

NO RESURRECTION, NO HOPE.

April 12, 2009.

Introduction.

Please turn to *1Cor.15:1-20*. (**read**). How important is the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? How important is it that this doctrine is a historical fact? In the first decade of my ministry in this church I had some one-on-one discussions with an Adventist elder. He argued very strongly that Saturday is the day of worship and declared that to worship on Sunday was to follow the teachings of the anti-Christ.

One day I asked him, *“how important is the resurrection of Jesus in his church?”* He said, *“We do not emphasize the resurrection because to emphasize the resurrection is to emphasize Sunday.”* He did not realize that by worshipping on Saturday he was emphasizing an unfinished salvation because Jesus is still in the grave. It is only when Jesus rose from the grave that His work of salvation on our behalf was finished. He did not realize that worshipping on Saturday meant he had no salvation in Christ. In *Rom.4:25* Paul wrote, “[Jesus] was delivered over for our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” Without the resurrection of Jesus there is no justification. This means without the resurrection of Jesus there is no salvation.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is the central doctrine of Christianity. It is the central doctrine of our salvation in Christ. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be a fanciful religious belief concocted by some deluded disciples. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be rooted in religious myth. The Bible boldly proclaims the resurrection of Jesus as a historical fact and as the cornerstone of the sinner’s salvation. If the resurrection of Jesus is not a historical fact, then Christianity is no different to all the other religions of this world. The historicity of

the resurrection is the primary truth that separates Biblical Christianity from all the other religions and cults in our world. The founders of all other religions and religious cults are dead and waiting for final judgment. The “author and perfecter” of our faith is alive (cf. *Heb.12:2*) and He will be the Judge in the final judgment. (*Acts 17:31*).

I have recommended that you read the booklet by **John Blanchard** entitled, “**Jesus : Dead or Alive.**” **Blanchard** took on the main arguments that deny the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus and answered them very efficiently. I will not spend time repeating what **Blanchard** said and urge you to read the booklet if you haven’t done so.

A Few Facts.

I want to turn your attention to a few facts about the resurrection before turning your attention to *1Cor.15*. I did a rough survey of the N.T. to see how often it spoke about the resurrection of Jesus. I want to emphasize the words “*rough survey*”. I found that there are twelve chapters in the Bible that are, for the most part, devoted to the resurrection of Jesus. There are approximately fifteen short passages in the gospels that speak of the resurrection of Jesus. There are approximately seven short passages in the book of Acts that speak about the resurrection of Jesus. And there are approximately twenty one short passages in the epistles that speak about the resurrection of Jesus.

Secondly, have you noticed how careful the Bible is to emphasize that Jesus was buried. *Matt.27:57-66 & 28:1* are devoted to the burial of Jesus. *Mk.15:42-47 & 16:1* are devoted to the burial of Jesus. *Lk.23:50-56 & 24:1* are devoted to the burial of Jesus. *Jn.19:38-42 & 20:1* are devoted to the burial of Jesus. These passages are not just passing references. These passages have a total of over **700** words and give us quite a detailed picture of how Jesus’ body was prepared for burial, where He was buried and how He was buried.

If there was no burial the enemies of the gospel would pounce on it and declare there was no burial because there was no death. But there was a burial. The response of the enemies of the gospel is to ignore it and desperately try to prove by means of various ridiculous theories that Jesus did not die. Despite the fact that these theories are ridiculous and even laughable, the world is being told that they are scholarly theories because the men who proposed them are supposed to be scholars. God's response in **Rom.1:22** is, "Professing to be wise, they became fools."

In **1Cor.15:3-4** Paul summed up the gospel as follows, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures." The message of the gospel emphasizes Jesus' burial.

Now note what the Bible says about Christian baptism. Turn to **Rom.6:3-4**. Paul wrote, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (cf. **Col.2:12**). When we are baptized and raised from the water we become identified with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15 : 1 – 20.

Let us go now to **1Cor.15:1-20**. A serious problem arose in the church at Corinth. Some had come to believe and teach the heresy that "there is no resurrection of the dead." (**vs.12**). Years later a problem with the resurrection would also surface in the church at Ephesus. Two heretics, Hymenaeus and Philetus, were teaching that the future resurrection of believers had already taken place. (**2Tim.2:17-18**). They had succeeded in getting a following and overthrowing or ruining the faith of some.

Now it is apparent that in Corinth the teachers of this no resurrection heresy had some success. Note carefully Paul's words in *vs.12*, "how do some among you say..." Some were already believing the no resurrection heresy. Those who had fallen prey to the heretics had opened themselves up to discussions with the heretics. They had fallen prey to the trap Satan set for Eve : *"Indeed, did God really say? Let's not be closed-minded. Let's talk about this."* Eve's theological discussion with the serpent led to her being deceived, their fall into sin and the fall of the whole human race into sin.

Paul has two warnings I want to touch on here very briefly. *Firstly*, he warned in *Acts 20:30* that heretics would arise from the very membership of the church, "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." These heretics are far more dangerous than those outside the church. Why? We regard them as fellow-believers in Christ. We regard them as friends. We trust them.

Secondly, take note of Paul's warning in *1Cor.15:33*, "Do not be deceived : Bad company corrupts good morals." This warning is general enough to have a very broad application. This warning is clearly seen in *Psa.1:1*, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!"

But in *1Cor.15* this warning must be understood within the context in which Paul gave it. Paul's context is the heretics and the spread of the no resurrection heresy in the church. And its primary application has to do with playing the open-minded game and having theological discussions with heretics about their beliefs. The immediate danger you face is being deceived and led astray. The ultimate danger is your professed faith in Christ being overthrown and brought to ruin as happened to those in the Ephesian church when they listened to the heretics.

"Do not be deceived" is literally *"do not deceive or fool yourself."* Heresies are always a danger to the spiritual welfare of your soul. They are the poison injected into

you from the fangs of the Satanic serpent when the serpent bites you. Learn your lesson from Eve's experience.

Now, I want you to follow Paul's argument in *1Cor.15* very carefully. **Firstly**, Paul said the gospel they received (*vs.1*) and which he delivered (*vs.3*) is authoritative. Both verbs emphasize the authoritative nature the gospel message given to them. This gospel message is summed up in *vss.3-4*.

Secondly, I want you to take note of the verb "raised". *Vs.4*, "He was raised". *Vs.12*, "He has been raised." *Vs.20*, "Christ has been raised." In these three instances the verb is a Greek perfect passive. The passive voice tells us that someone raised Christ from the dead. That someone is God. (*vs.15*). Paul is saying we are preaching to you that God raised Christ from the dead. The perfect tense emphasizes the continuing permanent result of what has happened. What this means is : Christ has been raised from the dead, He is presently raised from the dead, and He will forever be in this resurrected state.

Thirdly, Paul said to the Corinthians we have been preaching to you that God has raised Christ from the dead. You professed to receive this message as authoritative. You professed to believe this message. You professed to be saved by this message. You professed to take your stand on this message. Now "unless you have believed in vain" (*vs.2*), that is, unless your profession was a lie and you have believed the message we preached to you without due consideration of the facts, how can you now say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (*vs.12*). Do you realize the utterly serious implications of what you are now saying? Let us consider these implications.

The *first* implication is that "if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised." (*vs.13*). Paul's verb is a negative perfect passive. Paul's point is that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then God did not raise Christ from the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead then Christ is still dead and buried and will remain that way permanently.

The *second* implication is that “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.” (*vs.14*). If God did not raise Christ from the dead and He is still permanently dead and buried, then our preaching of the gospel to you is vain, without basis, without content. And your faith in that gospel we preached to you is without basis, without content. In other words, their faith was a blind faith. Their faith was a leap in the dark. Their faith was rooted in fanciful religious teachings. Their faith was not resting on historically verifiable facts.

The *third* implication is the most serious of all the implications Paul has set out. The third implication is this : to preach a gospel message that God raised Christ from the dead when He did not raise Christ from the dead is to make God to be a liar. Let us take note of what Paul wrote in *vs.15*, “Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised the Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.” You would have noted that I used the definite article when I said, “He raised *the* Christ.” Paul used the definite article here and the idea is, “He raised Christ the Messiah”.

The verb “found” can also mean “*we have been found out.*” The verb has a moral emphasis in it and the idea is, “*we have been found out; we have been exposed as liars.*” We have been exposed as “false witnesses” who proclaimed a message that was a blatant lie. We proclaimed a message that was a lie and claimed that it was the word of God. What’s worse, we proclaimed this lie in God’s name. We lied against God because to proclaim a message in God’s name is to say God authorized us to proclaim this message. If the dead are not raised and God authorized us to proclaim this message, then God is a liar. If God did not authorize us to proclaim this message then we are the liars and by putting God in front we have made Him out to be a liar.

Heb.6:18 says, “it is impossible for God to lie.” *Tit.1:2* says, “God ... cannot lie.” The word Paul used in *Tit.1:2* means : God is not a liar; God does not lie; God is without deceit; God is always truthful. To make God to be or to even look like a liar is utterly serious because we would be guilty of impugning the holiness of God. The

holiness of God is His crowning attribute. Time will not allow me to fully demonstrate from God's word how utterly serious it is to impugn God's holiness. But I want to use one passage as an example.

In *Ezek.36:20* God charged Israel with profaning His holy name. In *vs.21* God said, "I had concern for My holy name." In *vs.22* God said, "I am about to act ... for My holy name." In *vs.23* God said, "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name" which Israel has profaned. To impugn the holiness of God's name or character is very very dangerous business. Paul knew that and this is why he brought this denial of the resurrection of Jesus face to face with this third implication. Paul is charging the heretics with impugning the truthfulness and holiness of God.

In *vs.16* Paul repeated his basic premise stated in *vs.13* and then he submitted three more implications. The *fourth* implication in *vs.17* is, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins." If Christ is permanently dead and buried then "your faith is worthless". Then your faith is futile. Then your faith is useless. In *vs.14* Paul asserted that their faith is "vain", that is, without basis or without content. Now Paul is saying their faith is "worthless", that is, it does not achieve the promised goal.

The primary promised goal is clearly expressed in *Lk.24:46-47*. The resurrected Christ told His disciples, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations." The primary promised goal of the resurrected Christ is the forgiveness of their sins. But if Christ has not been raised then the goal of the forgiveness of their sins cannot be achieved. Then, "you are still in your sins" and the preaching of the gospel is a worthless task. Then the apostle has no basis any longer to say to them, "such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus...." (*1Cor.6:11*).

The *fifth* implication grows out of the fourth because it is rooted in the promise of the forgiveness of sins. Paul wrote, “Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” (vs.18). Then those who have died with their hope firmly fixed in Christ have died without hope. No resurrection, no hope! They have perished. They are lost. Since there is no resurrection, they have no future of any kind. No resurrection means no life beyond the grave. Therefore we are no different to the plants and animals. Death ends our existence.

In vs.32 Paul wrote the obvious, “If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” If there is no resurrection let us close the doors of this church building and never return. And let us go out into the world and live it up to the fullest because after we die its all over. Let me pause and say it here : the message of the gospel of Christ is not fanciful irrational religious myth. The message of the gospel of Christ takes into consideration the arguments that can be made against it and answers them head on. Paul is not mincing his words. Paul is not trying to pull a religious con job on you. Paul is saying to you very clearly : if you believe that the message of the gospel of Christ is a lie, if you believe the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is a lie and the dead is not raised, then go out into the world and live out your life the way you want to live it. In doing so do not short-change yourself. Really live it up because when you die its over.

It would seem from the behavior of the Corinthians and the arguments Paul was making that the Corinthians were playing the “*just-in-case let’s-keep-it-safe game*” with Paul. They were trying to play the one foot in, one foot out game with Paul. But Paul would have none of that. He is making it plain : if there is no resurrection of the dead then stop playing church and go out into the world and live it up. But if there is a resurrection of the dead and Christ has been raised from the dead, then believe the gospel and obey the gospel and live godly lives to the glory of God.

Paul’s *final* implication is found in vs.19, “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.” Take note of the verb “we have hoped.”

It is a Greek perfect tense. It means the hope we have in Christ is permanent. It means we believe our hope in Christ is resting on a certain foundation. Now what is Paul's point? If we believe that Christ has been raised from the dead then we are pinning our hope in Christ. We are pinning our hope in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We are pinning our hope in Christ for the life that exists beyond the grave. Now if we are wrong we are the most pitiful group of people in the world. Is this the language of a man who is trying to con you?

Paul's final implication can have a broad application. If we in this church are wrong in what we believe, then we are the most pitiful group of people in this world. If the Roman Catholics are wrong they are the most pitiful people in the world. If the Jehovah Witnesses are wrong they are the most pitiful people in the world. If the Muslims are wrong they are the most pitiful people in this world. If the Hindus are wrong they are the most pitiful people in this world. If the atheists are wrong they are the most pitiful people in this world. What are your religious beliefs today? If you are wrong you are the most pitiful person in this world. You need to be absolutely sure that your beliefs are right because if you are wrong you have made a most terrible mistake and you are in deep trouble.

Paul knew what he believed. Note how he ended this section of his arguments against the heresy of no resurrection. In *vs.20* Paul declared, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead." Paul used the Greek perfect tense again and as we saw the meaning is : Christ has been raised from the dead, He is presently raised from the dead, and He will forever be in this resurrected state. Paul knew that his beliefs were rooted in provable historical facts. Paul was absolutely sure about the accuracy of his beliefs. He was totally confident about the genuineness of his beliefs. He was not afraid to put his beliefs on the line by bringing his readers face to face with the ultimate challenges.

If Paul was here today what would he say to you? He would say to you : if you believe there is no resurrection of the dead; if you believe Christ has not been raised from the dead; if you believe the gospel message we are preaching is false, then, when you leave

this place today, do not return. Walk away, go into the world and live it up because when you die, you return to the dust and it's all over. You have only one short life. Why waste it in prayer when you can spend it in all kinds of pleasure.

But if you believe that this gospel message about Christ is the truth, then you need to obey it. You need to repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ to save you. You need to stop playing games with God and eternal welfare of your soul.

Now in closing let me point out a few Biblical facts to you.

1). If the resurrection is true then Jesus Christ is the Son of God. **Rom.1:4** says the Lord Jesus Christ “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.”

2). If the resurrection is true then Biblical Christianity alone is true. In **Acts 26** Festus charged Paul with being a mad man. Paul answered Festus, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth”, that is, I am speaking to you words that are true and rational. (**vs.25**).

3). If the resurrection is true then final judgment is coming and the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who will be the final Judge. In **Acts 17:31** Paul said to the Athenian scholars and philosophers, “[God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” How did the Athenians respond to Paul’s message? They did not believe in the resurrection. **Vs.32** tells us that “when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, they began to sneer.” They began to mock and scoff.

4). If the resurrection is true the Lord Jesus Christ is your only hope of salvation. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (**Jn.14:6**). Jesus said that repentance for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in His name. (**Lk.24:47**). Peter said, “there is salvation in no one else; for

there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (*Acts 4:12*). Note that very carefully : no other name has been given for our salvation. When the Philippian jailer asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?”, Paul had only one answer to give, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” (*Acts 16:30-31*).

5). If you are a Christian, the resurrection says to you that you must obey Christ and live a holy life. The resurrected Christ is the exalted Lord. You must honor Him. (*Phil.2:11*). The resurrected Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. You must obey Him. (*Matt.28:18*). Christ’s resurrection means you must “walk in newness of life.” (*Rom.6:4*). You must conduct your life in keeping with the new creation that you are in Christ.

Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? Do you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead? If you believe Jesus was raised from the dead, as we have seen, your belief has serious implications for you. If you do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead, then this sermon will mean nothing to you. But let ask you now : What if you are wrong? What if Jesus did rise from the dead? Have you tested the truthfulness of your belief that Jesus did not rise from the dead? If you are wrong you have a most stunning experience waiting for you. When you die you will stand in the final judgment. And guess who will be your Judge? Jesus!

I stand here today because I know Jesus rose from the dead. I know because I have examined the records and tested their truthfulness. I know because I have tested the truthfulness of Jesus’ promises. I have found out what Paul discovered, that God does not lie and God cannot lie. What about you?