

Resurrection Under Attack

1 Corinthians 15:12–22

The resurrection of Christ is absolutely essential for the sustenance of the Christian faith. It is a foundational truth. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then everything Paul teaches is worthless. Christianity is the only “religion” that teaches a resurrected savior and the promise of a resurrection for believers. Other religions all depend upon the teaching of a dead religious leader, or of a god who is fallible, or one that has never become man, died and came back to life. Fortunately, there are many proofs of Jesus Christ coming to earth and fulfilling many promises of the Old Testament as proof that He is of God. His resurrection proves that He is the Son of God (Acts 13:33; Psalm 2:7). Future fulfillments, as outlined in Isaiah 24–25, show how Jesus Christ, as the righteous ruler, will be given a kingdom and rule from Jerusalem. He is unique and above all others who have claimed to be God. Anyone following a god who has not died and was resurrected is following a false god.

Not only had Jesus Christ resurrected, but he brought a handful of others with Him as proof that He is the resurrection and the life. This happened right after His resurrection when graves were opened and many dead saints came back to life and appeared to many in Jerusalem. That must have been quite a shock to those who lost loved ones to see them again in their glorified bodies. That would have given them great encouragement for their own eternity, and proof that Jesus Christ was Lord. Jesus proved that God had power over death when He brought Lazarus back to life, although he did die again. This proved that He was the resurrection and the life and those who believed in Him would be given life.

Paul knew he was not qualified to be called an apostle. He was “born” when he should have not been placed into this position. However, God changed the rules so that he could become an apostle. He was disqualified because he had persecuted the church of God, a reference to the Little Flock of believers. He did everything in his power to maintain the Pharisaical way of life by preserving their traditions, which meant stamping out anything that would interfere with them. Jesus Christ was a threat to their traditions (Matthew 15:2–3; Mark 7:3–9). In addition, Paul was a blasphemer against the Holy Spirit. Under Israel’s program, those who blasphemed would not be able to have their sins forgiven (Mark 3:28–29; Luke 12:10). Paul rejected Stephen’s message, who was speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit. This was blasphemy. He opposed the work of the Holy Spirit by going against all those who were following Christ. It’s important to understand that this rule of blasphemy is not valid in this Dispensation of Grace, otherwise Paul would not be qualified to be an apostle. That also means that we do not need to worry about doing something that disqualifies us from salvation.

Bad doctrine

The Corinthian assembly had many problems. All of these problems had their roots in the church not being grounded in proper doctrine. Right from the beginning Paul could see that they were divided in what they were believing (1 Corinthians 1:10). Paul continually reminds them of things they had been taught previously (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:2, 9, 15; 6:16, 19; 9:13, 24) but had turned away from to live carnal lives, living by the flesh instead of by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:1–3).

Some who left sound doctrine were teaching that there was no resurrection. This may have come from some false teachers who had infiltrated the church (2 Corinthians 11:3–4, 13–15). In contrast, Paul calls himself a true apostle proven through many signs and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12). It can be inferred from this that there were false apostles who were presenting themselves as apostles from God.

It is also possible that some of this bad doctrine came from those who had been saved out of the synagogue next door to the Corinthians church. It’s possible that those who followed the Sadducee’s

teaching brought in the idea of no afterlife and therefore no resurrection (Acts 23:8). These traditions of men are very destructive to churches today. Church doctrine is often accepted with no real Scriptural support, but because they have been taught for years, often by respected teachers, it is accepted as good doctrine. For instance, water baptism was taken from Israel's program and force fitted into the Church. Many fundamental churches teach that water baptism is necessary for church membership, but there is absolutely no Scriptural basis for that idea. Using water baptism as a public declaration of our faith is again not biblical. Many use Romans 6:3–4 or Colossians 2:12 as the basis for integrating water baptism into the Church, but doing so actually shows water baptism is necessary for salvation. These verses are about our identification with Jesus Christ. He is the one baptism that is necessary for a person to be saved (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27). Paul makes it clear that there is only one baptism in effect today (Ephesians 4:5). Is it a spiritual baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit, or a physical baptism into a body of water? The choice should be obvious. It is important for us to carefully follow the teaching of Scripture, paying special heed to what is specifically written to us.

Importance of the resurrection

Paul makes it clear that the resurrection is a critical component to our faith. Without Christ rising from the dead then Paul would be preaching in vain and we would be believing in vain. Paul would be perpetrating a lie as a false witness if he were to teach something that did not happen. He stresses this because of those who were teaching that Christ did not rise from the dead. What good is our faith if there is no hope for an eternity in the future? Not only would we have no hope of being raised after our death, we would have no hope of being rescued from our sins (Romans 4:25). This is why Paul emphasizes the need to believe in the Person of Jesus Christ (as Lord) and His work (death, burial and resurrection) at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15. He was making clear to those who were teaching this heresy that they had no hope of a future with Christ, and no hope that their sins would be dealt with.

Order of the resurrection

Paul lists major events that will happen beginning with the Rapture beginning with verse 23. Before detailing the order of events he begins with Christ being risen from the dead. All these future events following Christ's resurrection would not happen if there were no resurrection. Paul goes into detail about what we can look forward to in order to emphasize how important it is to accept the truth of the resurrection. Everything we believe rides on Christ rising from the dead.

The importance of the resurrection is cross-dispensational. All people from all ages needed a Savior. Those who believed what God told them were declared righteous (Genesis 15:6). Before Christ died, sins were covered or overlooked by God (Romans 3:25). After Jesus Christ had died and resurrected, those sins were finally taken care of. Christ paid the price for sin. Old Testament saints are just as dependent upon His resurrection as ours is for salvation.

Paul begins with Adam because it was through him that sin came into the world. Everyone who is related to Adam is born into sin. That obviously includes all people. In contrast, all believers are in Christ instead of in Adam. We were physically born in Adam and those born spiritually are in Christ. Adam brings death while Christ brings life (Romans 5:14–18).

It's important to understand that the term "in Christ" does not always refer to the Church, the Body of Christ. All believers in all generations need to be "in Christ" redemptively (Romans 16:7). This applies even to those who were believers before Jesus Christ came. They could not have understood that their salvation was effected through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, they only needed to do what God told them to do.

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