

## 1 Corinthians 15:1-19 — Is The Resurrection Historical Fact Or Fiction?

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If you are new, it is great to have you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. It is no secret that today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and I will be teaching about the resurrection of Jesus. Let's pray and we will get to work.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus. Thank you for sending your Son to save us from our sin. Jesus, thank you for humbling yourself to take on a human body. Thank you for dying for us and rising to new life for us. Today, help me as I teach about your resurrection. All of us want to know more about the resurrection and how it changes our lives. We ask this in your name. Amen.

The book of Hebrews tells us that the resurrection of Jesus changes the way we look at death.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Hebrews 2:14–15 (ESV)

The mission of Jesus was to free us from the fear of death! Jesus came to turn the most terrifying moment of our lives into the best moment of our lives. He came to turn the time of our judgment into the moment of our forgiveness. When Jesus rose from the dead, he freed all those who trusted in him from their fear of death. This is what makes the resurrection so important.

The resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. If the resurrection of Jesus isn't true, we have no reason to gather. We have no hope for tomorrow. Everything about the church is a joke. If the resurrection isn't true, the Bible is an evil book based on a lie. The resurrection is the hinge upon which the Christian faith turns. Everything about the Christian faith stands or falls based

upon Jesus' resurrection. If the resurrection isn't true, the entire Christian faith is a waste of time.

In our day, with so much fake news designed to manipulate people, we can't help but wonder, was the resurrection of Jesus fake news from the ancient times that people still believe in our time? Somebody rising from the dead is impossible. How do we know Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a fact of history, not historical fiction?

To do that, we are going to answer two questions. The first question is, "What evidence do we have that the resurrection is a historical fact?" The second question is, "What would happen if the resurrection was historical fiction?"

When it comes to the resurrection, one of the best chapters in the Bible on the resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15. This chapter will help us answer these two questions. Let's read 1 Corinthians 15:1-19 and you will see what I mean.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy 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. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are

not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:1–19 (ESV)

You may have noticed that the first eleven verses answered our first question. How do we know the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact? Verses twelve to nineteen answered the second question. What would happen if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? Let's dive into our study.

### **What evidence supports the resurrection as a historical fact?**

#### **The Evidence of the Church**

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:1–2 (ESV)

The first evidence Paul gives us for the resurrection is not explicitly stated in these verses. Instead, it is stated implicitly. It is the fact that the Corinthian Christians, and all Christians everywhere, when they heard the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for their sin, and they trusted in what Jesus did for them when he died on the cross and rose from the dead, leaving an empty tomb, they were miraculously changed. When the Corinthians look at their lives and the radical change that took place, that is powerful evidence for the resurrection of Jesus being true. Where did the change come from in their life when they trusted in Jesus, if Jesus wasn't alive and in the business of changing lives with his resurrection power today?

The point Paul was making in the first two verses is that the Corinthian believers themselves were strong evidence that the resurrection of Jesus is true. When they trusted in the resurrection of Jesus to forgive their sin, Jesus changed

their lives. The Corinthian Christians found their lives transformed when they trusted in Jesus. This is also true for us today. When we trusted in Jesus' death on the cross to forgive our sins and his resurrection to new life to give us new life, our lives were also radically changed. That is powerful evidence of the truth of the resurrection.

Look what Paul said the members of the Corinthian church were like before they heard about the resurrection of Jesus.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers (one who attacks another's reputation with their words), nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (ESV \*emphasis mine)

That is a pretty messed up group of people! They were homosexuals, cheaters, and drunks. Paul's point is that this was what the members of the Corinthian church used to be like. Now they were different people. They left their old lifestyle behind. When they left that lifestyle, it wasn't on their own strength. It was after they trusted in the death of Jesus on the cross for their sins and the resurrection of Jesus for new life that God supernaturally changed them. He made them into new people.

Trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus to forgive their sin didn't make them perfect people, but it did make them changed people. Instead of living for the pleasure of sin, they now love Jesus and live to please Jesus. Trusting in what Jesus did for them on the cross and with the empty tomb broke

the power of sin in their lives. It was a supernatural change. Paul says, look at the change in your own life. That is evidence the resurrection is true.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Just as Jesus made this creation out of nothing in the book of Genesis, when we trust in Jesus' death on the cross to pay for our sins and his resurrection from the grave to new life, at that moment, Jesus also makes each of us into a new creation. He makes us into a completely new person with a different heart on the inside.

You can try anything you want to become a new person, but it won't work. You can try Jenny Craig, herbal tea, a diet, and essential oils. You may lose a few pounds. You may fit into your old pair of jeans. None of that can change your heart. None of that can change your life. It is only trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus that breaks people free from the power of sin, and God supernaturally transforms them into new people.

For the last 2,000 years, some have claimed that the resurrection did not occur. They have considered the church a misguided organization. They have considered the resurrection a hoax. The problem is that there is no explanation for the thousands upon thousands of people whose lives were radically altered and completely transformed when they asked the death of Jesus to pay for their sins and the resurrection of Jesus to give them new life. This is solid evidence that the resurrection of Jesus is factual historical, not fictional history.

## The Evidence Of The Bible

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures... 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (ESV)

Let's work our way through these verses. When Paul said he delivered the message of Jesus to them, this means Paul brought them authoritative teaching. The death and resurrection of Jesus, and how trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection to experience forgiveness of our sins, is not something Paul made up. He did not design it. He only delivered it. He only passed on what he received.

He also tells us that the message of Jesus' death and resurrection is of first importance. That means what Jesus did for us in his death, burial, and resurrection is the most important thing we need to know.

Paul then described the gospel message that every faithful Bible-teaching church must teach and upon which they must stand. It is the truth that Jesus died on the cross in our place for our sins. Jesus was then buried. Three days later, he rose to new life. That is the gospel message Paul received.

Here is where some historical context is helpful. The letter of 1 Corinthians is an early letter from Paul. It was written probably 20 years after Jesus rose from the dead. There is a small gap of time between the resurrection of Jesus and the teachings of the early church about what the resurrection of Jesus means for you and me.

Here is where it gets interesting. If you look at your text, you will see Paul quoted something. What Paul said about the death, burial, and resurrection of

Jesus in these verses is an early church creed that Paul received. A creed is an agreed-upon statement of truth by the early church. Scholars who study this creed tell us that the creed Paul quoted about Jesus' death, burial and resurrection dates back to within five years of the resurrection. This creed is a statement of what the earliest Christians believed about Jesus and what his death, burial, and resurrection meant for human history!

Sometimes we hear that the Christian faith has drifted. They tell us we don't know what the earliest Christians believed. That simply is not true. This is what the earliest Christians believed about the death and resurrection of Jesus. They considered this to be the most important information for anyone to know. It was written only five years after the resurrection of Jesus took place. It is the same thing we believe today. Nothing has changed!

In addition, twice Paul said the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus were predicted in the Bible long before it happened. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies that tell us how Jesus would come and die for our sins, be in the grave for three days, then rise to new life again. When we see Jesus dying and rising for our sins, this shouldn't surprise us. God told us in the Old Testament that this was always his plan.

For example, when Jesus was talking to the disciples on the Emmaus road after he rose from the dead, look what he said.

And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24:25–27 (ESV)

That would have been a great Bible study. I wish I was able to listen to Jesus as he explained the many ways the Old Testament forecasted his death, burial, and resurrection for our sins long before it happened.

When unbelieving Jews asked Jesus for a sign that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, look what Jesus said.

But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:39–40 (ESV)

At Pentecost, Peter quoted Psalm 16. David wrote that Psalm. Peter pointed out that in this Psalm, David was writing about someone greater than himself. David prophetically spoke about Jesus' death and resurrection before he came. Let me show you.

"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption." Acts 2:29–31 (ESV)

Peter told us that when David talked about God not abandoning his soul to Hades --- which is the realm of the dead --- and God not letting the body of his Holy One see corruption --- that meant not letting the body rot in the grave --- David could not have been talking about himself. We know David died. We know where to find David's tomb. We know David's body rotted in his tomb. David was talking about somebody different from himself and greater than himself who was his descendant. Jesus is that descendant of David that was different. Jesus did not stay dead in Hades, which is the realm of the dead. Jesus rose from the



grave. Jesus' body did not rot in the tomb. Jesus rose to new life. Peter tells us that when David wrote Psalm 16, he was prophetically speaking about the death and resurrection of Jesus hundreds of years before it happened.

Psalm 22 also talks about Jesus ahead of time, especially his crucifixion.

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. Psalm 22:16–18 (ESV)

That is exactly what happened to Jesus when he died. Nailing him to a cross, they pierced Jesus' hands and feet. Hanging on the cross, the Jewish leaders stared at him and gloated over him. The Roman soldiers cast lots for his clothing and divided it among themselves.

Isaiah 52 and 53 also give details about what Jesus' death means for our life. Isaiah was written hundreds of years before Jesus came.

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:5–6 (ESV)

Over and over again, either directly or indirectly, both literally and in figures of speech, the Old Testament foretold Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for our sins. No Jew who knew the Old Testament should be surprised by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for our sins because the Old Testament constantly talked about this. There is additional evidence for the resurrection being true.

## The Evidence of the Eyewitnesses

...and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 1 Corinthians 15:5–7 (ESV)

Throughout history, the testimony of responsible and honest eyewitnesses has been considered one of the most reliable forms of evidence in a court of law. If a lawyer has three honest and responsible eyewitnesses to a crime, the conviction rate rises to 99 percent. That is the power of honest and responsible eyewitnesses. To show us that the resurrection is true, Paul brings forward reliable eyewitnesses, and there are far more than three!

**Jesus appeared to Peter.** The first apostle Jesus revealed himself to was Peter. We are not told the exact time or location this happened. We only know it was sometime between Jesus' appearance to Mary on resurrection morning and his appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the evening of Jesus' resurrection. We are not told why Jesus appeared to Peter first or why Jesus appeared to Peter separately. I have a theory. At this time, Peter was filled with a huge amount of regret. Before the crucifixion, he denied knowing Jesus three times! While Peter turned his back on Jesus, Jesus never turned his back on Peter. Jesus did not appear to Peter because Peter deserved to see the risen Jesus the most. I think Jesus appeared to Peter because Peter needed to see the risen Jesus the most.

**Jesus appeared to the apostles.** Jesus also appeared to the apostles. The first time he appeared to his apostles was on the evening of the resurrection when Thomas was not present. A week later, Jesus appeared to them again

when Thomas was present. In that first week immediately after the resurrection, even though the rest of the apostles swore Jesus rose from the dead, and they met with him, Thomas refused to believe. After all, dead people don't come back to life. A week later, when Jesus appeared to the disciples again, and Thomas was present, he suddenly realized how wrong he had been. He was convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was alive and risen from the dead. Jesus told Thomas to put his hands in his wounds if he needed proof that the resurrected Jesus wasn't a ghost! Thomas' response was simply to say, "My Lord and my God!"

The resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples a number of times. If we count it up, we find Jesus appearing to his apostles five times in the Bible. The risen Jesus may have appeared to them more than five times, but that is what we find recorded in the Scriptures.

Remember, the apostles did not just talk with Jesus. They touched Jesus. They fed Jesus food and watched him eat. One time the resurrected Jesus cooked them breakfast, and they ate it! That is crazy hard evidence!

The character of the apostles was impeccable. They were honest, truthful, and self-sacrificial men. It would be completely out of character for them to lie about the resurrection of Jesus.

If the apostles were lying about Jesus' resurrection, it would have been an easy lie to discredit. All the Roman authorities or Jewish leaders needed to do to squash the claim of a resurrected Jesus was to produce a dead body. They could drag a dead body through the street and tell people. "He is not resurrected to life.

He looks pretty dead to me!" Even though Roman soldiers guarded the tomb, there was no dead body. The body of Jesus was not stolen from people on the outside of the tomb. Jesus burst to new life from inside the tomb and made his way out on resurrection morning. The tomb was empty. Jesus' body was gone because Jesus rose to new life.

In addition, we should know that people may die for their convictions, but they will not die for a concoction. People will die for what they hope to be true, but they will not die for what they know to be false. Every single apostle, minus one, died a horrendous death refusing to recant that Jesus rose from the dead. They refused to recant from claiming they met him, talked with him, touched him, and ate with him. If Jesus's resurrection were a fabrication they made up, they would not have died a torturous death for a lie. While facing the horrors of an agonizing death, if the resurrection of Jesus weren't true, they would have recanted.

How did they die? Peter was crucified upside down, swearing Jesus was alive. Andrew, Philip, Simon, Bartholomew, and James also died the horrific death of crucifixion, swearing Jesus was alive. Matthew was put to death by the sword, and Thaddeus was killed with arrows. Thomas by a spear. John was boiled alive in oil in a human-sized Fry Daddy. He did not die, so they exiled him to the island of Patmos.

Remember, Jesus' apostles were not predisposed to believe Jesus was alive. They were predisposed to believe Jesus was dead. This is why Thomas had such a hard time believing in the resurrection, even when all the other

apostles swore they met, touched, and talked with the resurrected Jesus. This is solid evidence for the resurrection.

**Jesus appeared to the 500.** While apostles represent the quality of the eyewitnesses, Paul next moved to the quantity of the eyewitnesses. Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time. That is a lot of people to have met the resurrected Jesus at one time! This could not have been a group hallucination. Groups don't have the same hallucination. When you have 500 eyewitnesses of an event telling the same story about a person they met, touched, and talked with at the same time in the same place, you have solid evidence for the truth of the event, even if it doesn't seem possible.

Paul told the Corinthians that if they had doubts about the resurrection of Jesus, They could reach out to these people. Remember, this was written only 20 years after the resurrection took place. Most of these people were still alive and would have been happy to talk with them about having met the resurrected Jesus. Just message them on Facebook or talk to them on Facetime.

**Jesus appeared to James.** First, Paul gave us many quality eyewitnesses. Next, he gave us a huge quantity of eyewitnesses, more than 500 at one time. Now Paul moved into another category. Now he gives us reluctant eyewitnesses. Most scholars believe this James is James the half-brother of Jesus, who is the author of the book of James in our Bible. He also became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. Jesus and James had Mary as their mother, but Jesus had God as his father, while James had Joseph as his father. For

James, I am sure it was tough growing up with an older brother who was the perfect child.

When Jesus left home and started his ministry, James was a skeptic. Imagine if your brother was running around calling himself God. Imagine if the brother that grew up in your house was healing the sick and raising the dead just by the power of his word or his touch. I am sure you would think your brother was nuts. I am sure you would think your brother found a way to trick people. You would think your brother must have become a magician, like David Copperfield.

What made James change his mind about Jesus, his half-brother? What convinced James to pray to his brother and worship his brother? There is only one thing. James saw Jesus' death. James saw Jesus buried. James must have seen the empty tomb. Then he was hit with the greatest shock of all. He met, touched, and talked with the resurrected Jesus, his own half-brother. That is the only thing that could have changed James from mocking Jesus to worshipping and praying to Jesus.

### **The Evidence of Paul, a Unique Eyewitness**

Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy 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. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:8–10 (ESV)

The next piece of evidence for the resurrection is the apostle Paul. He was a unique eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus. Remember that Paul was not among the original apostles. The other apostles followed Jesus while he was alive before his death. Paul was also not among the 500 eyewitnesses. Instead,

for years Paul did not just lack faith in Jesus. He went out of his way to arrest, punish, and even assist in the death of any who believed in Jesus. Paul hated Jesus! Paul traveled around the country arresting and imprisoning Christians.

Amazingly, last of all, he was privileged to meet the resurrected Jesus. It happened in a unique way. After the resurrected Jesus returned to heaven, Paul was busy arresting and killing Christians. Acts 9 tells us what happened. Paul was on the road to Damascus to arrest more Christians when Jesus appeared to him on the road in blinding light. The presence of Jesus knocked Paul down. Then Jesus told Paul, "I am the one you are persecuting." Paul suddenly realized he had the entire Jesus thing completely wrong. Paul did a 180 because he met the resurrected Jesus! Paul went from killing people who believed in Jesus to telling everyone he met the good news of Jesus and that he rose from the dead.<sup>1</sup> Paul even suffered greatly to tell people about Jesus for the rest of his life, ultimately dying because of his faith and trust in Jesus.

Paul described himself as an apostle that was untimely born. That means a miscarriage or an abortion. It is a way of saying that before Paul's conversion, he was spiritually dead when it came to Jesus. The only way Paul could have believed in the resurrection of Jesus was if God supernaturally created life in his cold, dead heart. Remember, Paul hated Jesus and killed Christians. If the resurrected Jesus had not supernaturally intervened in Paul's life so Paul met him, there was absolutely no way Paul would have believed in Jesus or could have believed in Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bible tells that while this was the first time Paul met the resurrected Jesus, it was not the last time (Acts 18:9-10, 23:11, 2 Cor 12:1-7).

## The Evidence of the Common Message

Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. 1 Corinthians 15:11 (ESV)

The last piece of evidence that the resurrection is true is the common message of the church. For the last 2,000 years, the unified message of the church has been that God's Son took on human flesh to die in our places. He was buried and rose to new life on the third day. If that were fictional truth, not foundational truth, in the last 2,000 years, the church would have moved on to something else. The church's ability to stay anchored to the resurrection of Jesus as the most important truth we need to know is evidence that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is indeed the most important truth we need to know. It is still trusting in the facts of what happened in Jesus' death and resurrection that changes lives today.

When I was younger, at this point, there would still have been doubts in my mind. It is not that I disbelieved the evidence for the resurrection in the Bible. The logic and evidence we looked at are good, solid, and true. When I was younger, I found myself saying, if the resurrection is such a big deal, why do we only find it written about in the Bible? Why is it not recorded in secular history?

The good news is that the resurrection is written about in secular history.

## The Evidence Of Secular History

James Warwick Montgomery answered this question.

We have thirty-nine documents that record history from the time of Jesus. Twenty-two of those documents discuss the death and resurrection of Jesus. Eleven of those twenty-two are non-Christian in origin.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John Warwick Montgomery, ed., *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question* (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), preface, p. 9.



For example, Tacitus, who was a Roman historian, wrote about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Josephus was an ancient Jewish historian who wrote about Jesus' death and resurrection. Tacitus and Josephus were not Christians, but they wrote about the resurrection.

There is good and solid evidence to believe the resurrection is true, not just from biblical history but it is also written about in secular history.

This can only lead us to one conclusion. The death of Jesus for our sins and the resurrection of Jesus to new life is a fact of history. It was not fake news. It is not news that was twisted. It is news we can trust. That is hard to find in the world today. This brings us to our second question.

### **What happens if the resurrection was historical fiction?**

**If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we lose our resurrection from the dead.**

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 1 Corinthians 15:12–13 (ESV)

In Corinth, some folks were fine with the idea of Jesus rising from the dead, but they couldn't comprehend that they would also rise from the dead. After all, they never saw anyone rise from the dead. When people died, they were buried. They turned to mulch. When people died, they went to the graveyard, but they never saw anyone come out of the graveyard. They figured Jesus rose from the dead because Jesus is God. They could accept that. But we are not God. Certainly, we won't rise from the dead. When we die, we will decay and push up daisies. Rising from the dead is something only God can do. It isn't something we will do.

At first, that conclusion sounds right. Paul told them to rethink their logic. Jesus was not just fully God. Jesus was also fully man. Jesus didn't just appear to be human. Jesus was human. Jesus sweat. Jesus grew tired. Jesus was thirsty. Jesus was hungry. Jesus felt pain, just like you and me.

The reason Jesus left heaven and was born to Mary was to become one of us and *completely identify with us in every way*. That is the big "E" on the Jesus eye chart. The only reason Jesus left heaven to become one of us was to save us. Jesus died and rose from the dead not for his sake but for our sake. Jesus died for our sins. He didn't die for his sin. He rose from the grave not just to give himself life but to give us life. Paul says it is impossible for Jesus to rise from the dead without realizing that all who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus will also be forgiven for their sin and rise from the dead.

Our resurrection and Christ's resurrection are connected. The reason Jesus took on a body, died for our sins, and rose from the grave was so we could live. Please understand that we do not die and simply decompose. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, we will also rise from the dead.

The world wants you to think about life differently. The world wants you to think this life is all there is. Get as many toys as you can while alive. Have as much fun as you can while alive because after we die, everything stops.

Paul said, "That is absolutely not true." As Christians, we must know that this life is only the beginning. Just as Christ rose from the dead, as Christians, we will also rise from the dead to live forever. One day we will have an indestructible resurrection body, just like Jesus' resurrection body. Once life begins in the womb

of a mother, death does not bring that life to an end. Death only transitions life. It doesn't end life.

**If Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Christian faith and the church are a joke.**

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:14 (ESV)

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, that means the church, the gospel message, and the Christian faith are completely useless. They are a total waste of our time. Everything about the church and our Christian faith is not just based on Jesus dying. It is based on Jesus dying and then rising from the dead. People died on Roman crosses all the time. It is Jesus rising from the dead after dying on the cross that makes a difference. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, we have nothing. There is no reason to worship Jesus. There is no reason to pray to Jesus. There is no reason to sing to Jesus. Jesus would be just another dead man. If Jesus didn't rise from the grave, he would be just another dead religious leader like Mohammed, Buddha, and Krishna. It is Jesus rising from the dead that creates the Christian faith and proves the Christian faith is completely different from other religions. It proves that the Christian faith is true, while all other religions are false. In all other religions, their leaders died and stayed dead. Jesus died, and the Christian faith only came into existence because of the startling fact that Jesus didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead.

If Jesus didn't rise from the grave, there is no reason to trust the Bible. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we should be someplace else on Sunday mornings. If Jesus did not rise, reading our Bible is meaningless. All the

preaching of the apostles was useless. If Jesus didn't rise, all the beatings, imprisonments, and suffering faced by Paul and thousands of other Christians throughout history was pointless. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, all Christians' effort to live their lives as an act of worship to Jesus was for nothing. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, the church is a joke, and we have no hope.

**If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, Christians are dishonest people.**

We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 1 Corinthians 15:15 (ESV)

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then those who claim Jesus rose are liars and deceivers. If Jesus' body simply decomposed on a rubbish heap or was eaten by dogs, the apostles and hundreds of others who claimed to have met, touched, and talked with the resurrected Jesus were lying through their teeth. It means they pulled off the largest deception the world has ever seen.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, that would mean hundreds of people were not simply mistaken about the truth. It means hundreds of godly people deliberately told bald-faced lies and intended to deceive the world about the truth.

In addition, all the apostles, and many others, were tortured to death for claiming Jesus rose from the dead. None of them recanted their claim that they met the resurrected Jesus while tortured to death. People will die for something they believe to be true, but people will not die for a lie they know to be false. Let that sink in. People will die for something they believe to be true, but people will not die for a lie they know to be false.

**If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we have no forgiveness for our sin.**

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 1 Corinthians 15:16–17 (ESV)

The resurrection of Christ proves that the death of Christ was an effective payment for our sins. It proves that Jesus wasn't just another person dying on a Roman cross for no good reason. The resurrection proves Jesus was God dying for our sins on the cross because only God could die and conquer death by coming back to life. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he was no different from any other man in the ancient world. Our sins are not paid for. The guilt of our sins would still hang around our necks. We would have no forgiveness. We would still be facing judgment. Our future would be eternal damnation.

In the book of Romans, Paul tells us that without forgiveness for our sins, the longer we live, all we do is rack up a longer list of sins that God will punish us for after our deaths. If that were true, a shorter life would always be preferable to a longer life.

Some of us have seared our consciences so much that we do not believe there is judgment for sin after death. We think that if we can get away with sin, we will never pay for sin. If that is you, I ask you, would an eternity without justice for sin in this world be fair?

When Mother Teresa died, and a Mexican cartel member died, would it be fair for them to enjoy the exact same experience in eternity? Mother Teresa spent her days saving thousands of lives. A murdering cartel member spent his days torturing people and taking thousands of lives. Wouldn't it be wrong for an extremely good person and an extremely evil person to face equal eternities after

death? If there is no judgment for sin after death, we should do all we can to live for the maximum pleasure in life. Without judgment for sin, we should never concern ourselves with the next life. If there is no judgment for sin after death, we should cheat, steal, and lie if it brings us more pleasure. If there are no consequences for sin, why not enjoy sin?

That is not the way life works. There are consequences for sin. Each of us instinctively knows that after death comes judgment.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we are still in our sin and have no forgiveness. That is a terrifying thought.

**If Jesus did not rise from the dead, there is no hope of seeing our loved ones.**

**Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 1 Corinthians 15:18 (ESV)**

Sleep is a euphemism for death. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, every saint in the Old Testament who died looking ahead in faith to Jesus is lost. It means every New Testament believer that died having placed their faith and trust in Jesus to forgive their sin and have the hope of eternal life will not be saved. All believers perished after their death. They are not alive after death.

This means that when Grandma, who was on her deathbed telling her children not to cry because when she breathed her last and closed her eyes, she would open them to see Jesus in heaven and things would be OK, she was completely wrong. It would mean that when Grammy died, her body rotted. When Grammy died, she faced judgment. Grammy is toast. You will never see her again, and there is no hope of a reunion in heaven with her after death.

**If Jesus did not rise, those who follow Christ are fools.**

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:19 (ESV)

Paul just comes out and says it. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, and we are following a dead guy from 2,000 years ago. That would mean Christians are a bunch of nut cases. Really. Think about it. Christianity would be pointless. If Jesus is just another dead man, he can't help us with eternal life. Jesus can't help us with this life. It would be a waste of time to pray to Jesus. It would be pointless to seek comfort from Jesus. It would be pointless to find help in times of anxiety from Jesus. If Jesus didn't rise, the Christian life is a joke. We are a bunch of losers.

If Christ is not alive, there is no reason to study the Bible. If Christ did not rise, every sermon preached is a waste of time at best and a deceptive lie at most. If Jesus did not rise from the grave, what we have in this life is all there is to life.

In short, if Jesus didn't rise from the grave, we lose everything. There is no reason to be here. We have no promise of forgiveness or hope for tomorrow. We have nothing.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we lose everything.

The good news is Jesus did rise from the dead, so we gain everything.

## **Conclusion**

Each of us has to weigh the evidence. Did the resurrection of Jesus take place? If the resurrection of Jesus didn't happen, we have no hope of forgiveness

for our sins. Christians are dishonest people. The church is a joke. Our loved ones are truly lost. Those who follow Christ are fools.

Thankfully there is abundant evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus is still in the business of transforming lives. Those who turn to Jesus and ask him to forgive their sin are made into new people right now. There were abundant eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. Even secular history speaks about the resurrection of Jesus.

The question is, what is your decision? The facts of history are clear. Today, will you decide to trust in Jesus as the one who died on the cross for your sins and rose to new life? If you don't know Jesus, will you make that decision today before you leave?

## **Baptisms**

This morning, as we close our message, we have two baptisms. Caleb and Hanna VanderWeide both trusted in Jesus to be their Lord and savior. The Bible tells us that after we believe in Jesus, we should be baptized. Baptism doesn't save anyone, but the Bible tells us baptism is how we make a public statement that we have trusted in Jesus. We typically baptize by immersion. When someone goes under the water, it pictures that they are buried with Jesus. When someone comes out of the water, it shows they are raised to new life with Jesus.

At CrossWinds, when someone gets baptized and comes out of the water, we cheer really loud. We give a standing ovation, cheering so loud we lift the roof off the place because we are excited that someone has trusted in Jesus and



been born again to new life by the power of Jesus' resurrection. Let's do that for



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Caleb and  Hanna this



morning.