

He is Risen Indeed – 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Introduction – The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pivot of all human history and that is no overstatement. It is the rock-bottom foundation for all of reality. If it is not objectively true, then Christians are of all men the most to be pitied (v19), and if it is true (and all that follows from His resurrection) then none of our labor is in vain in the Lord (v58). But the resurrection of Jesus and the future resurrection of all those who believe in Jesus is being questioned – and so we come to the beginning of one of the greatest sustained discussions on this topic written by the apostle Paul. When we proclaim, “*He is risen indeed*,” we are declaring the potency of the Good News over all peoples, all nations, and even over all of creation. Resurrection changes everything. Part 1.

The Gospel I Preached to You (vv1-2) – Over and over we have seen that the Corinthians were puffed up with their own “wisdom,” their own take and twist on Paul’s teaching, falling away to other false teachings, adding to the gospel or, here, removing the very foundation of the gospel, the gospel Paul preached to them. Paul was the first Christian to come and preach in Corinth and he stayed there for 18 months teaching and building the church body (Acts 18). Corinth was a Greek city and Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. In fact, when Paul preached the resurrection in Athens, they laughed at him (Acts 17:18, 32). Most Greek philosophies had a disdain for the physical body, considering it a prison of the soul, and death was considered a deliverance from this bondage. It appears some of this idea and teaching had entered the Corinthian church (vv12-13).

Paul reminds them (as we need to be reminded) that he preached the same message to them that he would now restate. He also reminds them that they *received* it, that they *stand* on it, and that they are *saved* by it – unless such a belief is empty. While salvation is in a Person and not in a statement of doctrines, the doctrines matter nonetheless. The Person and the declarations about the Person go hand in hand.

The Gospel I Delivered to You (vv3-4) – Paul was not making up a story, or his own version of the gospel; it was what he had received (he had said this about his teachings on the Lord’s Supper as well 11:23). As an apostle, he had received these teachings directly from the Lord. These are the matters of first importance. Four lines, four historical events, the bare bones of the gospel that saves.

1 - “That Christ Died for our Sins” – The Messiah (Christ) was an historical Person, not an idea or a philosophy. Jesus was mocked, beaten, and crucified like a criminal, a technique of the Romans to humiliate its enemies. He was stabbed in the side to make sure He was dead.

2 - “That He was Buried” – The death was not a play-acting. A dead corpse was laid in a grave.

3 - “That He Has Been Raised on the Third Day” – The verb emphasizes the one-time past, completed event that remains completed today. It was the third day, just as Jesus had said (John 2:19, Luke 18:33).

“According to the Scriptures” – Paul does not quote a handful of proof texts (although he could and does elsewhere). And so, the first point is that all of the Old Testament was pregnant with a need for fulfillment; it was a story in search of a final chapter, an ending, an answer. The phrase also highlights that everything that happened to Jesus was the perfect plan of God. From Adam and Eve’s animal skins to the ram substituted for Isaac to the whole priestly system of substitutionary sacrifice, there was a promise that One would be provided to bear our sins (Isaiah 53:4-6). The wages of sin is death, and so if Jesus was going to pay for our sins, He had to die (Rom 6:23). And when He rose from the dead, He declared victory over death for all who are in Him (Rom 1:4, 16-17).

...but there is one more line...

4 - “That He was Seen” – This is not an exhaustive list of the sightings of Christ. What Paul is emphasizing is that Peter (Cephas), the twelve, the leader of the Jerusalem church (James), and all the apostles testify to the same confession of faith and what they saw. But Jesus was also seen by over five hundred brethren at one time, many of whom could be interviewed when Paul wrote this letter (vv5-6). This of course eliminates the possibility of a small-group conspiracy. Last of all, He was seen by Paul, a persecutor of the church (v9). Their testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ was solid. Jesus’ ministry, His death, burial, and resurrection, were all public events (Acts 26:26).

A Resurrected Body - He proved to them that He was no ghost (Luke 24:36-43) letting them touch Him and eating with them. He also showed them that He was the same Jesus in the same body, though resurrected, by showing them His hands and feet (and for doubting Thomas, He lifted up His tunic and showed His side - John 20:24-29). He appeared on multiple occasions, in multiple settings, both in Jerusalem and in Galilee and finally on mount Olivet before His ascension. Throughout the scriptures, the resurrection of Jesus was not something that needed to be proved. Rather, the resurrection proved something about Jesus: He was who He said He was and He did what He said He'd do (Rom 1:4, Psalm 2:8-9, John 3:14-17).

Implications - This passage is the “if” clause and the rest of Chapter 15 is a series of “then” statements - of enormous importance. But let's get the “if” clause right first. Either Jesus, and you, and all of creation are a pile of cosmic accidents springing from the dust and destined for more dust and we are all a joke - or - Jesus, and you, and all of creation, are ultimately rooted in an eternal purpose and destiny and so everything counts. This culture is drowning in the former; we are proclaiming the latter. But the latter includes your future resurrection and the restoration of all creation. To be a Christian is to believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and to live with a hope in the final resurrection of all things. He is risen indeed.

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