

“Does the Resurrection of Jesus Really Matter?”

1 Corinthians 15:16-20

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

Is the resurrection really that important for the celebration of Easter? Are the events of Jesus life, relevant to me today?

Intro: Among the people from Eastern Europe, the Easter basket had nothing to do with candy and rabbits. Baskets were filled with symbolic things and taken to church to be blessed. There was bread in the basket to recall how Israel relied on God in the wilderness and to symbolize life. Horseradish was there to suggest the bitterness of Egyptian bondage and the bitterness of Jesus death. Salt was there as a symbol of our common humanity. Ham was there as a reminder that we are not under the old law, which forbade so much, but under the new law. Eggs were in the basket, too. They stood for hope and resurrection and life! Whatever our customs, whatever our symbols, Easter always stands for new life, for resurrection, for hope!

Transition: Easter often seems to be more about “Cadbury Bunnies, and new clothes” The events surrounding an itinerant teacher from Bethlehem are buried somehow by many in the celebration of spring and Easter dinners. Thoughts of his winning over death and being alive are kept in the back of many minds this time of year!

Is the resurrection really that important for the celebration of Easter? Are the events of Jesus’ life relevant to me today? Millions of people throughout history have asked those questions. Before coming to faith in Christ perhaps you asked these questions. Maybe you’re sitting here today and those questions are even now filling your mind!

Why all the fuss about Easter, why does it matter whether or not Jesus arose bodily from the tomb? I try to live a good life; I am a responsible member of this community and an ethical person. Why get overly excited about an event that is centuries old?

If it does matter, if it’s essential to my faith then what is it about the resurrection that offers me purpose hope and a future?

"Why is this night different from all other nights?" This is the question, which is asked in every Jewish home at Passover. It is always asked by the youngest child; and it offers an opportunity to explain the rescue of Israel from Egypt. So we may ask of the day of Christ’s resurrection, why is this day different from all other days? The answer is the most important ever given!

The resurrection of Jesus is without question the most pivotal truth to the Christian faith! Paul makes it clear in **1 Corinthians 15:16-20**

¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” ²⁰But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

If life doesn't continue then it didn't continue for Jesus.

If life doesn't go on your faith is empty, and you haven't been forgiven.

If life ends at death, then Christians cease to exist and we have missed what life is all about.

I. If life doesn't continue then it didn't continue for Jesus. “For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either” 1 Corinthians 15:16

Paul was writing to people who refused to believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus! It seems that they still wanted to follow and adhere to his teachings, but stopped short in their belief that He defeated death! Paul is logically helping them to understand that Jesus is more than a moral teacher whose teachings lead to a full and balanced life. He is much more than a moral influence!

Paul's point is that life continues! It does not end with your final heartbeat and breath! It didn't end for Jesus and it doesn't end for anyone! **16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either**". The difference is that Jesus came back! He went to the other side...and has returned to tell us that for all people who receive his forgiveness ...all is well, on the other side of your last heartbeat!

The first law of Thermodynamics says that no mass or energy is ever destroyed, that it merely changes form. When a piece of wood is burned, it is not gone. Some of it becomes heat; some deteriorates into the ashes. But it is not destroyed - it just changes. When a lake dries up, the water is gone. It has evaporated into the air, only to fall to earth again someday. If we can see this all around us in the physical world, is it so hard to conceive of it in the spiritual world? Harry Emerson Fosdick said, "Can it be that God is the most unscrupulous waster in the universe making great personalities, only to throw them utterly away." If we can see it in nature, can we see it in the sphere of faith? We, too, can have the same confidence that the apostle Paul had when he said, "We shall all be changed."

If life doesn't continue then it didn't continue for Jesus! 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either"

II. If life doesn't go on your, faith is empty, and you haven't been forgiven. 16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

Paul notes that if Christ has not been raised because there is no resurrection of the dead, then that also means that Christ cannot be with the believer. He is dead. Christ can be nothing more than a great historical example of a righteous life. But that creates another problem; because, like the true prophets, Jesus died condemned, without wealth or honor.

To follow his example of how to live the righteous life, one must live in such a way as to experience similar rejection. But if shame in this life is all that it means to be Christ's followers, then Christians are indeed a pitiful people.

Our faith is empty of any content if we believe that what we are (or anyone is) and what we have (or anyone has) is all we will ever be and have. Then Christ has accomplished nothing for us and we are still in our sins. Carolyn Schneider

Have you ever been taken in? Feeling the pressure to do something or buy something? Then after you gave in...you feel regret? Some feel that after they buy a high ticket item, like a car...they feel buyer's regret. We are all bombarded with sales pitches that come to us via the mail, in person, and of course through...the phone! I am now in the habit of asking immediately when I get a one of "those" calls...is this a sales call? Telemarketers must be aware of this because they often say no, and then go right into their pitch. One time I asked if this was a sales call...and the guy said what do you think! Wow! I said sounds like.....click!

On this bright Easter morning make no mistake the Apostle Paul is saying...if Jesus didn't bodily come out of that grave 2000 yrs ago, you have been duped, you have handed over your credit card...you are on the hook! You, my friend, have been swindled! Your week by week journey to the well appointed brick building with a steeple on top has been a colossal waste of time!

If the resurrection did not take place then the faith you have is groundless! If Christ has not been raised, every preacher, teacher, missionary... in the world is - willfully or ignorantly - perpetrating a hoax, and misleading people to trust in a delusion, not simply with respect to the resurrection as a fact of history, but with regard to the gospel that depends on it.

Without the resurrection of Christ as an historical fact, the Christian gospel is merely "the opiate of the people", a sort of "pie in the sky when you die" that keeps you contented but has no substance.

The faith of your grandparents, parents, uncles, and aunts is just so much wishful thinking, if Christ has not been raised!

That is...if Jesus is still in a Jerusalem grave.

And we are still in our sins! **16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.**

17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

This spells out the implication of what I have already said. If Christ has not been raised, then every person who has trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and, on the basis of faith in Christ, has been assured that his sins are forgiven, is in fact miserably deluded - "you are still in your sins". You have not received forgiveness, your guilt remains. You thought you had found the way of peace and reconciliation - how wrong you were! Peter J. Blackburn

If Christ has not been raised, we certainly do not know what way there might be for salvation and forgiveness of sins - we are still in our sins!

No resurrection - no salvation!

If life doesn't continue then it didn't continue for Jesus.

If life doesn't go on you, faith is empty, and you haven't been forgiven.

III. If life ends at death, then Christians cease to exist and we have missed what life is all about:

16For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. 20But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

It is true that Christians believe that this present life must be lived in the perspective of eternity. For example, the Christian is to set first God's Kingdom and His righteousness over such things as food, drink and clothing (**Mt. 6.33**). The Christian is to take the narrow gate and hard way, because these lead to life

(7.13,14). The Christian is to have a mind which is set on heavenly, rather than earthly, things, putting to death earthly desires and appetites **(Col. 3.1).**

If Christ has not been raised, there is nothing beyond the grave. The rigors and denials of this life have been for nothing. The greatest hopes and aspirations of this life have been for nothing. If we have had hope for this life only, with no reason to expect anything after this life (as would be the case if Christ has not risen from the dead), what a pitiable state we are in! Peter J. Blackburn

No resurrection - no hope!

But Christ has been raised!!!

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (v. 20).

What a tremendous significance the resurrection has for the Christian! We have good news - for ourselves, for others, for the whole world! All who believe in Christ can be certain of forgiveness of sins! The hope of an even fuller life beyond the grave is strong and solid!

What an awful state we would be in if Christ has not been raised!

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!"
Hallelujah! With confidence, believe it, live it, share it!

How can we be sure? All but one of the original twelve was martyred. Surely others of the disciples were martyred too. It's not reasonable that dozens (or hundreds!) of people would die for what they knew was a lie.

Christianity would have been the easiest religion to disprove in the first few years. Just produce the body of Christ. Yet no such body has turned up.
Now, I don't know anybody who has come back from the dead. Better than that, Jesus said he would come back from the dead, and then he did.

Harry Houdini said he'd come back, but he didn't. Overcoming death is a big deal. It can't be ignored. If someone tells you they're going to die, be dead for three days, then come back to life, and they proceed to do it, I suggest you listen to whatever they say next!

Jesus said he would return! **16For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)**

Why don't these other people hear Him? Why don't the unbelievers hear His voice and the sound of the trumpet? How is it just these that love Jesus hear that voice and that sound?

** Well, one day I came across something that explained that to me in an article that I read in the doctor's office not too long ago. In the wintertime as you know, these great mallard ducks fly from the north down to the south. And they winter in the south.*

Then when summertime, springtime comes, why, they go back up to the north. Well, when those great mallards came down into southern Louisiana, there was a farmer who caught one.

And staked him out, tied a string on his leg. And put him on the pond there with his domestic ducks. And that great mallard from the north just swam around, swam around, and swam around. Spent the wintertime with those domestic ducks.

But when the springtime came, those great mallards rose out of those swamps and lakes of southern Louisiana.

And one of that band of great mallards flying back home looked down from the sky and saw that mallard down there on the pond swimming around with those domestic ducks.

And they called from the sky. And that great mallard lifted up his head. And lifted up his eyes. And when they called from heaven, he gave a great lurch but was pulled back down by the stake and the string.

They called again from the sky. They called again from heaven. And that great mallard spread his wings and once again lurched to join them in the heavens and broke the stake and broke the string and rose up to meet them in the sky.

When I heard that, I said that's exactly what it will be at the time of the consummation. These who die without Christ don't hear. They don't move. Their hearts are not stirred like those domestic ducks. They just circle around in the earth and the pond.

But that great mallard, that great mallard. When they called from the sky, his heart was stirred. And he lifted up his head and his eyes and joined them in heaven.

That's the way it's going to be with us. If we fall asleep before the Lord comes, when the trumpet sounds and the archangel cries, we shall hear His voice. And we shall rise to meet our Lord. And the saints of God in the sky, in the sky.

**Dr. W.A. Criswell*

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If life ends at death, then Christians cease to exist and we have missed what life is all about:

It looked like Saturday morning TV time at the Van Pelt household. Lucy and Linus were sitting in front of the television set when Lucy said to Linus, "Go get me a glass of water."

Linus looked surprised, "Why should I do anything for you? You never do anything for me."

"On your 75th birthday," Lucy promised, "I'll bake you a cake."

Linus got up, headed to the kitchen and said, "Life is more pleasant when you have something to look forward to."

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