deeper in prayer.

Be A Leader Of Leaders

There are people in your church or department who can help you lead in ministry. The role of the staff person is to develop leaders and create space for other leaders to thrive. You can never grow and scale your ministry beyond your ability and sheer number of hours in your day unless you begin to focus on leaders who can also shoulder some of the load.

Act Twice Your Size

Too often, in many ministries, we feel small and as a result, act small. One way to move to the next level is to begin to act twice your size. What structures would need to be in place if you had twice as many people involved? Begin to implement those structures and plans now. This will help build expectation for those involved in your ministry. Acting twice your size also helps your church get ready for people that God will send as we are anticipating new people. acting twice your size can apply to worship attendance, hospitality endeavors, follow-up plans or leaders' structure. In other words, start acting like you dream to be as a ministry.

Think About Your Successor

Every ministry leader is interim. What kind of structure and legacy do you want to leave for the next person who will take your role? Thinking through this transition, even if it's not immediate, helps a leader nail down the most important things to get done.

Additionally, thinking about raising up those around you who could be your successor (though you don't have to tell them that) is another way to be intentional in planning, structure and growth of your ministry area. What will your ministry be like when you leave the post? Work toward a solid foundation of health, community, love, mission filled ministry role, ready for whoever serves next to build upon.

Work *On* It, Not Just *In* It

Spend time working on your ministry – not just in it. It's easy to get caught up the rat race, fighting fires, staying above water – or any number of other analogies that indicate that we are so busy with our nose to the grindstone that we don't have time to strategize and plan for ministry. Working on your ministry may mean taking a few hours each month to organize the calendar and goals. It could be a retreat with your leaders to dream about the future growth of your church. However, you do it, take time to work on the structure and systems and this will create lasting fruit as you continue working hard *in* ministry.

Document Your Ministry

Invest some time writing down specifically what you do in ministry and the roles you would like to delegate. It's some investment on the front end, but can pay big dividends. You don't have to publish these lists and documents, but have them available. It will help you clarify what you do and will help you lead others to do things well. Here are a few documents you need to start with:

Vision – Write out your vision for your ministry. A vision is basically a snapshot of preferred future outcome. It's that simple.

Culture – What are the core values you are trying to highlight in your organization?

Process – How do people get involved in your ministry? What are the steps? Where do they begin? How do volunteers get connected to a meaningful role? What is the process for planning and preparing each week?

Main Thing – What is the main thing your ministry (or church or department does). Limit this to three or four and write it out.

Fully Involved – Document what it looks like for someone to be fully engaged in your ministry area. How will you know someone is locked in – if they are there two times per month? if they have a regular weekly job? etc. What does it look like to be a fully engaged volunteer in your ministry area or your church? What are the requirements for leaders?

What To Delegate – Write out the steps to the routine things you do so you can pass it off to others who would enjoy doing it. Create a simple document with numbered steps describing those things you find yourself doing repeatedly and could easily be done by someone else. Documenting these things could free you up to focus on larger, vision context opportunities.

Shift To Friendships

Our world is in dire need of community. Whatever your ministry area, shift from programs to friendships. Connect with your people on a personal level. People have dreams, aspirations, and issues. They have friends, families, and schedules. The more you know your people, the better equipped you will all be to live out big ministry roles together in community.

Build a Culture of Invitation

The church is about reaching out to the world. Always model a culture of invitation. Invite new people to be involved. Invite new people to become a part of your ministry team. Invite others around you into deeper and more meaningful roles. Building a culture of invitation will help grow your ministry.

Activate Volunteers

You can't do ministry alone. Who is your on your team? Help them find the place where they can be activated in ministry. As they find their place, and become more effective in their work, the ministry will grow automatically. Who needs to be on your team? If you need to build more volunteers, workers and leaders in your ministry, start praying and asking (most often this happens simultaneously). Don't have a scarcity mindset about who in your church can help you. God has equipped each church with the leaders needed to accomplish the needed ministry for that community. But often, people need to be asked.

Build Expectation

One way to take your ministry to the next level is to expect things to grow and improve. Learn to speak out – complementing people as things go well, but raising the bar on

those areas in your ministry together that need improvement. As people rise to your expectation, growth will occur naturally.

I write with church leaders in mind and I would be honored to have you join me by [subscribing to the blog](#). You can take a look at the [top posts](#) here. The posts are categorized: [pastors](#), [worship leaders](#), [student ministry](#) and [kids ministry](#). In case we're just meeting, here's little [about my life](#).

POLITICS

MARCH 29, 2021

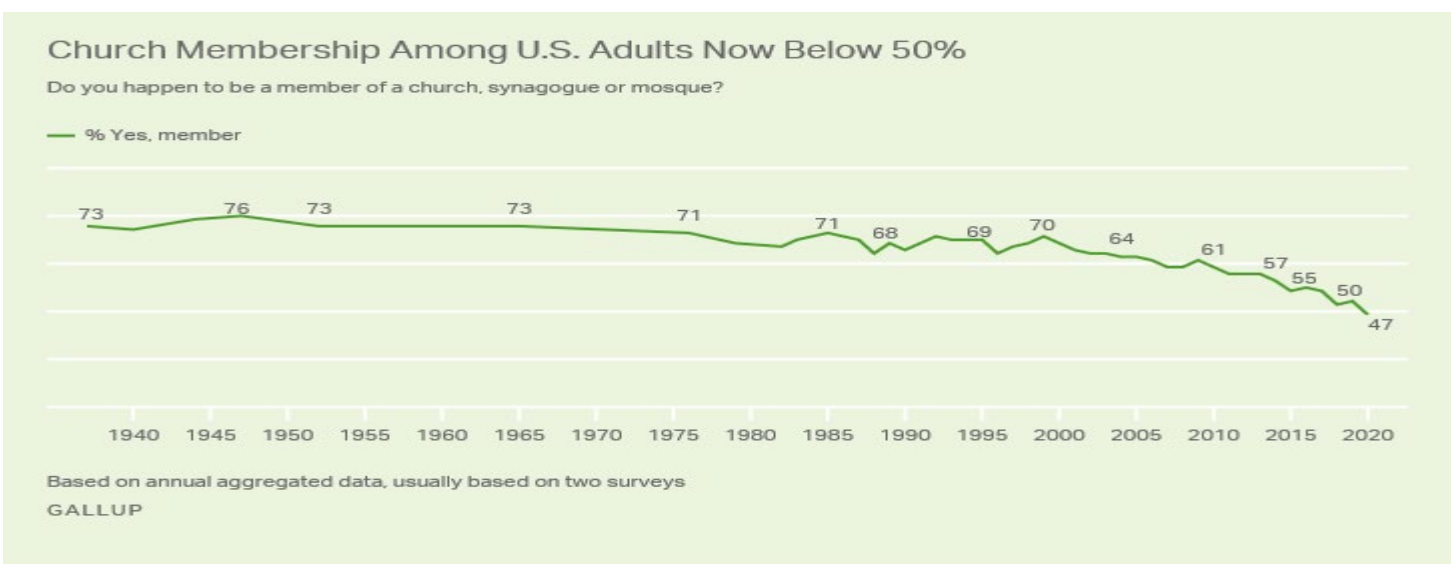
U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time

BY [JEFFREY M. JONES](#)

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2020, 47% of U.S. adults belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque
- Down more than 20 points from turn of the century
- Change primarily due to rise in Americans with no religious preference

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Americans' membership in houses of worship continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time in Gallup's eight-decade trend. In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999.



Line graph. U.S. church membership was 73% in 1937 when Gallup first measured it. It stayed near 70% through 2000 before beginning to decline, to 61% in 2010 and 47% in 2020.

U.S. church membership was 73% when Gallup first measured it in 1937 and remained near 70% for the next six decades, before beginning a steady decline around the turn of the 21st century.

As many Americans celebrate Easter and Passover this week, Gallup updates a [2019 analysis that examined the decline in church membership](#) over the past 20 years.

Gallup asks Americans a battery of questions on their religious attitudes and practices twice each year. The following analysis of declines in church membership relies on three-year aggregates from 1998-2000 (when church membership averaged 69%), 2008-2010 (62%), and 2018-2020 (49%). The aggregates allow for reliable estimates by subgroup, with each three-year period consisting of data from more than 6,000 U.S. adults.

Decline in Membership Tied to Increase in Lack of Religious Affiliation

The decline in church membership is primarily a function of the increasing number of Americans [who express no religious preference](#). Over the past two decades, the percentage of Americans who do not identify with any religion has grown from 8% in 1998-2000 to 13% in 2008-2010 and 21% over the past three years.

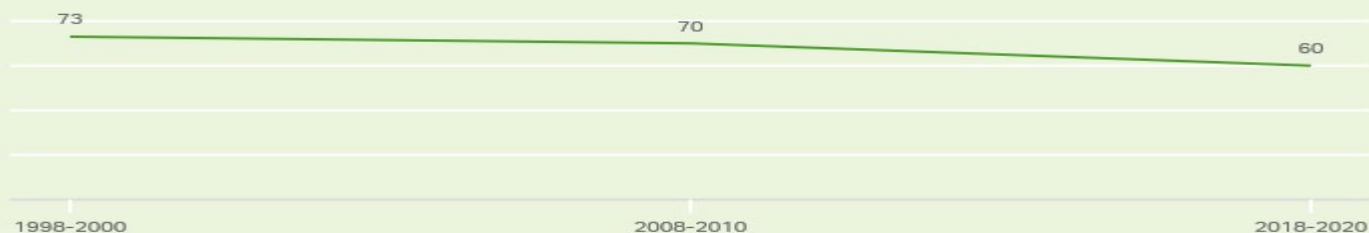
As would be expected, Americans without a religious preference are highly unlikely to belong to a church, synagogue or mosque, although a small proportion -- 4% in the 2018-2020 data -- say they do. That figure is down from 10% between 1998 and 2000.

Given the nearly perfect alignment between not having a religious preference and not belonging to a church, the 13-percentage-point increase in no religious affiliation since 1998-2000 appears to account for more than half of the 20-point decline in church membership over the same time.

Most of the rest of the drop can be attributed to a decline in formal church membership among Americans who *do* have a religious preference. Between 1998 and 2000, an average of 73% of religious Americans belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque. Over the past three years, the average has fallen to 60%.

Changes in Church Membership Among Americans Who Have a Religious Affiliation

— % Member of a church, synagogue or mosque



Data are based on U.S. adults who expressed a religious preference or affiliation, including any Christian or non-Christian religion. The percentage of U.S. adults with a religious affiliation was 90% in 1998-2000, 84% in 2008-2010 and 76% in 2018-2020.

GALLUP

Line graph. Changes in church membership among Americans who express a religious preference or affiliation. Between 1998 and 2000, 73% of religious Americans were members of a church, synagogue or mosque. That dipped to 70% between 2008 and 2010, and it fell to 60% between 2018 and 2020.

Generational Differences Linked to Change in Church Membership

Church membership is strongly correlated with age, as 66% of traditionalists -- U.S. adults born before 1946 -- belong to a church, compared with 58% of baby boomers, 50% of those in Generation X and 36% of millennials. The limited data Gallup has on church membership among the portion of Generation Z that has reached adulthood are so far showing church membership rates similar to those for millennials.

The decline in church membership, then, appears largely tied to population change, with those in older generations who were likely to be church members being replaced in the U.S. adult population with people in younger generations who are less likely to belong. The change has become increasingly apparent in recent decades because millennials and Gen Z are further apart from traditionalists in their church membership rates (about 30 points lower) than baby boomers and Generation X are (eight and 16 points, respectively). Also, each year the younger generations are making up an increasingly larger part of the entire U.S. adult population.

Still, population replacement doesn't fully explain the decline in church membership, as adults in the older generations have shown roughly double-digit decreases from two decades ago. Church membership is down even more, 15 points, in the past decade among millennials.

Changes in Church Membership by Generation, Over Time

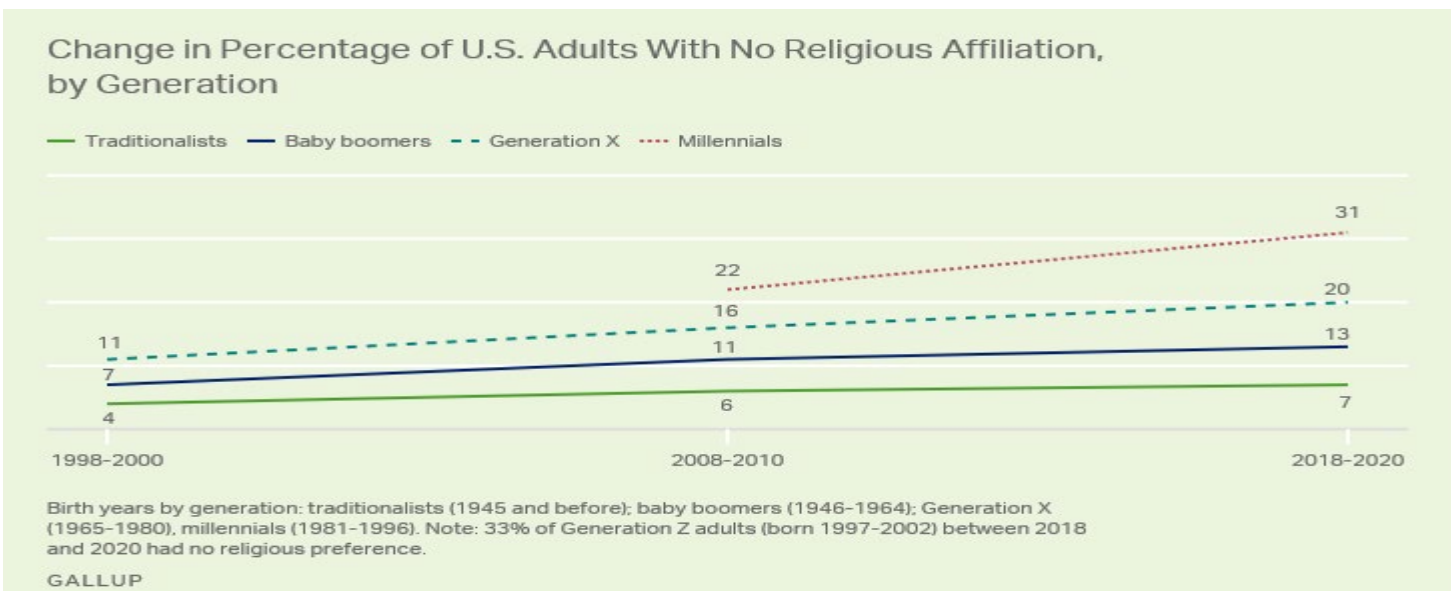
	1998-2000	2008-2010	2018-2020	Change 1998- 2020
	%	%	%	pct.
Traditionalists (born before 1946)	77	73	66	-11
Baby boomers (born 1946-1964)	67	63	58	-9
Generation X (born 1965-1980)	62	57	50	-12
Millennials (born 1981-1996)	n/a	51	36	n/a

Note: Given that Gallup's polls are based on the 18+ U.S. adult population, the 1980-2000 period would have included only a small proportion of the millennial generation. The 2018-2020 period includes only a small proportion of Generation Z (born after 1996).

GALLUP

The two major trends driving the drop in church membership -- more adults with no religious preference and falling rates of church membership among people who do have a religion -- are apparent in each of the generations over time.

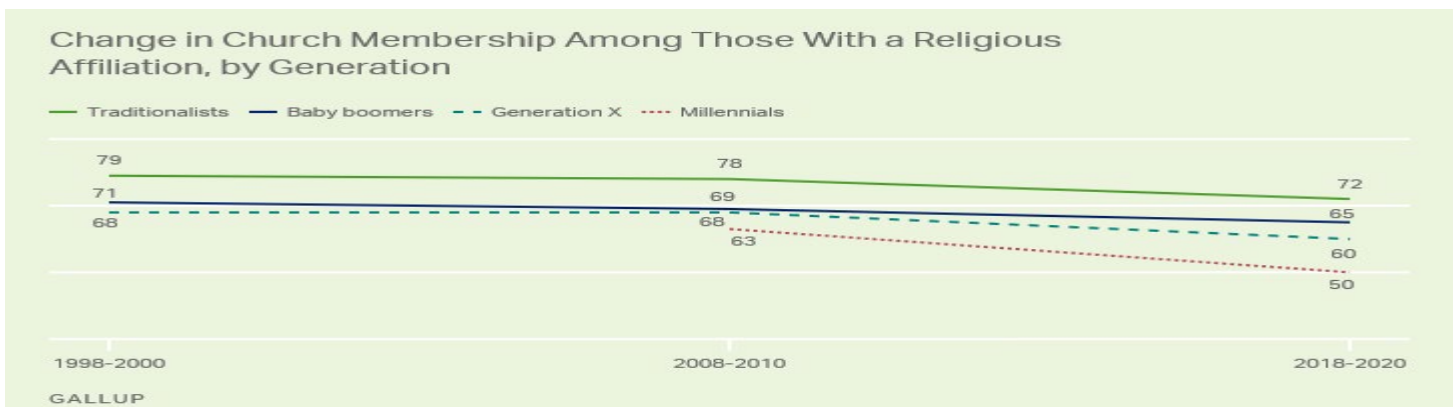
Since the turn of the century, there has been a near doubling in the percentage of traditionalists (from 4% to 7%), baby boomers (from 7% to 13%) and Gen Xers (11% to 20%) with no religious affiliation.



Line graph. Changes in the percentage with no religious identification, by generation. Each generation of U.S. adults has seen an increase in the proportion of the generation with no religious preference.

Currently, 31% of millennials have no religious affiliation, which is up from 22% a decade ago. Similarly, 33% of the portion of Generation Z that has reached adulthood have no religious preference.

Also, each generation has seen a decline in church membership among those who do affiliate with a specific religion. These declines have ranged between six and eight points over the past two decades for traditionalists, baby boomers and Generation X who identify with a religious faith. In just the past 10 years, the share of religious millennials who are church members has declined from 63% to 50%.



Line graph. Changes in church membership among those with a religious affiliation, by generation. There has been a seven-point decline in church membership, from 79% in 1998-2000 to 72% now, among traditionalists with a religious preference. There has been a six-point decline over the same period, from 71% to 65%, in church membership among baby boomers with a religious preference. There has been an eight-point decline in church membership among those in Generation X with a religious preference, from 68% to 60%. And there has been a 13-point decline since 2008-2010 among millennials with a religious preference, from 63% to 50%.

Church Membership Decline Seen in All Major Subgroups

As would be expected given the 20-point decline in church membership overall, the Gallup data show declines among all major subgroups of the U.S. population beyond age, with some differences in the size of that decline.

Among religious groups, the decline in membership is steeper among Catholics (down 18 points, from 76% to 58%) than Protestants (down nine points, from 73% to 64%). This mirrors the [historical changes in church attendance](#) Gallup has documented among Catholics, with sharp declines among Catholics but not among Protestants. Gallup does not have sufficient data to analyze the trends for other religious faiths.

In addition to Protestants, declines in church membership are proportionately smaller among political conservatives, Republicans, married adults and college graduates. These groups tend to have among the highest rates of church membership, along with Southern residents and non-Hispanic Black adults.

Over the past two decades, declines in church membership have been greater among Eastern residents and Democrats. Still, political independents have lower rates of church membership than Democrats do.

Changes in Church Membership, by Demographic Subgroup

	1998-2000	2008-2010	2018-2020	Change, 1998- to 2018-2020
	%	%	%	pct. pts.
Men	64	58	46	-18
Women	73	65	53	-20
Non-Hispanic White adults	68	62	52	-16
Non-Hispanic Black adults	78	70	59	-19
College graduate	68	65	54	-14
Not college graduate	69	60	47	-22
Married	71	68	58	-13
Not married	64	55	42	-22
Republican	77	75	65	-12
Independent	59	51	41	-18
Democrat	71	60	46	-25
Conservative	78	73	64	-14
Moderate	66	59	45	-21
Liberal	56	46	35	-21
East	69	58	44	-25
Midwest	72	66	54	-18
South	74	70	58	-16
West	57	51	38	-19
Protestant	73	72	64	-9
Catholic	76	73	58	-18
GALLUP				

The smaller declines seen among conservatives and other subgroups are largely attributable to more modest change among older generations within those groups. For example, conservatives in older generations have shown drops in church membership of between five and 13 points since 1998-2000, compared with the 20-point change among all U.S. adults. However, the influence of generation is apparent, in that church membership is lower in each younger generation of conservatives than in each older generation -- 51% of conservative millennials, 64% of conservative Gen Xers, 70% of conservative baby boomers and 71% of conservative traditionalists in 2018-2020 belong to a church.

Hispanic Church Membership

Church membership among Hispanic Americans in 2018-2020 was 37%, among the lowest for any major subgroup. Analysis of changes over time in Hispanic adults' church membership is complicated by a shift in Gallup methodology to include Spanish-language interviewing in all surveys beginning in 2011. Church membership rates are significantly lower among Hispanic respondents interviewed in Spanish than among Hispanic respondents interviewed in English. Thus, a comparison of current Hispanic church membership to past membership would overstate the decline by virtue of comparing mixed-language Hispanics today to English-speaking Hispanics, alone, in the earlier period.

Implications

The U.S. remains a religious nation, with more than seven in 10 affiliating with some type of organized religion. However, far fewer, now less than half, have a formal membership with a specific house of worship. While it is possible that part of the decline seen in 2020 was temporary and related to the coronavirus pandemic, continued decline in future decades seems inevitable, given the much lower levels of religiosity and church membership among younger versus older generations of adults.

Churches are only as strong as their membership and are dependent on their members for financial support and service to keep operating. Because it is unlikely that people who do not have a religious preference will become church members, the challenge for church leaders is to encourage those who do affiliate with a specific faith to become formal, and active, church members.

While precise numbers of church closures are elusive, a conservative estimate is that thousands of U.S. churches are closing each year.

A [2017 Gallup study found churchgoers citing sermons as the primary reason](#) they attended church. Majorities also said spiritual programs geared toward children and teenagers, community outreach and volunteer opportunities, and dynamic leaders were also factors in their attendance. A focus on some of these factors may also help local church leaders encourage people who share their faith to join their church.

Learn more about how the [Gallup Poll Social Series](#) works.

MARCH 31

The cross is evidence that in the hands of the Redeemer, moments of apparent defeat become wonderful moments of grace and victory.

At the center of a biblical worldview is this radical recognition—the most horrible thing that ever happened was the most wonderful thing that ever happened. Consider the cross of Jesus Christ. Could it be possible for something to happen that was more terrible than this? Could any injustice be greater? Could any loss be more painful? Could any suffering be worse? The only man who ever lived a life that was perfect in every way possible, who gave his life for the sake of many, and who willingly suffered from birth to death in loyalty to his calling was cruelly and publicly murdered in the most vicious of ways. How could it happen that the Son of Man could die? How could it be that men could capture and torture the Messiah? Was this not the end of everything good, true, and beautiful? If this could happen, is there any hope for the world?

Well, the answer is yes. There is hope! The cross was not the end of the story! In God's righteous and wise plan, this dark and disastrous moment was ordained to be the moment that would fix all the dark and disastrous things that sin had done to the world. This moment of death was at the same time a moment of life. This hopeless moment was the moment when eternal hope was given. This terrible moment of injustice was at the very same time a moment of amazing grace. This moment of extreme suffering guaranteed that suffering would end one day, once and for all. This moment of sadness welcomed us to eternal joy of heart and life. The capture and death of Christ purchased for us life and freedom. The very worst thing that could happen was at the very same time the very best thing that could happen. Only God is able to do such a thing.

The same God who planned that the worst thing would be the best thing is your Father. He rules over every moment in your life, and in powerful grace he is able to do for you just what he did in redemptive history. He takes the disasters in your life and makes them tools of redemption. He takes your failure and employs it as a tool of grace. He uses the "death" of the fallen world to motivate you to reach out for life. The hardest things in your life become the sweetest tools of grace in his wise and loving hands.

So be careful how you make sense of your life. What looks like a disaster may in fact be grace. What looks like the end may be the beginning. What looks hopeless may be God's instrument to give you real and lasting hope. Your Father is committed to taking what seems so bad and turning it into something that is very, very good.

For further...

Biblical and Extra-Biblical Evidences

by [Tim Chaffey](#) on February 26, 2013

Featured in [The Resurrection of Jesus Christ](#)

Tim Chaffey, AiG-US, addresses many more evidences that Jesus rose from the dead, which are either described in Scripture or derived from it. Our [previous article](#) on the Resurrection of Jesus discussed the "many infallible proofs" ([Acts 1:3](#)) of this event. Today, we will address many of the other evidences that [Jesus](#) rose from the dead, which are either described in Scripture or derived from it. We will also survey what have been called the minimal facts to show what would happen if we were to use the critics' own criteria.

Evidences that Jesus Rose

The [Bible](#) describes several pieces of evidence that are consistent with the belief that Jesus rose from the dead. Some of these evidences are explicitly stated in the text, while others are based on strong inferences drawn from the text. As such, some of these points are more convincing than others, but taken together with the “infallible proofs,” there is only one reasonable conclusion: Jesus rose physically from the dead.

Conversion of James

The man who wrote the Epistle of James was the half-brother of Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, and an early leader of the church in Jerusalem.¹ For whatever reason, James did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah prior to the Resurrection. In fact, none of His brothers believed in Him early on ([John 7:5](#)), and even tried to prevent Him from speaking, thinking He was out of His mind ([Mark 3:20–21, NET](#)).² However, just several weeks after the Crucifixion they were counted among His followers ([Acts 1:14](#)). And by the time of the “Jerusalem Council” in [Acts 15](#), James was one of the leading figures at the church in Jerusalem. Paul seems to imply this as well in [Galatians 1:18–19 and 2:9](#). Several early sources reveal that James was eventually martyred for his faith.³

What could compel a man who had grown up with Jesus to suddenly change his mind about his older brother? James likely remained in his unbelief until after Christ’s death. After all, while He was on the Cross, Jesus entrusted the care of His mother to the Apostle John ([John 19:26–27](#)). If one of his brothers had been a believer at this point, it would have been their responsibility to care for Mary. Although Scripture does not describe the conversion of James for us, it does provide the most likely cause for his drastic change of heart. Upon telling his

readers that Jesus appeared to over 500 people at once, Paul wrote, “After that He was seen by James” (*1 Corinthians 15:7*).

While it is possible that James converted to the faith based on reports of his brother’s Resurrection, it is far more likely that he became a believer when Jesus appeared to him. Whatever it was that triggered his conversion, James believed in the Resurrection so strongly that he was willing to die for his faith.

Conversion of Saul/Paul

The Apostle Paul (also called Saul) is responsible for penning at least 13 books of the New Testament and is arguably the most influential Christian ever. But he was not always a devout follower of Christ. We are first introduced to him observing the stoning of Stephen (*Acts 7:58*). A few verses later we read that Saul “made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison” (*Acts 8:3*). He would later tell an angry crowd in Jerusalem that he persecuted Christians “to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (*Acts 22:4*). He wrote that he “persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it” (*Galatians 1:13*).

From a human perspective, this is not the person we would select to carry the gospel message throughout the Roman Empire, but God had other plans for Paul. *Acts 9* opens with the following words: “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (*Acts 9:1–2*). Paul was the church’s greatest persecutor, but he was about to see the Light (pun intended).

As Paul approached Damascus, Jesus appeared to him and asked, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (*Acts 9:4*). Upon seeing the risen Savior, Saul converted to the **Christian** faith and tirelessly preached the **gospel**—Christ’s death for sins, burial, and Resurrection—until his martyrdom many years later. The apostle described some of the trials he endured for Christ:

. . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness ... (2 Corinthians 11:23–27)

What could possibly explain such a drastic change of heart? This was not a foolish man who could be swayed by poor argumentation, nor was he prone to changing his views based on shifting public opinion. Paul was a scholar and a well-respected Pharisee. But he was suddenly transformed into a fearless evangelist and church planter who suffered greatly for preaching the gospel before Jews and Gentiles, kings, civil leaders, and commoners.

The only reasonable explanation for this change of heart is precisely what Paul said it was: “Then last of all [Jesus] was seen by me also” (*1 Corinthians 15:8*). Paul was so committed to serving Christ that he was beheaded in Rome during Nero’s reign.⁴ His treatise on the absolute necessity of the Resurrection for the Christian faith in *1 Corinthians 15* demonstrates this former Pharisee’s undying commitment to the gospel of Christ.

The Change in the Disciples

James and Paul were not the only people to undergo drastic changes. On the night Jesus was arrested, His disciples fled in fear (*Mark 14:50*). As far as we know, of the eleven disciples only

John had the courage to remain close enough to Jesus to observe some of the proceedings up to and including the Crucifixion (*John 18:15; 19:26*). Peter attempted to stay with Jesus but ended up denying Christ several times before fleeing in shame (*Matthew 26:69–75*).

Less than two months later, Peter stood in front of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem and boldly delivered one of the least “seeker-sensitive” messages of all time. He declared that they had “taken by lawless hands, [had] crucified, and put to death” their Messiah, but “God raised [Him] up” (*Acts 2:23*). It’s difficult to imagine how offensive Peter’s words would have been to such a crowd. These people had been longing for the Messiah to come, but when He came, they failed to recognize Him (*Luke 19:41–44; Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8*). Instead of welcoming Him with open arms, they had delivered Him to be executed by one of the most brutal means imaginable—crucifixion.

But Peter and the disciples weren’t done. After healing a crippled man in the name of Jesus, Peter soon spoke to another large crowd of Jews in the temple. He unflinchingly proclaimed, “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses” (*Acts 3:14–15*).

The disciples were arrested and on the next day they stood before “their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, [and] Caiaphas...” (*Acts 4:5–6*). What was Peter’s message? “Let it be known to you all, and to the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole... Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (*Acts 4:10, 12*). The disciples were commanded by the authorities to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (*Acts 4:18*), but they replied, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (*Acts 4:19–20*). Upon their

release and following a prayer for boldness, we are told, “And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (*Acts 4:33*).

In the next chapter of Acts, the disciples were arrested and imprisoned, miraculously freed by an angel, and taken into custody again. They refused to stop preaching and told the council, “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree” (*Acts 5:30*).

According to church tradition, all of the disciples except for John suffered a martyr’s death because they continually preached what they had seen and heard: Jesus was crucified, but now He was alive again because God had raised Him from the dead. James, the brother of John, was killed by Herod with the sword (*Acts 12:2*). An early church tradition records that Peter was crucified upside down, which is consistent with what Jesus told him in *John 21:18–19*. Early church tradition also holds that the other disciples suffered martyrdom in various manners: spearing, flaying, crucifixion, the sword, and boiling oil.

The book of Acts makes it pretty clear why these men who fled in fear on the night Jesus was arrested were willing to die for Him. They were filled with the Spirit (*Acts 2:4; 4:8*), and they knew that even though Jesus had died, He was alive and well. They had seen Him with their own eyes and touched Him with their own hands (*1 John 1:1–3*), and only death could silence them.

Scoffers have attempted to downplay this remarkable proof of the Resurrection by claiming that many people are willing to die for a cause. For example, some Muslims are willing to blow themselves up to kill Jews. That’s true, but it misses the point. The Muslims who do this sort of thing sincerely *believe* in their cause, but they do not *know* if it’s true. The disciples were in a position to know whether or not Jesus was raised from the dead. It simply is not plausible to suggest that each of these men would face continual persecution and horrifying deaths for

something they *knew* to be a lie. After all, liars don't make good martyrs. And in contrast to suicide bombers, the disciples didn't kill others in their respective martyrdoms. And they didn't use violence to force people to convert to Christianity. In fact, they did no harm to anyone, but loved their enemies and willingly accepted persecution from them for the sake of the gospel.⁵

The Empty Tomb

Jesus was buried in the tomb of a council member from Arimathea named Joseph ([John 19:38–42](#)). All four Gospels testify to this fact. The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers, and a Roman seal was affixed to it ([Matthew 27:62–66](#)). If Jesus was bodily resurrected from the dead, then we would expect that His body would not remain in the tomb. Of course, that's precisely what was discovered on the Sunday morning after the Crucifixion—His body was gone and only the burial cloths remained.

As we will see in upcoming articles, the fact that the tomb was empty has led to numerous imaginative alternative views. If the Lord's body was still in the tomb on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached in Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders could have grabbed Peter, taken him to the tomb, and said, "Look, there's Jesus. He didn't rise from the dead. Now stop lying to everyone about it." Yet, there is not a single ancient record of this sort. Instead, the Jewish leaders who opposed Christianity invented the incredible idea that the disciples stole the body to explain away the empty tomb ([Matthew 28:11–15](#)).⁶

The fact that the opponents of the early Christians acknowledged the empty tomb lends authenticity to the accounts, since a person's enemies are unlikely to help him make his case. This is known as the principle of enemy attestation or the testimony of a hostile witness. "If opponents of the eyewitnesses admit certain facts the eyewitnesses say are true, then those facts probably are true (for example, if your mother says you are brave, that might be true; but it's probably more credible if your archenemy says the same thing)."⁷

The Existence of the Church

As noted in the first article of the series, Schaff stated, “The Christian church rests on the resurrection of its Founder. Without this fact the church could never have been born, or if born, it would soon have died a natural death.”⁸ After an exhaustive study of early Christian beliefs about the Resurrection, N.T. Wright wrote, “Christianity is inexplicable apart from the assumption that virtually all early Christians ... did indeed believe that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised bodily from the dead.”⁹

Due to the remarkable circumstances in first-century Jerusalem, Christianity would have never been able to get started if Jesus had not risen from the dead. Recall that the Resurrection of Jesus was central to the disciples’ preaching. Even if they had the courage to preach without having seen the risen Lord, what message would they have proclaimed? They certainly could not repeatedly claim to have been eyewitnesses of His Resurrection, as they did ([Acts 2:32](#); [3:15](#); [5:32](#); [10:39](#); [13:31](#)). Without this bold proclamation of the Resurrection, and if His body was rotting in the grave, people would not be converted and the memory of Jesus and His disciples would quickly fade. In fact, it may be safely said that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, very few people living today, if any, would have ever heard of Him.¹⁰

Undivided Testimony of New Testament

As could be expected, the New Testament writers were undivided in their proclamation that Jesus rose from the dead. Space does not permit an exhaustive treatment of the subject here, but consider that the Resurrection is explicitly mentioned in every New Testament book except for the short letters of Philemon, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. Yet even these letters presume the truth of the Resurrection since Jesus is portrayed as living and active. So from the penning of the earliest New Testament book to the final one, the Resurrection of Jesus is consistently viewed as central to Christian teaching.

Principle of Embarrassment

A key idea used by historians in weighing the historical validity of alleged events has been called the principle of embarrassment. That is, if the writer included details that would seem to hurt his position, then those details are likely true, since one would not readily undercut his own beliefs with certain data that could just as easily be left unreported.¹¹ Applied to the topic at hand, this principle does not directly relate to the Resurrection, but it does relate indirectly since it provides multiple clues that the eyewitness accounts are authentic.

The Bible includes numerous embarrassing details about its leading figures. For example, David was an adulterer and murderer (*2 Samuel 11*). Peter was accused of being a mouthpiece of Satan by Jesus when Peter denied that Jesus would be killed in Jerusalem and rise again (*Matthew 16:23*). Later, despite his promises to the contrary, Peter denied Jesus several times (*Luke 22:31–35, 54–62*). When it comes to the Resurrection accounts in the Gospels, the writers included some embarrassing details that actually afford credibility to their extraordinary claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

If the disciples were inventing Christianity, as has been alleged by some critics and skeptics, then surely they could have made up a more respectable story. They could have claimed that the first witnesses of the empty tomb and the risen Christ were respected men like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and perhaps some other members of the Sanhedrin. Maybe they could have said that Jesus appeared to Herod, Pilate, or even the emperor himself. That would be impressive. But what does Scripture tell us about the first witnesses of these things? They were women—at least five of them traveled to the tomb early on Easter morning (*Luke 24:10*). Given that a woman's testimony was not highly valued in that patriarchal society,¹² it would make no sense for the writers to include this detail if they were attempting to gain a following—unless it was true.

This information is even more embarrassing when we consider who the very first eyewitness was. Who in their right mind would ever make up the idea that Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the risen Savior? By this time Mary was surely a devoted follower of Christ, but she would have virtually zero credibility with anyone outside of the disciples' circle, and even they didn't initially believe her report (*Luke 24:11*). After all, this was a woman "out of whom had come seven demons" (*Luke 8:2*).¹³ That the biblical writers assign Mary Magdalene as the first eyewitness of the resurrected Christ lends strong support for the truthfulness of the account.

The Nazareth Inscription

An interesting archaeological discovery lends early support to the biblical accounts of the Resurrection. The Nazareth Inscription is a marble tablet with Greek writing that has been dated to approximately AD 41. The inscription is likely an abbreviated form of an edict (called a rescript) from Emperor Claudius.

The wording of this particular find indicates that the message of the Resurrection, or at least the Jewish response to it, had been brought to the emperor's attention within about ten years of the event. In just fourteen brief lines this rescript explains a new law carrying capital punishment for anyone who would move a body from graves or tombs to another place with wicked intent. That is, no one was permitted to move an entombed body for fraudulent reasons.

Why is this so intriguing? Think about the response of the Jewish leaders to the Resurrection reports. They bribed the Roman soldiers to say, "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept" (*Matthew 28:13*). Why would the Roman emperor issue an edict forbidding the moving of a body with fraudulent intent? Sure, there were grave robbers at that time, but grave robbers weren't interested in stealing bodies—they wanted the valuables occasionally buried with the body. Interestingly enough, there is no mention of valuables in the

edict, but there is a comment forbidding the moving of sepulcher-sealing stones. These types of stones were only used in Israel, so the wording of this edict pinpoints the reason for its issuance. Something had happened in Israel concerning the reported moving of a body that had caused enough ripples throughout the empire to merit the attention of the emperor.

The Nazareth Inscription does not prove that Jesus rose from the dead, but it is consistent with the biblical accounts. It also gives extra-biblical testimony to the growing impact of the church and its central message of the Resurrection soon after Christ's death. For more details on this fascinating discovery, along with a full translation of its inscription, please see "[The Nazareth Inscription: Proof of the Resurrection of Christ?](#)"

Subjective Evidences

My favorite song as a young boy mentions a remarkable, though subjective evidence that Jesus is alive today. The chorus of "He Lives" closes with the words, "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart." This may sound strange to an unbeliever, but Christians can testify to significant, positive life-change as a result of trusting in the risen Christ. People from every nation, from all walks of life, all levels of age or education or material prosperity, all religious backgrounds, and all kinds of moral or immoral lifestyles can testify to a radical change of values, priorities, relationships, and purpose in life as a result of trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Drunks, violent men, prostitutes, addicts, and filthy perverts have found victory from sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible explains that by His life-giving Spirit Jesus dwells in the hearts of believers through faith ([Ephesians 3:17](#)) to gradually transform their lives to be like Christ ([Romans 12:2](#); [2 Corinthians 3:18](#); [5:17](#); [Ephesians 2:8–10](#)).

Again, this evidence is subjective, and I wouldn't expect anyone to start believing in the Resurrection based solely on someone's personal experience. But changed lives are exactly

what we would expect if the one who claimed to forgive [sin](#) and give eternal life in relationship with [God](#) really did rise from the dead. Conversely, if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, it is very difficult to explain so many changed lives down through the centuries.

Like James and Paul, other former skeptics have been persuaded that Christianity is true based largely on their attempts to disprove the faith, particularly the Resurrection. Some of the most popular Christian apologists, such as Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, and C.S. Lewis,[14](#) have testified that their attempts to disprove the Resurrection of Jesus were integral to their conversion.

While God is the only one who can supernaturally change a person's heart, He often uses the evidences of the Resurrection to remove intellectual objections to the Christian faith. John Whitcomb explained that in the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, it was God who did the supernatural work (raising Lazarus), but He commanded people to move the sepulcher-sealing stone ([John 11:39](#)) and unwrap Lazarus ([v. 46](#)). Many of the Jews believed in Jesus when they saw this incredible miracle ([John 11:45](#)), and the chief priests "plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus" ([John 12:10–11](#)). In a sense, that's how these evidences for the Resurrection of Christ can be used. Figuratively, we can roll away the stones of objections so that people can see the risen Lord.

Five Key Evidences

The Bible is the Word of God, so it is accurate in all it affirms. Since it tells us Jesus rose from the dead, we can have complete confidence that He did. What many people fail to recognize is that even when we use the critics' and skeptics' own criteria, the most reasonable conclusion is the same: Jesus rose from the dead. That is, even if we did not presume biblical authority and treated the New Testament as unbelieving historians do, the bodily Resurrection of Jesus is the

only explanation that matches all the accepted facts. One point will become rather obvious throughout this study: these people simply have an anti-supernatural bias, or more accurately, an anti-Christian bias. Thus, they have developed absurd positions in efforts to explain away the only reasonable conclusion that can be derived from the facts. So what are these facts?

Since 1975, Resurrection expert Dr. Gary Habermas has catalogued over 3,400 academic works on the fate of Jesus, from conservative, critical, and skeptical scholars in English, German, and French. A skeptic may be tempted to accuse Habermas of only using material from scholars in his own camp, but his research has actually been skewed to favor the most skeptical positions.

I endeavored to be more than fair to all the positions. In fact, if anything, I erred in the direction of cataloguing the most radical positions, since this was the only classification where I included even those authors who did not have specialized scholarly credentials or peer-reviewed publications. It is this group, too, that often tends to doubt or deny that Jesus ever existed. Yet, given that I counted many sources in this category, this means that my study is skewed in the skeptical direction far more than if I had stayed strictly with my requirement of citing only those with scholarly credentials. Still, I included these positions quite liberally, even when the wide majority of mainline scholars, “liberals” included, rarely even footnoted this material. Of course, this practice would also skew the numbers who proposed naturalistic theories of the resurrection, to which I particularly gravitated.¹⁵

From this research Habermas has been able to show that of the 3,400 works studied, the majority of writers accept the following 12 events as historical fact:¹⁶

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. Jesus was buried.
3. His death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope, believing that his life was ended.
4. The tomb was empty a few days later.

5. The disciples had experiences that they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus.
6. The disciples were transformed from doubters who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold proclaimers of His death and Resurrection.
7. This message was the center of preaching in the early church.
8. This message was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried shortly before.
9. The church was born in Jerusalem and grew rapidly.
10. Orthodox Jews who believed in Jesus made Sunday their primary day of worship.
11. James, the half-brother of Jesus, converted to the faith when he saw what he believed was the resurrected Jesus.
12. Paul was converted to the faith after his experience which he believed was with the risen Jesus.

As we will demonstrate in subsequent articles in this series, if we compare the alternative theories of what happened to the body of Jesus with these 12 facts, we quickly see that none of these views can even come close to matching the evidence. Habermas has gone one step further and reduced this list to just the top five evidences, which he calls the “minimal facts”:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. His disciples believed that He rose and appeared to them.
3. The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed.
4. The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.
5. The tomb was empty.¹⁷

To make this list, each of these points had to meet two criteria: (1) the data are strongly evidenced, and (2) the data are granted by virtually all scholars on the subject, even the skeptical ones. So even if we were to use the criteria set forth by critical and skeptical scholars, the conclusion that Jesus rose from the dead is still the most reasonable explanation of the facts concerning what happened to His body on that first Easter morning.

Conclusion

The Bible gives us clear and compelling eyewitness testimonies that Jesus rose bodily from the dead just as He predicted. God has also left a tremendous amount of corroborating evidence from history, archaeology, and personal experience to show that Jesus is risen indeed. While skeptics and critics have developed numerous alternative explanations for the facts (often due to their bias against the Bible), we will examine over the next several articles whether these proposals can stand up to scrutiny and account for the minimal facts.

All of the evidence we have looked at in this series confirms precisely what God's infallible Word reveals: the Son of God died on the Cross and subsequently rose from the dead. His death paid the penalty for our sins, and His Resurrection guarantees our hope of eternal life. This central truth of Christianity is essential to our faith, as Scripture testifies that "if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty" (*1 Corinthians 15:14*).

However, it is not enough to simply agree that these things are true. There are many people who believe that Jesus did these things but remain in their sins because they have not placed saving faith in Christ. What about you? Have you turned from your sins and placed your faith in Christ's death, burial, and Resurrection, calling on the Lord to save you from what we all deserve—His wrath?

7 Proofs of the Resurrection

Evidence the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Happened

By Jack Zavada

Updated April 26, 2019

Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ a historical event that really happened, or is it only a myth, as many atheists claim? While no one witnessed the actual resurrection, many people swore they saw the risen Christ after his death, and their lives were never the same.

Archaeological discoveries continue to support the Bible's historical accuracy. We tend to forget that the Gospels and book of Acts are eyewitness accounts of the life and death of Jesus. Further nonbiblical evidence for Jesus' existence comes from the writings of Flavius Josephus, Cornelius Tacitus, Lucian of Samosata, and the Jewish Sanhedrin. The following seven proofs of the resurrection show that Christ did, indeed, rise from the dead.

Proof of the Resurrection #1: The Empty Tomb of Jesus

The empty tomb may be the strongest proof Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Two major theories have been advanced by unbelievers: someone stole Jesus' body or the women and disciples went to the wrong tomb. The Jews and Romans had no motive to steal the body. Christ's apostles were too cowardly and would have had to overcome the Roman guards. The women who found the tomb empty had earlier watched Jesus being laid away; they knew where the correct tomb was. Even if they had gone to the wrong tomb, the Sanhedrin could have produced the body from the right tomb to stop the resurrection stories. Jesus' burial cloths were left neatly folded inside, hardly the act of hurrying grave robbers. Angels said Jesus had risen from the dead.

Proof of the Resurrection #2: The Holy Women Eyewitnesses

The holy women eyewitnesses are further proof that the Gospels are accurate historical records. If the accounts had been made up, no ancient author would have used women for witnesses to Christ's resurrection. Women were second-class citizens in Bible times; their testimony was not even allowed in court. Yet the Bible says the risen Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene and other holy women. Even the apostles did not believe Mary when she told them the tomb was empty. Jesus, who always had special respect for these women, honored them as the first eyewitnesses to his resurrection. The male Gospel writers had no choice but to report this embarrassing act of God's favor because that was how it happened.

Proof of the Resurrection #3: Jesus' Apostles' New-Found Courage

After the crucifixion, Jesus' apostles hid behind locked doors, terrified they would be executed next. But something changed them from cowards to bold preachers. Anyone who understands human character

knows people do not change that much without some major influence. That influence was seeing their Master, bodily risen from the dead. Christ appeared to them in the locked room, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and on the Mount of Olives. After seeing Jesus alive, Peter and the others left the locked room and preached the risen Christ, unafraid of what would happen to them. They quit hiding because they knew the truth. They finally understood that Jesus is God incarnate, who saves people from sin.

Proof of the Resurrection #4: Changed Lives of James and Others

Changed lives are yet another proof of the resurrection. James, the brother of Jesus, was openly skeptical that Jesus was the Messiah. Later James became a courageous leader of the Jerusalem church, even being stoned to death for his faith. Why? The Bible says the risen Christ appeared to him. What a shock to see your own brother, alive again, after you knew he was dead. James and the apostles were effective missionaries because people could tell these men had touched and seen the risen Christ. With such zealous eyewitnesses, the early church exploded in growth, spreading west from Jerusalem to Rome and beyond. For 2,000 years, encounters with the resurrected Jesus have changed lives.

Proof of the Resurrection #5: Large Crowd of Eyewitnesses

A large crowd of more than 500 eyewitnesses saw the risen Jesus Christ at the same time. The Apostle Paul records this event in 1 Corinthians 15:6. He states that most of these men and women were still alive when he wrote this letter, about 55 A.D. Undoubtedly they told others about this miracle. Today, psychologists say it would be impossible for a large crowd of people to have had the same hallucination at once. Smaller groups also saw the risen Christ, such as the apostles, and Cleopas and his companion. They all saw the same thing, and in the case of the apostles, they touched Jesus and watched him eat food. The hallucination theory is further debunked because after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, sightings of him stopped.

Proof of the Resurrection #6: Conversion of Paul

The conversion of Paul records the most drastically changed life in the Bible. As Saul of Tarsus, he was an aggressive persecutor of the early church. When the risen Christ appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road, Paul became Christianity's most determined missionary. He endured five floggings, three beatings, three shipwrecks, a stoning, poverty, and years of ridicule. Finally, the Roman emperor Nero had Paul beheaded because the apostle refused to deny his faith in Jesus. What could make a person willingly accept—even welcome—such hardships? Christians believe the conversion of Paul came about because he encountered Jesus Christ who had risen from the dead.

Proof of the Resurrection #7: They Died for Jesus

Countless people have died for Jesus, absolutely certain that the resurrection of Christ is a historical fact. Tradition says ten of the original apostles died as martyrs for Christ, as did the Apostle Paul. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of early Christians died in the Roman arena and in prisons for their faith. Down through the centuries, thousands more have died for Jesus because they believed the resurrection is true. Even today, people suffer persecution because they have faith that Christ rose from the dead. An isolated group may give up their lives for a cult leader, but Christian martyrs have died in many lands, for nearly 2,000 years, believing Jesus conquered death to give them eternal life.

(Sources: gotquestions.org, xenos.org, faithfacts.org, newadvent.org, tektonics.org, biblicalstudies.info, garyhabermas.com, and ntwrightpage.com)

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND OUR RESURRECTION

A. The truth of Jesus' resurrection.

1. (1Cr 15:1-2) Preface to the proclamation of Paul's gospel.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain.

a. **The gospel which I preached to you:** In verses three and four, Paul will describe the *content* of the gospel. Here, he describes how the gospel can be of *benefit* to man. The gospel is only of benefit if it is **received** and if one will **stand** in it.

i. The word **gospel** means "good news." As the word was used in ancient times, it didn't have to describe the message of salvation in Jesus Christ; it could describe any good news. But the best news ever is that we can be saved from the punishment we deserve from God because of what Jesus did for us.

ii. The Corinthian Christians first **received** the gospel. The message of the gospel must first be believed and embraced. As Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.* (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

iii. The Corinthian Christians also did **stand** in the gospel. Despite all their problems with carnality, lack of understanding, strife, divisions, immorality, and weird spirituality, they still stood for the gospel. This is in contrast to the Galatian church, who was quickly being moved away to another gospel (Galatians 1:6).

b. **By which you are also saved, if you hold fast that word I preached to you:** The Corinthian Christians *had done* well in that they **received** the gospel. They *were doing* well in that they did **stand** in the gospel. But they had to *continue to do well*, and **hold fast** the gospel Paul preached to them. Every Christian must take seriously their responsibility to not only have a good past, and a good present, but to determine to have a great future with the Lord, also.

i. **Hold fast** also implies there were some people or some things which might want to snatch the true gospel away from the Corinthian Christians. All the more, this is why they had to hold on!

c. **Unless you believed in vain:** If the Corinthian Christians did not continue to **hold fast**, one day they might let go of the gospel. And if one lets go of the gospel, all their *previous* belief won't do them any good. It was as if they had **believed in vain**.

2. (1Cr 15:3-4) The content of the gospel Paul preached.

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

a. **For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received:** Paul did not make up this gospel. He **received** it (and not from man, but from Jesus Christ, according to [Galatians 1:11-12](#)), and Paul **delivered it**. This is not "Paul's gospel" in the sense that he created it or fashioned it; it is "Paul's gospel" in the sense that he personally believes it and spreads it.

i. "Notice that the preacher does not make the gospel. If he makes it, it is not worth your having. Originality in preaching, if it be originality in the statement of doctrine, is falsehood. We are not makers and inventors; we are repeaters, we tell the message we have received." (Spurgeon)

b. As Paul describes the gospel in the following verses, it is important to notice that this gospel is not insightful teaching or good advice. At the core of the gospel are things that *happened* – actual, real, historical events. The gospel isn't a matter of religious opinions, platitudes, or fairy tales; it is about real historical events.

i. "Our religion is not based upon opinions, but upon facts. We hear persons sometimes saying, 'Those are your views, and these are ours.' Whatever your 'views' may be, is a small matter; what are the facts of the case?" (Spurgeon)

c. **Christ died:** The death of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, is the center of the gospel. Though the idea of glorying in the death of a Savior seems foolishness to the world, it is salvation to those who will believe.

i. How did Jesus die? The Roman government executed Him by one of the most cruel and excruciating forms of capital punishment ever devised: crucifixion.

ii. "Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering." (Edwards) What exactly was it like to be crucified? In days the New Testament was first written, the practice needed no explanation. But we do well to appreciate just what happened in crucifixion.

iii. The victim's back was first torn open by scourging, and the clotting blood was ripped open again when the clothes were torn off the victim. When he was thrown on the ground to nail his hands to the crossbeam, the wounds were again torn open and contaminated with dirt. Then, as he hung on the cross, with each breath, the painful wounds on the back scraped against the rough wood of the upright beam and were further aggravated.

iv. When the nail was driven through the wrists, it severed the large median nerve. This stimulated nerve produced excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and resulted in a claw-like grip in the victim's hands.

v. Beyond the excruciating pain, the major effect of crucifixion was inhibiting normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, tended to fix the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state, and hindered exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration resulted in severe muscle cramps, which hindered breathing even further. To get a good breath, one had to push against the feet, and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet produced searing pain, and flexing the elbows twisted the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath also painfully scraped the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and lead to a sooner death.

vi. "Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals." (Edwards)

vii. Death from crucifixion could come from many sources: acute shock from blood loss, being too exhausted to breathe any longer; dehydration, stress-induced heart attack, or congestive heart failure leading to a cardiac rupture. If the victim did not die quickly enough, the legs were broken, and the victim was soon unable to breathe.

viii. How bad was crucifixion? We get our English word *excruciating* from the Roman word "out of the cross." "Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!" (Clarke)

ix. However, we never speak of the physical sufferings of Jesus to make us feel sorry for Jesus, as if He needed our pity. Save your pity for those who reject the complete work of Jesus on the cross at Calvary, and save your pity for those preachers who do not have the heart of Paul in [1 Corinthians 1:23](#), when he proclaimed the center of the Christian message: *we preach Christ crucified*.

d. **Christ died for our sins**: What does it mean that Jesus **died for our sins**? How does His death do anything for our sins? Many noble men and women have died horrible deaths for righteous causes through the centuries. How does the death of Jesus do anything **for our sins**?

i. At some point before He died, before the veil was torn in two, before He cried out *it is finished*, an awesome spiritual transaction took place. God the Father laid upon God the Son all the guilt and wrath our sin deserved, and Jesus bore it in Himself perfectly, totally satisfying the wrath of God in our place.

ii. As horrible as the physical suffering of Jesus was, this spiritual suffering – the act of being judged for sin in our place – was what Jesus really dreaded about the cross. This was the *cup* – the cup of God’s righteous wrath – that He trembled at drinking ([Luke 22:39-46](#), [Psalm 75:8](#), [Isaiah 51:17](#), [Jeremiah 25:15](#)). On the cross Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God, who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father’s fury so we would not have to drink that cup.

iii. [Isaiah 53:3-5](#) puts it powerfully: *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*

iv. “Reader! *one drop* of this cup would bear down thy soul to endless ruin; and these agonies would annihilate the universe. He suffered *alone*: for the people there was none with him; because his sufferings were to make an atonement for the sins of the world: and in the work of redemption he had no helper.” (Clarke)

v. And when that was accomplished (who knows how long it could have lasted), there was no reason for Jesus to “hang around” on the cross. His work was done and He could go on to what was next.

e. **For our sins**: Our **sins** were *responsible* for the death of Jesus. He did not die for a political cause, or as an enemy of the state, or for someone’s envy. Jesus died **for our sins**. Jesus did not die as a mere martyr for a cause.

f. **He was buried**: We don’t often think of the burial of Jesus as part of the gospel, but it is. The burial of Jesus is important for many reasons. It is proof positive that He really died, because you don’t bury someone unless they are really dead, and Jesus’ death was confirmed at the cross before He was taken down to be buried ([John 19:31-37](#)). Jesus’ burial is also important because it fulfilled the Scriptures which declared, *And they made His grave with the wicked; but with the rich at His death* ([Isaiah 53:9](#)). Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich man ([Matthew 27:57-60](#)).

g. **He rose again:** This truth is essential to the gospel. If Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and remove our guilt, then why is the resurrection of Jesus so important?

i. Although Jesus bore the full wrath of God on the cross, *as if* He were a guilty sinner, guilty of *all* our sin, even being made sin for us (2 [Corinthians 5:21](#)), He Himself did not become a sinner. Even the act of taking our sin was an act of holy, giving love for us – so that Jesus Himself did not become a sinner, even though He bore the full *guilt* of our sin. This is the gospel message! That Jesus took our punishment for sin on the cross, and remained a perfect Savior through the whole ordeal – proved by His resurrection.

ii. For this reason, He remained the *Holy One* ([Acts 2:27](#), [2:31-32](#)), even in His death. Since it was incomprehensible that God's Holy One could remain bound by death, the resurrection was absolutely inevitable.

iii. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is not some “add on” to a “more important” work on the cross. If the cross is the *payment* for our sins, the empty tomb is the *receipt*, showing that the perfect Son of God made perfect payment for our sins. The payment itself is of little good without the receipt! This is why the resurrection of Jesus was such a prominent theme in the evangelistic preaching of the early church ([Acts 2:24](#), [Acts 3:15](#), [Acts 4:10](#), [Acts 13:30-39](#)).

iv. The cross was a time of victorious death, a *negative* triumph. Sin was defeated, but nothing positive was put in its place until the resurrection. The resurrection showed that Jesus did not succumb to the inevitable result of sin. The resurrection is proof of His conquest.

h. **He rose again the third day:** The fact that Jesus **rose again the third day** is part of the gospel. Jesus was a unique case. He did not or will not rise at some “general” resurrection of the dead. Instead He rose **the third day** after His death. This also demonstrates Jesus' credibility, because He proclaimed He would rise three days after His death ([Matthew 16:21](#), [17:23](#), [20:19](#)).

i. Because of the reference to **the third day**, and because in [Matthew 12:40](#) Jesus refers to *three days and three nights*, some have thought it necessary for Jesus to spend at least 72 hours in the grave. This upsets most chronologies of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and is unnecessary, being unaware of the use of ancient figures of speech. Eleazar ben Azariah (around the year 100 a.d.) said: “A day and a night make a whole day, and a portion of a whole day is reckoned as a whole day.” This demonstrates how in Jesus' day, the phrase *three days and three nights* did not necessarily mean a 72-hour period, but a period including at least the portions of three days and three nights.

ii. “According to Jewish reckoning, ‘three days’ would include parts of Friday afternoon, all of Saturday, and Sunday morning.” (Mare)

i. **According to the Scriptures:** Because this idea is so important, Paul repeats it twice in these two verses. Jesus’ work for us didn’t just come out of thin air; it was planned from all eternity and described prophetically in the **Scriptures**.

i. The plan for His *death* is described in passages such as [Psalm 22](#) and [Isaiah 53](#).

ii. The plan for His *resurrection* is described in places like [Hosea 6:2](#), [Jonah 1:17](#), and [Psalm 16:10](#). Another example is the scenario in [Genesis 22](#) where Isaac, as a type of Jesus, is “raised” on the third day of their journey, at the beginning of which Abraham had reckoned his son dead.

iii. Admittedly, the Old Testament understanding of resurrection was shadowy. Many passages look to a bleak existence after death ([Psalms 6:5](#), [30:9](#), [39:13](#), [88:10-12](#), [115:17](#), [Isaiah 38:18](#), [Ecclesiastes 9:4-5](#), [9:10](#)). Yet there are other passages of hope and confidence after this life ([Job 19:25-27](#), [Psalm 16:9-11](#), [73:24](#)).

iv. Remember though, that it was Jesus, not the Old Testament, which *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* ([2 Timothy 1:10](#)).

3. ([1Cr 15:5-8](#)) Concrete evidence of Jesus’ resurrection.

And that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

a. No one saw the actual resurrection of Jesus. No one was present in the tomb with Him when His body transformed into a resurrection body. If someone were there, perhaps in a brilliant flash of light, they would have seen the dead body of Jesus transformed, and virtually vaporize out of the grave clothes. Perhaps it would be something along the lines of the way a body was transported on the old Star Trek series; the molecules would alter, and the person could pass through a solid object, and re-assemble themselves into a solid person. We know that Jesus could do this after His resurrection; He could miraculously appear in a room that had all the doors locked and the windows shut. Yet He was no phantom; He had a real flesh and bone body.

i. Though no one saw the actual resurrection of Jesus, many people saw the resurrected Jesus. Paul now calls forth these witnesses to the resurrection, to establish beyond all controversy that Jesus was raised from the dead in a resurrection body.

b. **He was seen by Cephas:** Jesus made a special resurrection appearance to Peter ([Luke 24:34](#)). We are not told much about this visit, but we can assume there was some special need for comfort and restoration in Peter that Jesus ministered to.

c. **Then by the twelve:** This probably refers to the first meeting Jesus had with His assembled disciples, mentioned in [Mark 16:14](#), [Luke 24:36-43](#), and [John 20:19-25](#). This was the meeting where Jesus appeared in the room with the doors and windows shut, and breathed on the disciples, giving them the Holy Spirit.

i. When Paul writes **by the twelve**, he uses the term as a figurative title. At the first meeting of the resurrected Jesus with His disciples, Thomas was absent and Judas had killed himself. But they still were known as **the twelve**.

ii. "Perhaps the term *twelve* is used here *merely* to point out the *society of the apostles*, who, though at this time they were only *eleven*, were still called the *twelve*, because this was their *original number*." (Clarke)

d. The meeting of Jesus with **over five hundred brethren at once** isn't detailed in the gospels, but is suggested by [Matthew 28:10](#) and [28:16-17](#). During the time after His resurrection, but before His Ascension, Jesus met with His followers on many different occasions.

i. **Of whom the great part remain to the present** is compelling testimony of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul says, "Go ask these people who saw the resurrected Jesus. There are not a handful of self-deluded souls; there are literally hundreds who saw the resurrected Jesus with their own eyes. They know Jesus rose from the dead."

ii. There really were **five hundred** followers of Jesus before His Ascension, though [Acts 1:15](#) mentions only the 120 who were in the Jerusalem area. Jesus met with these 500 followers in the region of Galilee. They *knew* Jesus rose from the dead.

iii. We sometimes sing: "You ask me how I know He lives; He lives, He lives inside my heart." But that is not the best way to prove Jesus lives. We know He lives because the historical evidence *demand*s we believe in the resurrection of Jesus. If we can believe *anything* in history, we can believe the reliable, confirmed testimony of these eyewitnesses. Jesus rose from the dead.

iv. Through the years, there have been many objections suggested to the resurrection of Jesus. Some say He didn't die at all, but just "swooned" on the cross and revived in the tomb. Others say He really died, but His body was stolen. Still others suggest He really died, but His desperate followers hallucinated His resurrection. A plain, simple understanding of these evidences of the resurrection of

Jesus destroys all of these theories, and shows they take far more faith to believe than the Biblical account.

v. “I suppose, brethren, that we may have persons arise, who will doubt whether there was ever such a man as Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte; and when they do, – when all reliable history is flung to the winds, – then, but not till then, may they begin to question whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for this historical fact is attested by more witnesses than almost any other fact that stands on record in history, whether sacred or profane.” (Spurgeon)

e. **He was seen by James:** This would be **James**, the brother of Jesus, who is seen as a prominent leader in the church in [Acts 15](#). Significantly, in the gospels, Jesus’ brothers are hostile to Him and His mission ([John 7:3-5](#)). Yet in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus’ brothers are among the followers of Jesus ([Acts 1:14](#)). What happened to change them? Certainly, this meeting of the resurrected Jesus with His brother **James** had some influence.

f. **By all the apostles:** This refers to a few different meetings, such as in [John 20:26-31](#), [John 21:1-25](#), [Matthew 28:16-20](#), and [Luke 24:44-49](#). There may have been many more meetings that are not described in the gospels. These meetings were important in proving to the disciples that Jesus was who He said He was. At these meetings He ate with them, comforted them, commanded them to preach the gospel, and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after His ascension.

g. **Last of all He was seen by me also:** By saying **as by one born out of due time**, Paul may mean that he did not have a three-year “gestation” period as the other apostles; he came on the scene suddenly.

i. Paul used the ancient Greek term *ektroma* meaning, “abortion, stillbirth, miscarriage” – it speaks of an untimely birth with “freakish” associations. Some think Paul used this striking word because the Corinthian Christians so consistently depreciated his stature as an apostle. They considered him truly a *paulus* (“little”) apostle, but Paul will glory in his weakness.

h. The cumulative testimony of these witnesses is overwhelming. Not only did they see Jesus after His death, but they saw Him in a manner which revolutionized their faith and trust in Him.

i. The changed character of the apostles, and their willingness to die for the testimony of the resurrection, eliminate *fraud* as an explanation of the empty tomb.

ii. Why didn’t Paul mention the appearances of Jesus to the women at the tomb as evidence of Jesus’ resurrection? Probably because in that day a woman’s testimony was not received in law courts. It

was true, and it was good evidence for the apostles at that time, but the world of that day would reject that testimony, because it came from women.

4. (1Cr 15:9-11) Paul's testimony of grace.

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

a. **For I am the least of the apostles:** Paul would argue hard for his apostolic credentials, because he knew he had to be respected as an apostle. But he had no desire to compete with other apostles for the "Most Valuable Apostle" award. He would gladly say, **I am the least of the apostles**. In fact, Paul believed he was **not worthy to be called an apostle**.

i. For some, this would just be spiritual sounding talk, which showed more pride than humility. But Paul meant it. He regarded himself as **the least of the apostles** because he **persecuted the church of God**. Paul always remembered how he had sinned against Jesus' church. He knew that he was forgiven; yet he remembered his sin.

ii. Paul felt – rightly so – that his sins were worse because he was responsible for the death, imprisonment, and suffering of Christians, whom he persecuted before his life was changed by Jesus (Acts 8:3, Acts 9:1-2, Galatians 1:13, Philippians 3:6, and 1 Timothy 1:15).

iii. "This was literally *true* in reference to his being chosen *last*, and chosen not in the *number* of the *twelve*, but as an *extra* apostle. How much pains do some men take to make the apostle *contradict* himself, by attempting to show that he was the very *greatest* of the apostles, though he calls himself the *least!*" (Clarke)

iv. There are worse kinds of sin. Sins that harm God's people are especially grievous in God's eyes. Are you guilty, now or in the past, of harming God's people? "[God] remembers jests and scoffs leveled at his little ones, and he bids those who indulge in them to take heed. You had better offend a king than one of the Lord's little ones." (Spurgeon)

b. **But by the grace of God I am what I am:** Paul gave **the grace of God** all the credit for the change in His life. He was a changed man, forgiven, cleansed, and full of love when he used to be full of hate. He knew this was not his own accomplishment, but it was the work of the grace of God in him.

i. The grace that *saves* us also *changes* us. Grace changed Paul. You can't receive the grace of God without being changed by it. The changes don't come all at once, and the changes are not complete until we pass to the next life, but we are indeed changed.

ii. "You see that the mark of a child of God is that by the grace of God he is what he is; what do you know about the grace of God? 'Well, I attend a place of worship regularly.' But what do you know about *the grace of God*? 'I have always been an upright, honest, truthful, respectable man.' I am glad to hear it; but what do you know about the grace of God?" (Spurgeon)

iii. "By the grace of God' we not only are what we are, but we also remain what we are. We should long ago have ruined ourselves, and damned ourselves, if Christ had not kept us by his almighty grace." (Spurgeon)

c. **His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all:** Though grace made Paul what he was, Paul still **labored** with grace, so that it wouldn't be given **in vain**.

i. Conceivably, if Paul had not worked as hard as he did, the grace of God would still have been given to him, but in some measure it would be given **in vain**. Grace, by definition, is given freely. But how we receive grace will help to determine how effective the gift of grace is.

ii. Grace isn't given because of any works, past, present or promised; yet it is given to *encourage* work, not to say work is not necessary. God doesn't want us to receive His grace and become *passive*.

iii. Paul knew that God gives His grace, we work hard, and the work of God is done. We work in a partnership with God, not because He needs us, but because He wants us to share in His work. Paul understood this principle well, writing, "*for we are God's fellow workers*" in [1 Corinthians 3:9](#).

iv. Many Christians struggle at this very point. Is God supposed to do it or am I supposed to do it? The answer is, "Yes!" God does it and we do it. Trust God, rely on Him, *and then get to work and work as hard as you can!* That is how we see the work of God accomplished.

v. If I neglect my end of the partnership, God's grace doesn't accomplish all that it might, and is therefore given **in vain**. Later, in [2 Corinthians 6:1](#), Paul pleads that we might not receive the grace of God in vain: *We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*

d. **I labored more abundantly than they all:** Paul compares himself to the other apostles. He was not shy about saying he worked harder than any of the other apostles did. This is not to say the other

apostles were lazy (although some of them may have been), but that Paul was an exceptionally hard worker.

e. **Yet not it, but the grace of God which was with me:** Paul was honest enough to know and to say that he worked hard. He was also humble enough to know that even his hard work was the work of God's grace in him.

i. If you were to ask Paul, "Paul, do you work hard as an apostle," he wouldn't respond with that falsely spiritual, "Oh no, I don't do anything. It's all the work of God's grace." Paul would say, "You bet I work hard. In fact, I work harder than any other apostle." But then he would not dwell on it, but simply have the inward knowledge that it was all the work of God's grace in him.

f. **Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed:** Whether Paul or one of the other apostles brought the message, the result was the same. They preached the resurrection of Jesus, and the early Christians believed the resurrection of Jesus.

i. The verb **we preach** is in the *present continuous* tense; Paul says that he and the other apostles *habitually* preached this message.

B. The relevance of the resurrection of Jesus.

1. (1Cr 15:12-13) The resurrection of Jesus proves there is a resurrection.

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

a. Why did Paul so carefully prove the resurrection of Jesus? It wasn't because the Corinthian Christians did not believe Jesus rose from the dead. In fact, he makes it clear in [1 Corinthians 15:11](#) that they *did* believe it: *so we preach and so you believed*. Then why was it important?

i. The Corinthian Christians did not deny Jesus' resurrection; they denied *our* resurrection. They were influenced either by Greek philosophy (which considered the resurrection undesirable, thinking the state of "pure spirit" superior), or by the thinking of the Sadducees (which thought the world beyond to be just wishful thinking). The bottom line is that the Corinthian Christians believed we lived forever, but not in resurrected bodies.

ii. Remember that *resurrection* is not merely life after death; it is the continuation of life after death in glorified bodies, which are our present bodies in a glorified state.

b. **How do some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?** The Corinthian Christians just did not think carefully. Some of them denied the reality of resurrection, while believing in a resurrected Jesus. Paul shows how the resurrection of Jesus not only proves His own resurrection, but it proves the *principle* of resurrection.

c. **If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen:** If these few Corinthians were right about the resurrection, then Jesus was still dead!

2. (1Cr 15:14-19) What if there is no resurrection?

And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up; if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

a. **If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is in vain:** If there is no resurrection, then Jesus is not risen, and Paul and the other apostles have preached **in vain**. There is no real, resurrected Jesus whom they serve.

b. Worse, **if Christ is not risen, then we are found false witnesses of God.** If there is no principle of resurrection, and if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the apostles are *liars*.

c. Worse yet, **if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!** We can follow Paul's logic point-by-point:

- If there is no principle of resurrection, then Jesus did not rise from the dead
- If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then death has power over Him and defeated Him
- If death has power over Jesus, He is not God
- If Jesus is not God, He cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins
- If Jesus cannot offer a complete sacrifice for sins, our sins are not completely paid for before God
- If my sins are not completely paid for before God, then I am still in my sins
- Therefore, if Jesus is not risen, He is unable to save

d. Worse still, **if Christ is not risen, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.** If there is no principle of resurrection, then the dead in Christ are gone forever.

e. Worst of all, **if Christ is not risen, then in this life only we have hope in Christ, and we are of all men the most pitiable.** If there is no principle of resurrection, then *the whole Christian life is a pitiful joke!* If we don't have something beyond this life to look forward to, why hassle with the problems in being a Christian?

- i. It is true that being a Christian *solves* many problems; but it also *brings* many others. Paul, (like the preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes) saw little ultimate value in life if there is only this life to live.
- ii. It is true that knowing Jesus and loving Jesus can make this life better, but sometimes it will make this life worse. When we understand what Paul meant when he wrote, “**If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable**,” then we understand what a difficult life Paul lived. Paul thought, “with all I have endured for Jesus Christ, if there is not a resurrection and a heavenly reward beyond this life, I am a fool to be pitied.” Can we, in our super-comfortable age, say the same thing? Trapp says Paul can write this “Because none out of hell ever suffered more than the saints have done.”
- iii. Paul only applies this principle to *Christians*. He writes, **we are of all men the most pitiable**. For the unbeliever, this life alone gives them any chance at pleasure, and whatever happiness they can find now is all the happiness they will ever know. How different for the Christian!
- f. See how important the truth of the resurrection is! This is not some side doctrine, to be believed if one likes it. If you do not believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead in a resurrection body the way the Bible says He did, then *you have no right to call yourself a Christian*. This is one of the *essential* doctrines of the Christian faith.
- i. “Everything depends on our retaining a firm hold on this doctrine in particular; for if this one totters and no longer counts, all the others will lose their value and validity.” (Martin Luther)
- ii. “If Jesus rose, then this gospel is what it professes to be; if He rose not from the dead, then it is all deceit and delusion.” (Spurgeon)
- g. When you know what rests on the resurrection, you know why **if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable**.
- i. The *divinity* of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 1:4](#)).
- ii. The *sovereignty* of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 14:9](#)).
- iii. Our *justification* rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 4:25](#)).
- iv. Our *regeneration* rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([1 Peter 1:3](#)).
- v. Our *ultimate resurrection* rests on the resurrection of Jesus ([Romans 8:11](#)).
- vi. “The fact is, that the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and binds them together.” (Spurgeon)

3. (1Cr 15:20-23) The resurrection of Jesus was the firstfruit of our resurrection.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

a. **Now Christ is risen from the dead:** In the previous part of the chapter, Paul demonstrated beyond all doubt that Jesus rose from the dead, and the importance of that fact. Here, he simply states the fact: **now Christ is risen from the dead.**

b. **And has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep:** **Firstfruits** is the ancient Greek word *aparche*. In the Septuagint, this word is used for the offering of firstfruits and in secular usage the word was used for an entrance fee.

i. Jesus was the **firstfruits** of our resurrection in both senses. In the Old Testament, the offering of firstfruits brought one sheaf of grain to represent and anticipate the rest of the harvest ([Leviticus 23:9-14](#)). The resurrection of Jesus *represents* our resurrection, because *if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection* ([Romans 6:5](#)). The resurrection of Jesus also *anticipates* our resurrection, because we will be raised with a body like His. "As in the firstfruits offered to God, the Jews were assured of God's blessing on the whole harvest; so by the resurrection of Christ, our resurrection is insured." (Trapp)

ii. The Feast of Firstfruits was observed on the day after the Sabbath following Passover ([Leviticus 23:9-14](#)). Significantly, Jesus rose from the dead on the exact day of the Feast of Firstfruits, the day after the Sabbath following the Passover.

iii. The offering at the Feast of Firstfruits was a bloodless grain offering ([Leviticus 2](#)). No atoning sacrifice was necessary, because the Passover lamb had just been sacrificed. This corresponds perfectly with the resurrection of Jesus, because His death ended the need for sacrifice, having provided a perfect and complete atonement.

iv. The resurrection of Jesus is also the **firstfruits** of our resurrection in the sense that He is our "entrance fee" to resurrection. Jesus paid our admission to the resurrection!

c. **By man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead:** Here, Paul communicates the same ideas found in [Romans 5:12-21](#). Adam (**by man**) is one "head" of the human race, and all mankind was brought under death by Adam. The *second Adam*, Jesus Christ (**by Man**) is the other head of the human race, and Jesus brings resurrection to all that are "under" His headship.

i. “Men admire the man who is first to discover a new country... Oh, then, sing it in songs, sound it with voice of trumpet to the ends of the earth – Christ is the first who returned from the jaws of death to tell of immortality and light.” (Spurgeon)

d. **In Christ, all shall be made alive:** Does this mean everyone is resurrected? Yes and no. All will be resurrected in the sense that they will receive a resurrection body and live forever. Jesus plainly spoke of both *the resurrection of life* and *the resurrection of condemnation* (John 5:29). So, all are resurrected, but not all will receive *the resurrection of life*. Some will receive the *resurrection of condemnation*, and live forever in a resurrected body in hell.

i. “But though this text doth not prove the general resurrection, (being only intended of believers, that are members of Christ,) yet it doth not oppose it. But that the *all* here mentioned is no more than all believers, appeareth not only from the term *in Christ* in this verse, but from the whole following discourse; which is only concerning the resurrection of believers to life, not that of the wicked to eternal condemnation.” (Poole)

e. **Each one in his own order:** It would be strange and inappropriate for us to receive resurrection before Jesus. So He receives resurrection first as **the firstfruits**, and then we receive it **afterward... at His coming**.

i. The **coming** of Jesus described here uses the ancient Greek word *parousia*. This word can simply mean a person’s presence (as in [Philippians 2:12](#), *not as in my presence only*). But when it is used of Jesus, it has special reference to His Second Coming (as in [Matthew 24:27](#)).

ii. If Jesus is **the firstfruits** of our resurrection, does that mean He was the first one raised from the dead? What about the widow’s son in the days of Elijah ([1 Kings 17:17-24](#)) and Lazarus ([John 11:38-44](#)), among others? Each of these were resuscitated from death, but none of them were *resurrected*. Each of them were raised in the same body they died in, and were raised from the dead to eventually die again. Resurrection isn’t just living again; it is living again in a new body based on our old body but perfectly suited for life in eternity. Jesus was not the first one brought back from the dead, but He was the first one *resurrected*.

4. ([1Cr 15:24-28](#)) The resurrection of Jesus leads to the resolution of all things.

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For “He has put all things under His feet.” But when He says “all things are put under Him,” it is evident that He who put all things under

Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

a. **Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father.** In [Ephesians 1:10](#), Paul reveals God's eternal purpose in history: *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him*. Paul wrote of the “gathering together” of all things in Jesus, or of the “summing up” of all things in Him. Here, in 1 Corinthians, he looks forward to the time when all things are resolved in Jesus Christ and He presents it all to God the Father, giving glory to the God who authored this eternal plan of the ages.

b. **When He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power:** For now, God has granted a measure of **rule** and **authority** and **power** to men, to Satan, and even to death. But all that is temporary. Jesus will take His rightful place as *the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords* ([1 Timothy 6:15](#)). After the resurrection, God will finally resolve all of history according to His will.

i. “In raising Christ from the dead God has set in motion a chain of events that must culminate in the final destruction of death and thus of God's being once again, as in eternity past, ‘all in all.’” (Fee)

c. **He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet:** Paul here refers to the one-thousand-year reign of Jesus described in [Revelation 20:1-6](#). After that time, there will be a final, Satan inspired rebellion ([Revelation 20:7-10](#)), which Jesus will crush and finally and forever **put all enemies under His feet**.

i. The expression **under His feet** is an Old Testament “figure for total conquest.” (Mare)

d. **The last enemy that will be destroyed is death:** Death will be present during the millennial reign of Jesus ([Revelation 20:9](#) and [Isaiah 65:20](#)), but afterward, death will be abolished. It is truly the **last enemy that will be destroyed**.

i. Paul reminds us of something important: death is an **enemy**. When Jesus came upon the tomb of Lazarus, He *groaned in the spirit and was troubled*, and *Jesus wept* ([John 11:33, 35](#)). Why? Not simply because Lazarus was dead, for Jesus would raise him shortly. Instead, Jesus was troubled at death itself. It was an **enemy**. Today, some are told to embrace death as a friend, but that is not Biblical thinking. Death is a defeated enemy because of the work of Jesus, an enemy that will one day **be destroyed**, and therefore an enemy we need not fear. But death is an enemy nonetheless.

ii. The destruction of death was shown at the resurrection of Jesus, when *the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after*

His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many (Matthew 27:52-53). “When at the Redeemer’s resurrection many of the saints arose and came out of their graves into the holy city then was the crucified Lord proclaimed to be victorious over death and the grave... these were but preliminary skirmishes and mere foreshadowings of the grand victory by which death was overthrown.” (Spurgeon)

iii. If death is destroyed, why do Christians die? “Death since Jesus died is not a penal infliction upon the children of God: as such he has abolished it, and it can never be enforced. Why die the saints then? Why, because their bodies must be changed ere they can enter heaven... Saints die not now, but they are dissolved and depart.” (Spurgeon)

iv. “Death is not the worst of enemies; death is an enemy, but he is much to be preferred to our other adversaries. It were better to die a thousand times than to sin. To be tried by death is nothing compared to being tempted by the devil. The mere physical pains connected with dissolution are comparative trifles compared with the hideous grief which is caused by sin and the burden which a sense of guilt causes to the soul.” (Spurgeon)

v. “Notice, that death is the last enemy to each individual Christian and the last to be destroyed... Brother, do not dispute the appointed order, but let the last be last. I have known a brother wanting to vanquish death long before he died. But, brother, you do not want dying grace till dying moments. What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be needful when you reach a river. Ask for living grace, and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when dying time comes.” (Spurgeon)

e. But when He says “all things are put under Him,” it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted: Paul reminds us that the Son will not someday be superior to the Father. The relationship of *Father* to *Son* will be eternal: **the Son Himself will also be subject to Him.**

i. Those who deny the deity of Jesus say this verse proves their point. They take the submission of God the Son as “proof” that He must not be equal in deity to God the Father. But the submission of Jesus to the Father doesn’t come from any inherent inferiority; instead, it comes from the administrative order of the Godhead. A *son* is always in submission to his *father*, even if both are “equal” in substance.

ii. “The son of a king may be the equal of his father in every attribute of his nature, though officially inferior. So the eternal Son of God may be coequal with the Father, though officially subordinate.” (Hodge)

iii. “The Son’s subjection to his Father, which is mentioned in this place, doth no where prove his inequality of essence or power with his Father; it only signifieth what was spoken before, that Christ should deliver up his mediatory kingdom to his Father.” (Poole)

iv. Simply put, God the Father will always be God the *Father*, and God the Son will always be God the *Son*, and for all eternity they will continue to relate to each other as *Father* and *Son*.

f. **That God may be all in all:** Here, Paul refers to God the Son’s desire to glorify God the Father through all eternity. Importantly, each person of the Trinity desires to glorify another person of the Trinity. The Son glorifies the Father ([John 17:4](#)), the Father glorifies the Son ([John 17:5](#)), and the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son ([John 16:14](#)). This aspect of the nature of God is something God wants us to walk in, having a concern for the glory of others, and not our own ([Philippians 2:3-4](#)).

5. ([1Cr 15:29-32](#)) More reasons to believe in the principle of resurrection.

Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage *is it* to me? If *the* dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

a. **Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?**

What was being **baptized for the dead**? It is a mysterious passage, and there have been more than thirty different attempts to interpret it.

i. The plain meaning of the original language is that some people are being baptized on behalf of those who have died. Paul’s point is “If there is no resurrection, why are they doing this? What is the point if there is no life after death?”

ii. Significantly, Paul did not say, “we baptize for the dead,” but asked, “**what will *they* do who are baptized for the dead,**” and “**why then are *they* baptized for the dead?**” Therefore, Paul refers to a *pagan* custom of vicarious baptism for the dead. “Paul simply mentions the superstitious custom without approving it and uses it to fortify his argument that there is a resurrection from the dead.” (Mare)

iii. Paul certainly does not *approve* of the practice; he merely says that if there were no resurrection, why would the custom exist? The Mormon practice of baptism for the dead – erroneously based on this passage – is neither Scriptural nor sensible.

iv. Paul's point is plain: "The pagans even believe in the resurrection because they baptize for the dead. The pagans have the sense to believe in resurrection, but some of you Corinthian Christians do not!"

b. **And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?** If there were no resurrection, why would Paul place his life in jeopardy for the gospel? The way Paul lived his life all-out for the gospel was evidence of the truth of the resurrection.

i. Most of us are so concerned about living comfortable lives here on earth that our lives give no evidence of the resurrection. Paul lived such a committed Christian life, people could look at him and say, "There is no way he would live like that unless there was a reward waiting for him in heaven."

c. **I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily:** Paul will boast a little here. His boasting is both **in you** (that is, in the Corinthian Christians) and **in Christ Jesus**. What will Paul boast about? That he does **die daily**.

i. Vincent on **I die daily**: "I am in constant peril of my life." Paul's life was lived so on the edge for Jesus Christ that he could say, "**I die daily**." His life was always on the line; there were always people out to kill him. An example of this is in [Acts 23:12-13](#), when more than forty men took a vow that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. With enemies like that, no wonder Paul could say, "**I die daily**." And this is his *boast!*

ii. It is important to understand that when Paul says, "**I die daily**," he does not speak of his spiritual identification with the death of Jesus. He does not speak of the spiritual putting to death of the flesh. He writes of the constant imminent danger to his physical life. It is important and useful for Christians to daily reckon themselves dead to sin with Jesus Christ (as in [Romans 6:11](#), *Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*). But to use this statement **I die daily** to support that truth is wrong, because in context Paul is writing about the danger to his physical life.

iii. How can we die daily? Spurgeon gives seven steps to dying daily in a sermon titled *Dying Daily*.

- First, every day carefully consider the certainty of death
- Second, by faith put your soul through the whole process of death
- Third, hold this world with a loose hand
- Fourth, every day seriously test your hope and experience
- Next, come every day, just as you did at conversion, to the cross of Jesus, as a poor guilty sinner
- Sixth, live in such a manner that you would not be ashamed to die at any moment
- Finally, have all your affairs in order so that you are ready to die

d. **I have fought with beasts at Ephesus:** The book of Acts does not record an occasion when Paul faced wild animals in an arena. It may simply be unrecorded, or Paul may mean “**beasts**” figuratively, in reference to his violent and wild human opponents (as he faced at Ephesus in [Acts 19:21-41](#)).

i. Paul faced all this for the sake of the resurrection of the dead, both Jesus’ resurrection and the believer’s. Though at the time of his writing 1 Corinthians it was still in the future, Paul’s whole arrest, imprisonment, and journey to Rome as done for the sake of the resurrection of the dead ([Acts 23:6](#), [24:15](#), and [24:21](#)).

e. **If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”** Paul’s third proof for the resurrection in this section is also compelling. If there is no resurrection, then there is no future judgment to consider. Then life is lived only “under the sun,” as is considered in Ecclesiastes.

i. The ancient Egyptians, at the end of a big banquet, often escorted a wooden image of a man in a coffin around the tables, telling people to have a good time now, because you’ll be dead sooner than you think. If there is no resurrection, and no future judgment, then we may as well have the best time we can right now – and Paul was a fool for putting himself in such discomfort and danger for the sake of the gospel.

6. ([1Cr 15:33-34](#)) Knowing the truth about our resurrection should affect the way we live.

Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.

a. **Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”** Where did the Corinthian Christians get their strange ideas about the resurrection, ideas Paul spent this chapter trying to correct? They got this bad thinking by associating either with Jews who did not believe in the resurrection (such as the Sadducees) or by associating with pagan, Greek philosophical types, who did not believe in the resurrection ([Acts 17:31-32](#)). It was bad enough that these associations had affected their thinking on an important matter like the resurrection, but this **evil company** could corrupt far more.

i. This speaks to the vital need described in [Romans 12:2](#): *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. By keeping **evil company**, the Corinthian Christians were being *conformed to this world*, and they needed to be *transformed by the renewing of your mind*. Christians must let the Word of God shape their thinking, not the **evil company** of this world.

ii. Through much of this book, Paul deals with the moral problems of the Corinthians: envy, divisions, pride, immorality, greed, irreverence, and selfishness. How much of this came in because of they kept

evil company? Their problem with the resurrection also indicated the source of many of their moral problems.

b. **Evil company corrupts good habits:** This is not a quotation from the Old Testament, or even from the words of Jesus. Paul quotes from an ancient, secular comedy play, *Thais*, written by Menander. Though he was a pagan, Menander told the truth at this point, and Paul (more properly, the Holy Spirit) had no problem quoting a pagan who did tell the truth at a particular point.

c. **Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God:** For Christians to resist God's process of transformation by the renewing of our minds is to neglect the knowledge of God. To remain willfully ignorant of the truth is **sin**.

C. The nature of the resurrected body.

1. (1Cr 15:35) What is the nature of the resurrected body?

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"

a. **How are the dead raised up?** This is a question Paul doesn't really answer in the following verses, because the answer is obvious. God raises the dead. As Paul said to Agrippa in Acts 26:8, *Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?*

b. **And with what body do they come?** This may be a foolish question (Paul calls his imaginary questioner "*Foolish one*" in 1 Corinthians 15:36), but it is a question Paul will answer.

2. (1Cr 15:36-38) The analogy of the seed.

Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain; perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

a. **Foolish one:** In the wording of the ancient Greek, it is even stronger: *Fools!* "A hard knot must have a hard wedge, a dead heart a rousing reproof." (Trapp)

b. **What you sow:** Paul says our bodies are like "seeds" which "grow" into resurrection bodies. When you bury the body of a believer, you are "sowing" a "seed" that will come out of the earth as a resurrection body.

i. "Truly it is never a pleasant sound, that rattle of the clay upon the coffin-lid, 'Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,' nor to the farmer, for its own sake, would it be a very pleasant thing to put his grain into the dull cold earth; yet I trow no farmer ever weeps when he sows his seed." (Spurgeon)

ii. “Dear friends, if such be death – if it be but a sowing, let us have done with all faithless, hopeless, graceless sorrow... ‘Our family circle has been broken,’ say you. Yes, but only broken that it may be re-formed. You have lost a dear friend: yes, but only lost that friend that you may find him again, and find more than you lost. They are not lost; they are sown.” (Spurgeon)

c. **You do not sow that body that shall be... God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body:** When you plant a wheat seed, a big wheat seed does not come up. Instead, a stalk of wheat grows. So, even though our resurrection bodies come from our present bodies, we should not expect that they will be the same bodies or just “improved” bodies.

i. Some mock the idea of resurrection. They say, “Here is a Christian’s body, lying in a grave with no casket. The atoms in the body are taken up in grass and eaten by a steer, and the steer is slaughtered and another man eats the meat and takes the atom into his body. Where does that atom go in the resurrection?” But God does not need every atom of a man’s body to make a resurrection body. Since every cell of my body contains the DNA blueprint to make a whole new body, God can no doubt take one cell of my dead body and make a glorious resurrection body out of that old blueprint.

3. (1Cr 15:39-41) The analogy of living and heavenly bodies.

All flesh is not the same flesh, but *there is one kind of flesh* of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds. *There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. *There is* one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one star* differs from *another star* in glory.

a. **All flesh is not the same flesh:** There are all different kinds of “bodies” in God’s creation, including **celestial bodies**. Our resurrection body will be a heavenly (**celestial**) body, suited for life in heaven, not only life on this earth.

b. **All flesh is not the same flesh** explains why animals do not rise in the resurrection. “Man’s flesh only is informed by a reasonable and immortal soul, not so the flesh of other creatures: and hence the difference.” (Trapp)

c. There are different **bodies** or structures in the universe (**sun... moon... stars**), and each is created with its own **glory**, and each is suited to its own particular environment and needs. While our present bodies are adapted for the environment of time and earth, our resurrection bodies will be adapted for the environment of eternity and heaven.

d. **There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory:** Some take this to mean there will be different degrees

of glory for believers in heaven. “Whether there are degrees of glory, as it seems probable, so we shall certainly know, when we come to heaven.” (Trapp)

4. (1Cr 15:42-44) Comparison of the two kinds of bodies.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

a. **So also is the resurrection of the dead:** It’s hard to understand what our resurrection bodies will be like, so Paul will use *contrast* to help us, giving four contrasts between our present body and our future resurrection body. On all counts, the resurrection body wins!

- **Incorruption** triumphs over **corruption**
- **Glory** triumphs over **dishonor**
- **Power** triumphs over **weakness**
- **Spiritual** triumphs over **natural**

b. **Raised in incorruption... raised in glory... raised in power:** Our resurrection body will be glorious!

i. “There is nothing more uncomely, unlovely, and loathsome than a dead body; but it will not be so when it shall be raised again, then it shall be a beautiful, comely body. We shall rise in a full and perfect age, (as is generally thought) and without those defects and deformities which may here make our bodies appear unlovely.” (Poole)

ii. “Three glimpses of the body’s glory were seen, in Moses’ face, in Christ’s transfiguration, and in Stephen’s countenance.” (Trapp)

iii. “The righteous are put into their graves all weary and worn; but as such they will not rise. They go there with the furrowed brow, the hollowed cheek, the wrinkled skin; they shall wake up in beauty and glory.” (Spurgeon)

5. (1Cr 15:45-49) The two Adams and their bodies.

And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.

a. The first perfect man, **Adam**, gave us one kind of body. The second perfect man, Jesus the **last Adam**, can give us another kind of body. He is a **life-giving spirit**.

b. We have all borne the image of the first **Adam**, and those who put their trust in the **last Adam** will also bear His resurrection image. From the first **Adam**, we all are **made of dust**, but from the **last Adam** we can be made **heavenly**. For believers, the promise is sure: **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man**.

i. [Philippians 3:21](#) repeats Paul's theme: *Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

c. Since we will **bear the image of the heavenly Man**, the best example we have of what a resurrection body will be like is to see what Jesus' resurrection body was like. The resurrection body of Jesus was material and could eat ([Luke 24:39-43](#)), yet it was not bound by the laws of nature ([Luke 24:31, 24:36-37](#)).

6. ([1Cr 15:50-53](#)) The need for the resurrection.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

a. **Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God:** Paul is not saying, "material things cannot inherit the kingdom of God," because Jesus' resurrection body was a *material* body. **Flesh and blood**, in this context, means "our present bodies." Jesus' resurrection body was not a "pure spirit" body, but a material body described as *flesh and bones* ([Luke 24:39](#)) instead of **flesh and blood**. This may seem like a small distinction to us, but it must be an important distinction to God.

b. **Nor does corruption inherit incorruption:** The word **corruption** does not mean moral or ethical corruption, but physical, material corruption. These bodies which are subject to disease, injury, and one day decay, are unsuited for heaven. **Corruption can't inherit incorruption.**

c. **I tell you a mystery:** In the Biblical sense, a **mystery** is simply a thing to be understood by spiritual, rather than by merely human perception. Paul will tell the Corinthian Christians something they could not have known by reason or research. They could not have known this unless God revealed it to them.

d. **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed:** Since **sleep** is a softer way of describing the death of a believer, Paul tells us that not all Christians will die, but there will be a “final generation” who will be transformed into resurrection bodies at the return of Jesus before they ever face death.

i. Does **we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed** mean that Paul predicted Jesus would come in his lifetime? Barclay says “yes,” and simply points out that Paul was dead wrong here. But Hodge recognizes that Paul isn’t necessarily referring to only believers of *his* day with **all**; it is a word that properly embraces all believers, over all time. Secondly, it was right and proper for Paul to live as if the coming of Jesus was imminent, though he did not in fact know when Jesus would return. When writing Scripture, Paul was infallible, but not omniscient.

ii. “The plain fact is that Paul did not know when these events would take place, and nowhere does he claim to know. So when he says *we* he means ‘we believers.’” (Morris)

e. **In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet... the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed:** In a single moment, Jesus will gather His people (both dead and on the earth) to Himself, for resurrection.

i. Paul expressed the same idea again in [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18](#). This remarkable, instant gathering of Christians unto Jesus in the clouds has been called *the rapture*, after the Latin word for *caught up* in [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18](#).

ii. There will come a day when in God’s eternal plan, He gives those dead in the Lord their resurrection bodies, and then in an instant He gathers all His people to meet Jesus in the air. All the redeemed on the earth at that time will rise up to meet the Lord in the clouds, and will receive their resurrection bodies.

iii. What of the dead in Christ before that day? Are they lying in the grave, in some kind of soul sleep or suspended animation? No. Paul made it clear that to be *absent from the body* means *to be present with the Lord* ([2 Corinthians 5:8](#)). Either the present dead in Christ are with the Lord in a spiritual body, awaiting their final resurrection body; or because of the nature of timeless eternity, they have received their resurrection bodies already because they live in the eternal “now.”

f. **At the last trumpet:** What is the **last trumpet**? Those who believe that Jesus gathers His people *after* He has poured out His wrath on a Jesus-rejecting world sometimes argue that it is the last trumpet of judgment, cited in [Revelation 11:15-19](#). But this is not necessarily the case at all.

i. The **last trumpet** may not refer to the last trumpet of the seven trumpets of Revelation at all, but simply refer to the **last trumpet** believers hear on this earth.

ii. This **last trumpet** may be connected with the *trumpet of God* in [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#), but not with the trumpets of angels in [Revelation 11](#). A distinction may be made between the trumpet of an angel and the trumpet of God. Chuck Smith points to a grammatical construction that would be different if this trumpet were the trumpet of [Revelation 11](#).

iii. Ironside says that the **last trumpet** was a figure of speech that came from the Roman military, when they broke camp. The first trumpet meant, “strike the tents and prepare to leave”; the second trumpet meant, “fall into line”; the third and **last trumpet** meant “march away.” This **last trumpet** describes the Christian’s “marching orders” at the rapture of the Church.

g. **So this corruptible must put on incorruption:** Resurrection is a **must** for the Christian’s destiny. In light of all this, how could the Corinthian Christians let go of such an important truth?

7. ([1Cr 15:54-57](#)) Resurrection is the final defeat of death.

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?” The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

a. **Death is swallowed up in victory:** A resurrected body is not a resuscitated corpse. It is a new order of life that will never die again. Death is defeated by resurrection.

i. Freud was *wrong* when he said: “And finally there is the painful riddle of death, for which no remedy at all has yet been found, nor probably ever will be.” Compare that with Paul’s triumphant declaration, **“Death is swallowed up in victory”!**

b. **O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?** Paul, knowing death is a defeated enemy because of Jesus’ work, can almost taunt death, and mock it. Death has no power over the person found in Jesus Christ.

i. “This is the sharpest and the shrillest note, the boldest and the bravest challenge, that ever man rang in the ears of death... Death is here out-braved, called craven to his face, and bidden to do his worst.” (Trapp)

ii. “I will not fear thee, death, why should I? Thou lookest like a dragon, but thy sting is gone. Thy teeth are broken, oh old lion, wherefore should I fear thee? I know thou art no more able to destroy me, but thou art sent as a messenger to conduct me to the golden gate wherein I shall enter and see

my Saviour's unveiled face for ever. Expiring saints have often said that their last beds have been the best they have ever slept upon." (Spurgeon)

iii. For those who are not in Jesus Christ, death still has its **sting**. "The sting of death lay in this, that we had sinned and were summoned to appear before the God whom we had offended. This is the sting of death to you, unconverted ones, not that you are dying, but that after death is the judgment, and that you must stand before the Judge of the quick and dead to receive a sentence for the sins which you have committed in your body against him." (Spurgeon)

c. **The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law:** The principle of resurrection also proves that we are not under the law any longer. We are no longer subject to the penalty of the law (death), and we are set free from sin. Sin is the ultimate cause of death ([Romans 6:23](#), [Genesis 2:17](#)), and the *result* can't be defeated unless the *cause* is defeated.

i. Paul brilliantly links together the ideas of sin, death, and our identification with Jesus' death and resurrection in [Romans 6:1-14](#).

d. **Through our Lord Jesus Christ:** This defeat of death is only possible for those who live **through our Lord Jesus Christ**. For others, there is resurrection and eternal life, but unto damnation. If you are an unbeliever, death is not your friend; it is your enemy.

8. ([1Cr 15:58](#)) Final application: how our destiny of resurrection means we should stand fast for the Lord right now.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

a. **Therefore... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord:** Because we know death is defeated and we have an eternal, resurrected destiny with Jesus Christ, we should stand firm and unshakable all the more for Him right now. We should work hard in everything now, working for the Lord, because *right now counts forever!*

b. **Knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord:** Even if your labor is vain to everyone else, and everyone else discounts or doesn't appreciate what you do for the Lord, **your labor is not in vain in the Lord**. It doesn't matter if you get the praise or the encouragement; sometimes you will and sometimes you won't. But resurrection means **that your labor is not in vain in the Lord**.

i. "You must not only *work*, but you must *labour* – put forth all your strength; and you must work and labour *in the Lord* – under his *direction*, and by his *influence*; for without him you can do nothing." (Clarke)

ii. This should make us **steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!** We don't need to waver, we don't need to change direction, we don't need to fall, and we don't need to quit. *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister (Hebrews 6:10).* The Lord will show His remembrance of our *work and labor of love* at the resurrection.

©2013 David Guzik – No distribution beyond personal use without permission

[A previous revision of this page can be [found here](#)]

NKJV

1st Corinthians Chuck Missler

Session 15: Chapter 15 – Part 2

This is the most important chapter in the Bible (and the longest in this epistle). It deals with the ultimate enemy of mankind: death. This chapter is regarded by many as the *Centerpiece of Christianity* and the climax of Paul's message.

This Session

- The Physics of Immortality 15:36-40
- The Resurrection Body 15:41-50
- The *Harpazo* 15:51-58 Page 124

1 Corinthians 15

35] But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

- Greek philosophers taught the immortality of the soul but denied the immortality of the body. At the end of his Areopagus address, the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens scorned Paul over this point (Acts 17:31-32).

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Job 19:25-27

- The Jewish rabbis believed that God created man as a body and spirit.

The Physics of Immortality

- Frank J. Tipler, Professor of Mathematical Physics at Tulane University, is a major theoretician in the field of global general relativity, that rarefied branch of physics created by Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose.
- In devising a mathematical model of the end of the universe, Tipler (a professed atheist) came to a stunning conclusion: Using the most advanced and sophisticated methods of modern physics, relying solely on the rigorous procedures of logic that science demands, he has created a proof of the existence of God.

- Furthermore, he believes that every human being who ever lived will be resurrected from the dead.

- He claims that he arrived at his proofs of God and immortality “in exactly the same way physicists calculate the properties of an electron.”

- His book explains why he now believes that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, and that these claims are straight-forward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them.

36] Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

- “Thou fool...”: (from v.34). Paul introduces the analogy of a seed (Jn 12:24).

- “...that which thou sowest”: It is no more difficult to believe in the resurrection than it is to believe

in a harvest!

- The Greek passive voice conveys the sense that God alone is the agent who creates life. 37] And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

- Jesus’ physical body was placed in the tomb. On the third day a new glorified body came forth, no longer subject to time and space (Jn 20:19, 26; Lk 24:31).

- What emerges from a seed that “dies” is incomparably more glorious than what was planted.

- Examples: bulbs vs. gladiolas, et al. A butterfly...

38] But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

- Plants (and people) do not rise of their own volition, nor by chance. Only by the decisive (aorist) action of God. Page 125

39] All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

- Order reversed from creation account (Gen 1:20-27).

- ...overwhelming variation that is complimentary through its nonconformity.

– DNA: 3 out of 4 error-correcting code, using the same for all. Digitally different but by a common architect.

Six Is the Number of Man

- At the cellular level, an intact human immune system will virtually always recognize and reject a nonhuman transplant as foreign. What is the underlying characteristic within humanity that speaks of our uniqueness?

- On virtually every nucleated cell in a person are small markers (lipoproteins to be precise) called antigens. Their official designation is “histocompatibility antigen” or “human leukocyte antigen (HLA).”

- These certain antigens are the same in every human and are only found in humans, although given individuals may have different arrangements and collections of these molecules. (For example, these antigens are responsible for the different ABO and Rh systems important in blood transfusions.)

- The irony is that in every person, on virtually every cell, this marker of mankind is a product of one certain chromosome: Chromosome #6.

Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA)

- This system is the locus of genes that encode for proteins on the surface of cells that are responsible for regulation of the immune system in humans.
- This group of genes encodes cell-surface antigen-presenting proteins and has many other functions, and it resides on chromosome 6.

40] There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

- Geometric means; see our *Beyond Coincidence* briefing pack.

41] There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

- No two are alike. Even without a spectrograph.
- Even the moons of Jupiter are each unique.
- There are 100,000 million stars in the Milky Way alone; (at 1/sec, it would take 2500 years to count them).
- And yet God knows them all by name. Can't God do the same for us? To ask the question is to answer it.

42] So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

- Here we find four lines of recurring verbs and contrasting nouns (in anticipation of the Holy Spirit?).

43] It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

- "Dishonor": *Atimia*, loss of the rights of citizenship. A corpse has no rights. It is "unclean" (Num 19:11). Page 126
- "Sown in corruption": Entropy? The entire creation is subject to the "bondage of decay" (cf. Rom 8:19-21). Entropy began in Genesis 3; decay of *c?* etc. See our *Beyond Time and Space* briefing pack.
- Burials are vivid and constant reminders of the curse of death pronounced in Genesis. The dissolution of the human body in the grave is the ultimate humiliation to we who were originally crowned with glory and honor to rule God's creation (Ps 8:5b; Heb 2:7b, 9).
- Burial is a figurative sowing in anticipation of the future harvest at the time of the resurrection. A believer has received eternal life already (Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 5:11-13).

Jesus' Resurrection Body

- Could appear and disappear at will: Luke 24:31; John 20:19.
- Could move through solid walls: John 20:19,26.
- Could be seen and felt; palpable: Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:36-42.
- He could eat food, although it wasn't apparently necessary: Luke 24:41-43.
- Though glorified, He could be recognized: Luke 24:30-31.

- No more experience of death, aging, crying, mourning, sorrow, or pain: Rev 21:4.
- All believers will be given new bodies like the glorious body of the Lord: Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2.

44] It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

- Our new body has a different dimensionality (1 John 3:2). [See our *Beyond Perception* briefing pack.]
- "...raised a spiritual body": Our new, natural bodies will be "spiritual," completely Spirit-filled and Spirit-governed. Our bodies have become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19, et al.).

45] And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

- Jesus emphasized that His new body is material ("flesh and bone," Luke 24:39), but with the Holy

Spirit thoroughly filling and governing this body. Note: the Holy Spirit's role in the Creation (Gen 1:2).

- Note the intended parallelism between Adam and Christ.
- Our physical bodies will be like His own (2 Cor 4:14; Col 1:18; Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2; Rev 1:5).

After His resurrection, immortality for His people became a certainty. I have never seen you; the real

you. You have never seen the real me.

What Is the "Body of Christ"?

- The Church is a living organism called "The Body of Christ" (Eph 1:22-23).
- It is not just a "figure of speech" but an actual organic reality. Every believer is mystically joined into a living union with Jesus Christ (and each other! 1 Cor 12:12-28; Gal 3:27-28).
- *Ekklesia* first mentioned by Jesus Christ in Matthew 16:18.
- The Confession was the foundation, not Peter: the *Petros*, masculine, does not agree with "rock," *petra*, neuter, as it must do.
- It is in this confession of faith in Jesus that one enters into the one true "church," the body of Christ.
- "I will be in you...and you in me...": John 14:16,17,20. "In Christ" = This phrase is used 165 X in the epistles. "A Mystery": Col 1:26,27; 2:12; 1 Cor 12:12,13; Gal 3:27,28
- In the Church period, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (1 Cor 10:32, 12:13; Rom 10:12; Gal 3:27-28; Col 3:11).
- However, Israel is distinct (cf. Dan 9:27, and Rev 6-18) until the New Jerusalem which combines both. Page 127
- The Gentile is judged in Matthew 25:31-46; Israel in Ezek 20:34-44;
- The Church in 1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:8; cf. Rom 8:31-34.
- The Bride returns with Him, already adorned (Rev 19:7-9,11,14).

46] Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

47] The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

- Confirming, again, the Creation record: not from primates, etc.; a unique creation.

48] As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

- Adam was the pattern, we are his copies. In Christ, He is the pattern (we are His copies, re: 1 Cor 13). – You have been designed for this environment: the Earth. [cf. Space suits, diving gear, et al.]

- Just as a caterpillar enjoys a new dimensionality when it transforms into a butterfly, you and I will also enjoy a new dimensionality in our resurrection bodies.

- We, too, are headed for an “upgrade.”

49] And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

- Seth was born in Adam’s likeness and image (Gen 5:3). Children born of their parents bear not only the external image, but also the talents, traits, and characteristics. [We don’t have to teach them to sin.]

- We are “born again” in Him.

50] Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

- “Flesh and blood” and “corrupt” are identical in meaning (John 3:5,6f).

- Note: “flesh and bone” (Luke 24:39); His blood has been shed (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22).

- There will be a generation that will not die.

51] Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

- “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed”: (They called their burial places *koimeteria*, “dormitories,” from which we get the word “cemeteries.”)

52] In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

- “...in a moment”: *Atmos*, an “indivisible” unit.

- In quantum physics, an indivisible quanta of time is 10-43 seconds;

The Harpazo of the Body of Christ

- The doctrine of the rapture is one of ecclesiology as much as eschatology!

– NT: 1 Corinthians 15:50, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

– OT: Isaiah 26:19-21; Zephaniah 2:3; Psalm 27:5

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven Page 128

with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

- “...caught up”: a`rpa,zw *Harpazo*: seize; carry off by force. *deinde nos qui vivimus qui relinquimur simul rapiemur cum illis in nubibus obviam Domino in aera et sic semper cum Domino erimus.* 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (Latin Vulgate)
- *Rapiemur* is the proper tense of *rapio*: Our English words “rapt” and “rapture” come from the past participle of *rapio*.

Thessalonian Epistles

- (This Corinth reference, in a sense, was the opposite of the 1 Thessalonian problem: there they were worried about those who preceded them! In 2 Thessalonians, as here, it was for the those living...)
- The rapture is introduced in John 14: Before the millennial kingdom, He would leave and go to heaven, He would prepare a place for them in heaven, and He would come back to receive them unto Himself. He would take them to glory before he set up his kingdom on the earth.
- Note: Promise to the Church
 - Holy Spirit to take up residence *in* them;
 - Specific place reserved for them;
 - [Separate from return to the Earth: Zech 12, 14:4-9, etc.]
- (We will also be taking this up in 2 Corinthians...)

52] In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

- “...the last trump”: For some, this means the *Teki’ah Gedolah*, the “great blowing” of the series which make up the Feast of Trumpets (see the Feast of Trumpets in *The Feasts of Israel* briefing pack).
- To others, it is simply the final trumpet on earth for the redeemed!
- This is not really the “last” trump in the Bible: another trump calls the elect (Mat 24:31); there will be others in the Millennium, etc.
- Even the 7th Trumpet Judgment of Revelation isn’t the last: they “assemble” no one; they are not symbols of salvation; they are not symbols of deliverance; they are symbols of judgments on a Christ-rejecting world.
- It is called the “Trumpet of God” in 1 Thess 4:16, used only there and in Ex 19 at Mt. Sinai.
- Paul is not saying anything about timing. No one but the Father knows the day and the hour (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7).

53] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

- “This mortal must put on immortality...”
- We cannot dress ourselves. God does it all. We are disconnected from our past (and even time itself).

54] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55] O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?Page 129

- Quotes from OT (Isa 25:8; Hos 13:14).
- Death's days are numbered.

56] The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

- Here in a single verse, Paul expresses the doctrine of sin, the law, and death.
- Two years later, Paul expanded the complete doctrine in his Epistle to the Romans (Rom 6:23; 7:9 11,13).

57] But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The key word is victory, echoing vv.54-55 (cf. 1 Jn 5:4; Rev 1:18).
- It is in the present tense; He keeps on giving us victory.
- *Do you have your passport for the transit that's coming?*

58] Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

- "Therefore": How then shall we live?
- Out of gratitude for our salvation provided through the Son (Heb 6:10).