

# The Impact of the Resurrection

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And that is the astounding claim of the Christian faith. Christianity is about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The resurrection in history is crucial to Christianity. Because if Jesus did not die and then rise again, then there would be no Christianity.

And the Apostle Paul says as much in our Bible reading. We read it there in verse 14. If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

Verse 17. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You're still in your sins. Then verse 19. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

So he's saying if Christ did not rise from the dead, the Christian faith is a complete and utter waste of time. It's useless.

[ 1 : 04 ] And more than that, Christians are to be pitied above all other people for believing in something that isn't true. And so if you're a believer and you're here this afternoon, then you'll be convinced about the resurrection of Jesus.

And you'll want to celebrate it today. In fact, you'll want to celebrate it every single day. But perhaps you're skeptical and you've got your doubts about the resurrection. Or maybe you would call yourself an unbeliever and you can't accept that the resurrection of Jesus happened.

Well, what we're going to do this afternoon is to look at one of the classic passages on the resurrection from 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Where the emphasis in this Bible passage is on the historical fact of the resurrection.

Showing how these amazing events of that first Easter Sunday morning are true. Now, of course, that is a massive claim in a culture that doesn't want to believe in facts or truth.

Our cultural climate these days would suggest that you can make up your own truth. You can claim your own facts. Which is difficult because you can then have little certainty about anything being true or trustworthy.

[ 2 : 24 ] And yet, when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus, we don't just get a bold claim saying that it happened. What we get are the historical facts that verify the truth of that claim.

And so, no matter who we are today or where we've come from, what our background is, what we think or what we believe about the resurrection of Jesus, what we find here is that the resurrection is an inescapable challenge for every single one of us.

The resurrection is about rising from death. And I don't know about you, but there's a 100% chance that all of us in this room will one day die. So, the truth of the resurrection of Jesus applies to us.

And so, what Paul does is he emphasizes the historical facts of the resurrection. And then he gives us compelling reasons as to why we can believe that this is true.

And in doing so, he then shows us the personal impact that the resurrection of Jesus has on our lives, on your life and on mine. And so, we see three things in this passage we're going to think about this afternoon.

[ 3 : 33 ] First, the resurrection is historical. Second, the resurrection is reasonable. And third, the resurrection is personal. It's historical. It happened.

It's reasonable. You can believe it. It's personal. It transforms your life. So, first, the resurrection is historical. What Paul does here is he reminds his readers that Christianity is firmly based on historical events.

So, verse 1 and 2, he says, Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.

Otherwise, you have believed in vain. That word gospel simply means good news. What's the news? The news is the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus.

Both those events come together and are the gospel, the good news. News of events that have taken place in history, our history, world history.

[ 4 : 39 ] And so, Paul is saying to his readers, he said, I told you about these events. You believed that they were true and they transformed your lives.

He says, by this gospel you are saved. And so, Christianity is essentially a rescue mission. It's a message about people being saved.

It is the good news that through the death of Jesus on the cross and through the resurrection of Jesus, we can be saved. Because, Paul says, without these actual events having taken place in history, what we believe would be in vain.

It would be pointless. And now, of course, we are bombarded with all kinds of news today from all kinds of places. TV, newspapers, magazines, Instagram, podcasts, YouTube, TikTok, whatever. And on your smartphone, you can get a notification telling you that there is some important news that you need to pay attention to. And so, amidst all the news in our world today, all the different messages that are coming to us with a constant onslaught of news, we can't miss the biggest news ever, which is the resurrection of Jesus.

[ 5 : 56 ] The death and resurrection of Jesus in history is the news of the world. It doesn't get bigger or better. And that's why Paul says that this is of first importance.

It matters. And that's why he then fleshes this out for us. Listen to what he says in verse 3 to 5. For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared.

And then he lists the number of people that he appeared to. So, Paul is reporting here on what Jesus did in history. Essentially, four things. First, Christ died for our sins.

Second, he was buried. Third, he was raised to life. And fourth, lots of people saw him. He appeared to many eyewitnesses. So, let's think about each of those.

First, Christ died for our sins. So, Jesus was born. He lived just around 2,000 years ago, around 2,000 miles away from here.

[ 7 : 06 ] He lived and he died in this world. And historians don't doubt the fact that Jesus lived and walked on this earth. But then the story of Jesus is that he was crucified on a cross, nailed to it.

And to make sure he was dead, the Romans were experts at killing people, they thrust a spear into his side. And then an executioner, a professional, declared him dead.

So, there was no doubt that Jesus had died. Well, why did he die? Paul says he died for our sins. Our sins are essentially our rebellion against our Creator God.

It's the insulting way that we reject God as God. We don't worship him as we should, love him as we should, obey him as we should. We think we can do life better ourselves.

And so, the penalty for our failure to treat God as he deserves to be treated is death. But Jesus came to pay the penalty to take our death, as it were, on the cross for the sins of all those who will believe in him.

[ 8 : 18 ] And this, Paul says, was according to the Scriptures. In other words, God had a plan that Jesus would come and Jesus would die. God's Word foretold that all of this would happen.

So, Jesus died. First of all. Secondly, Jesus was buried. The burial of Jesus confirms that he was dead. You don't bury people who are alive, do you? Unless you're a criminal or a murderer or somebody.

Only dead people are buried. So, he was wrapped in burial linens, spices, placed in a tomb. Large stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb and a guard was posted there to make sure nobody broke in and stole the body.

So, Jesus died. Jesus was buried. Then thirdly, Jesus was raised on the third day. Paul says he was resurrected. The tomb was empty on that first Easter morning because Jesus was alive.

Jesus had predicted this would happen. He said he would die, rise again three days later. And he did. And so, when Paul says he was raised on the third day, he's talking about an actual date in the calendar.

[ 9 : 29 ] An event that took place in history. And because Jesus did rise, then that's why, fourthly, he was seen by many people. Jesus appeared to many eyewitnesses.

Eyewitnesses. So, he wasn't just raised to life. He was then seen alive by many different people. So, just as the burial confirms his death, so the eyewitnesses confirm his resurrection.

Now, Paul wants to establish here that Christianity is firmly based on historical events. And it's because the resurrection is historical that it's reasonable to believe.

So, let's move from the resurrection is historical, secondly, to the resurrection is reasonable. What Paul does here is he shows how reasonable it is to believe that Jesus rose from death.

Now, there have always been objections to the resurrection of Jesus. Attempts to try and explain these things away. But what we're told here shows that the weight of evidence is for the resurrection of Jesus, not against it.

[10:44] And so, Paul answers the common objections here in these verses. The main one is that it didn't happen or that it couldn't possibly have happened. And the theory is, well, the resurrection was just a story that was made up over a long period of time.

That his followers were sad. They didn't want to believe that he was truly gone. And so, they fabricated the story. And over time, it just grew arms and legs. And then it became Jesus rose from the dead.

And yet, what the commentators think of Paul's words here in verse 3 to verse 7 is that this is really an early Christian creed or a bit like a confession of faith about Jesus.

Because Paul says in verse 3 that he received and then he passed on these facts about Jesus. In other words, he's saying, this wasn't made up by me. This wasn't made up by anyone else.

This is something that was received. And so, when he wrote to the Corinthians about 15 or 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, this summary of the Christian faith was thought to be in wide circulation.

[12:00] This is what people were saying about Jesus. And Paul says that the Corinthians received and then believed that these claims about Jesus were true. And they would never believe if there was no solid basis for the resurrection.

The story of the resurrection would never have got off the ground if it wasn't true. And so, to say that Christ died refutes any suggestion that Jesus didn't actually die and was somehow revived inside the tomb.

And to say that he was buried refutes the suggestion that the disciples stole the body. Or that the woman went to the wrong tomb. And then to say that he was raised on the third day refutes any suggestion that Jesus didn't physically rise from death.

And of course, the easiest way to deny the resurrection of Jesus would be to produce the body of Jesus. But of course, that has never happened.

And that's why we're told next that he appeared. Jesus appeared to many eyewitnesses. Let me just read that. And then he appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve.

[13:16] After that, he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters. At the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

And last of all, he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. So in order to prove how reasonable it is to believe the resurrection, what Paul does is he lists all the eyewitnesses who had seen Jesus alive.

And among the eyewitnesses of the resurrection were those people he mentioned. Peter and the twelve. A crowd of over 500. Jesus' family and followers. And Paul himself, who was one of Jesus' enemies.

And so the sheer list of names challenges any assumption that the resurrection was a hoax. And so when Paul speaks about the eyewitnesses, see what he says?

He says, Most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Fallen asleep is a nice way of saying they died. But he says most of them are still living.

[14:19] So what he's saying is that the majority of his sources were still alive at the time of writing. So there were literally hundreds of corroborating eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

And the point is that since these witnesses were all still living, or the majority of them were, than any of Paul's readers could go to these people who were named and ask them whether what Paul was saying about Jesus and his resurrection was true.

In fact, Paul's inviting people to do that. He's saying, okay, you've got your doubts. You're not sure. Here's people. Go and check it out with them. Scrutinize them and what they say they saw and

make up your own mind.

And so the eyewitnesses refute the suggestion that Jesus followers were hallucinating. You don't get mass hallucinations. Maybe one person hallucinates, maybe two people.

But over 500 people hallucinating over a lengthy period of time, all seeing the same thing, just doesn't happen. Let's know what Peter Williams, who's a biblical scholar, says in his book, *Can We Trust the Gospels?*

[ 15 : 38 ] He helpfully lists all the appearances of the risen Lord Jesus. So he says, And so Peter Williams is essentially saying, There's no way Paul would have the sheer audacity to make such a massive claim in a public document that was widely circulated, that lots of people would read.

He would never make a claim that wasn't true. It would easily have been shot down. That's the only way that Paul could claim that over 500 people had seen Jesus alive 15 to 20 years earlier was because they had seen Jesus alive.

So any discrepancies with what Paul was saying could have easily have been scrutinized by skeptical people. Because people, you know, were just as skeptical about the resurrection back then as they are now today.

And so Paul presents the historical facts essentially to show us how reasonable it is to believe the resurrection. That's why being a Christian is never about having blind faith.

It is never about disengaging your brain, taking it out of your head and putting it under your seat in order to believe in Christianity. Christianity is firmly based on real events in history.

[ 17 : 53 ] So it isn't intellectual suicide to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. What it is, is to take all the evidence to review it and let it lead you to a logical conclusion.

Although it is a remarkable conclusion at that. Because we're not talking here about myth or legend that somehow formed and grew hundreds of years after Jesus lived.

What we're talking about here is an empty tomb. Hundreds of eyewitnesses. And the explosion of a movement, the Jesus movement, that gave birth to the church that has changed the world ever since these events.

And so the reason we can trust the resurrection of Jesus is the reason we can trust any historical event. We trust the eyewitnesses who were there and wrote it down for us.

That's how we know what happened in history. It's the same with Jesus. And yet still the assumption is that somehow we modern people are far more sophisticated and far less gullible than our pre-scientific ancestors.

[ 19 : 09 ] That they were just stupid people who believed anything. But that simply isn't true, is it? The resurrection was just as inconceivable to people then as it is to people now.

And yet the early Christians came to believe against all expectations that Jesus had risen from the dead. N.T. Wright, who is one of the foremost scholars on the resurrection, says this in his book, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

These books are 700 pages. And this is on page 707. You need to get a long way through the book before you hear this. He says, The early Christians did not invent the empty tomb or the meetings or sightings of the risen Jesus in order to explain a faith they already had.

Nobody was expecting this kind of thing. No kind of conversion experience would have generated such ideas. Nobody would have invented it. To suggest otherwise is to stop doing history and to enter into a fantasy world of our own.

In terms of the kind of proof which historians normally accept, the case we have presented that the tomb plus appearances combination is what generated early Christian belief is as watertight as one is likely to find.

[ 20 : 30 ] Do you hear what he's saying? He's saying that you don't live in a fantasy world if you believe in the resurrection of Jesus. He's basically saying you live in a fantasy world if you don't.

In other words, it is impossible to come up with a reasonable explanation that makes sense of all the evidence. And so, yes, it's good to raise your doubts.

It's good to ask your questions about Christianity and about the resurrection and about Jesus. But history and reason are on the side of Christianity. And this is where it gets personal.

So, the resurrection is historical. The resurrection is reasonable. And finally, the resurrection is personal. It's not just an historical event that has got nothing to do with us today.

The reality of the resurrection means it has implications on your life and on my life. It impacts us personally.

[ 21 : 28 ] So, the death and resurrection of Jesus doesn't just satisfy your mind when you explore it for yourself. It also warms your heart. And it transforms your life.

And that's why Paul gives his personal testimony here in verse 8 to 11. Let me read those words again. He says, verse 8.

And last of all, he appeared to me also as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve 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 to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them. Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Whether then it is I or they, this is what we preach and this is what you believed. So, when Paul says here, he met the risen Lord Jesus, he was as to one abnormally born.

[ 22 : 35 ] What does he mean? Well, the word there speaks of a premature birth. And it's a stark way for Paul to basically say he was completely lifeless before Jesus met him.

He was dead. No hope. Nothing. Nothing. That's why he says in verse 9 that he was the least of all the apostles. He didn't deserve to be an apostle because he was an enemy of Jesus and he persecuted the church.

And yet, he says his life was completely transformed. What transformed his life? He says it was by the grace of God. And he uses the word grace here three times.

What does grace mean? Undeserved favor. So, it was the grace of God that transformed Paul. He was in the dead, lifeless, hopeless, helpless state.

But God's grace took hold of Paul and turned his life around. In fact, turned his life around the right way. Because meeting the risen Jesus completely transformed Paul.

[ 23 : 40 ] He was never the same man again. Because the grace of God had saved him. Had rescued him. And there is nothing else, no power in this world, that can change a human life forever.

No power greater than the encounter and encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. That's what happened to Paul. And that's why the death and the resurrection of Jesus are a personal challenge to every single one of us.

If this is true, and we're claiming it is, there's no reason to doubt that it isn't. It's got to change our whole life. One of my favorite journalists is called Kevin McKenna.

He's a Glaswegian, often writes for the Herald, sometimes for the Guardian. A couple of years ago, he wrote a great article on Easter, at the Easter weekend. And this is what he said. He said, The message of Christ's death and resurrection should evoke profoundly emotional reactions in the hearts and minds of all who hear it.

Believer and non-believer alike. You can't simply shrug off this sort of stuff. Not when it presents a direct challenge to your way of life, your narcissism, your arrogance of intellect, your banal certainty that you are the master of your own destiny and your own salvation.

[ 25 : 03 ] A journalist. And what he's saying is, well, because the resurrection is historical, then it's reasonable to believe. And because it's reasonable, then it directly challenges our lives.

And Paul came to believe it. And he was one of the most unlikely converts. And yet he experienced the grace of God through meeting the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

And the good news is we can too. The resurrection leads to such joy and such hope when we follow through the implications of what we see here.

So Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. That's saying, whoever we are, whatever we've done, no matter how good or bad our background has been, all our sins can be forgiven by Jesus.

That's why he died. And isn't that great news? God accepts us when we go to him with our sin and it can be forgiven in Jesus.

[ 26 : 17 ] And then Jesus was raised on the third day. And so if Jesus was raised from the dead, now we have the sure and certain hope that death is not the end for us.

For all those who believe in Jesus, death is not like a full stop, the end, a closed door. Death is more like a door that opens up into life everlasting.

And Paul describes Jesus' resurrection as the first fruits. This is springtime. The first fruits indicate there's a lot more to come. And so the resurrection of Jesus that he speaks of here as the first fruits is an indication there is far more to come in the future.

