

## **Jesus Is Alive And That's A Fact**

**But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**

### **1 Corinthians 15:20-22**

#### **Topical Outline of the Chapter**

- I. But now, (in fact), Christ has indeed been raised form the dead.**
  - A. Proof #1**
  - B. Proof # 2**
  - C. Proof #3**
  
- II. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep**
- III. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**

Corinth was a Greek city, and the Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. When Paul had preached at Athens ad declared the fact of Christ's resurrection, some of his listeners actually laughed at him (Acts 17:32). For most of us, when we were young, Easter was a very important time for our family. The church traditions many of us are familiar with was one of which we were not allowed to forget what the season was about. There were poems recited in worship services and sermons preached about the resurrection of Jesus. Choirs sang "He arose, He arose, He rose from the grave, and the Lord will bear my spirit home." Yes, the season of Easter was a fresh reminder that God raised Jesus from the grave.

Unfortunately, things have changed from yester-year. What a contrast fifty to sixty years have made on our society. Easter today is not the same. Shifts and changes in African American

mentality have caused many to forget the fact that God raised Jesus from the grave. If the African American Church is not careful, many of the orthodox traditions of the Christian Church will be “Gone With the Wind.” This skeptical attitude had somehow invaded the Church and Paul had to face it head-on. The truth of the resurrection had doctrinal and practical implication for life that were too important to ignore. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the bedrock of the Christian Faith. Paul in our texts gives us three proofs to assure his readers that Jesus Christ indeed had been raised from the dead. The wonderful thing about the fact that Jesus lives, is that His resurrection was/is not a fluke of fantasy and it is real. Paul gives us three proofs that it was real.

#### **A. Proof #1- Their Salvation (vv.1-2)**

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Paul had come to Corinth and preached the message of the Gospel, and their faith had transformed their lives. Paul presents the gospel as the “good news.” What Paul preached to them is “good news” compared to what the Corinthians had previously heard. All before now was “bad news.” Roman oppression, profligate living and life styles, false religions and the like was all the Corinthians had known before now. But, since Paul visited them, he has brought to them the “good news.” Paul’s readers had received the Word, trusted Christ, been saved, and were now standing on that Word as the assurance of their salvation. The fact that they were standing firm was proof that their faith was genuine and not empty.

#### **B. Proof # 2- The Old Testament Scripture (vv.3-4)**

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: And that he was buried, and he arose again the third day according to the scriptures:

First of all means “of first importance.” The Gospel is the most important message that the Church ever proclaims. While it is good to be involved in social action and betterment of mankind, there is no reason why these ministries should preempt the Gospel. “Christ seen” are the basic historical facts on which the Gospel stands. (1 Corinthians 15:3-5) “Christ died for our sins” is the theological explanation of the historical facts. It was an historical fact that the Romans crucified many people, but only one “victim” ever died for the sins of the world.

When Paul wrote, “according to the Scriptures,” he was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. Much of the sacrificial system in the Old Testament pointed to the sacrifice of Christ as our substitute and Savior. The annual Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) and prophecies like Isaiah 53 would also come to mind.

- A. Old Testament scripture told of his death
- B. Isaiah said that “ He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed.
- C. The prophets Hosea and Jonah spoke of the three days Jesus would stay in the grave and then be raised in power and glory.
- D. God planned it! It happened, just as He planned it.

**C. Proof #3 Christ was seen and the Greek word (optanomai) by witnesses (vv. 5-11)**

The message of the Early Church was that Jesus lives. It was a message that turned the world upside down. Jesus lives. Such a message had never been heard before. No one had died and come back to life, but Jesus did. This miracle, this marvel caused men to fall out with the ways of the world to follow Jesus. The fact that Jesus live today is reason enough for you, I and every man and woman to fall out with the ways of the world and follow Jesus. But, the record, the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all testify that Jesus came and lived in the flesh. Jesus died for our sins. The women at the cross saw him die. The Roman Centurion at the cross saw him die. Paul writes about it. The Gospel writers write about it. Roman historians, Tacitus, Seutonious, allude to it. Jesus died! They buried him in the grave of a rich man and Matthew tells us that they sealed up the tomb. Early Sunday morning, Jesus got up from the grave. Mary and

the women went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus-but He was not there. The angels said, "He is not here, he has risen as he said." Jesus lives, Jesus lives and that's a fact. Paul says that Cephas saw him, the twelve saw him, more than five hundred saw him, James saw him and then Paul saw him on the road to Damascus. Jesus is alive and that's a fact.

On the cross, Jesus was exposed to the eyes of unbelievers; but after the Resurrection, Hallelujah! Note to mention, the Christ was seen by believers, who could be and became witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32). Peter saw him and so did the disciples collectively. James was a half brother of the Lord who became a believer after the Lord appeared to him (John 7:5; Acts 1:14). The 500 plus brethren all saw Him at the same time, so it could not have been a hallucination or a deception. The Lord's appearance was not as a ghost, a phantom or a spirit, but one who, like the description of John in 1 John, has been seen, felt, and experienced as fully alive. But one of the greatest witnesses of the Resurrection was Paul himself, for as an unbeliever he was soundly convinced that Jesus was dead. The radical change in his life- a change that brought him persecution and suffering- is certainly evidence that the lord had indeed been raised from the dead. Paul made it clear that his salvation was purely an act of God's grace; but that grace worked in and through him as he served the Lord.

The disciples were almost immediately transformed from men who were hopeless and fearful after the crucifixion (Luke 24:21, John 20:19) into men who were confident and bold witnesses of the resurrection (Acts 2:24, 3:15, 4:2). Their explanation of this change was that they had seen the risen Christ and had been authorized to be his witnesses (Acts 2:32). The most popular competing explanation is that their confidence was owing to hallucinations. There are numerous problems with such a notion. The disciples were not gullible, but levelheaded skeptics both before and after the resurrection (Mark 9:32, Luke 24:11, John 20:8-9, 25). Moreover, is the deep and noble teaching of those who witnessed the risen Christ the stuff of which hallucination are made? What about Paul's great letter to the Romans? I personally find it hard to think of this giant intellect and deeply transparent soul as deluded or deceptive, and he claimed to have seen the risen Christ.

Further, Paul claimed that not only had he seen the risen Christ, but that 500 others had seen him also, and many were still alive when he made this public claim. "Then he appeared to more that

five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:6). What makes this so relevant is that this was written to Greeks who were skeptical of such claims when many of these witnesses were still alive. So, it was a risky claim if it could be disproved by a little firsthand research. The sheer existence of a thriving, empire-conquering early Christian Church supports the truth of the resurrection claim. Without that assurance, the gospel would have been incomplete; without it the gospel would scarcely have survived. How do we know He lives? The late Howard Thurman can answer this question for us in his book “ The Creative Encounter.” Where he says, “The religious experience profoundest dimension is the finding of man by God and the finding of God by man. This is the inner witness.” The inner witness of what one has learned concerning the Christ, one has experience with the Christ and one has seen the Christ has done in other life causes them to sing:

*I serve a risen Savior, He is in the world today  
I know that he is living, no matter what men say  
I felt Hi hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer  
And just the time I need him, He's always near  
He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today  
He walks with me and talks with me  
Along life's narrow way  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart  
You ask me how I know he lives  
He lives within my heart  
HE IS RISEN, JUST LIKE HE SAID*

The inner witness makes us alive to God and the things of God. Knowing God through life's experiences with His involvement-His interaction with you through the different paths of your life-writes your story. You begin to acknowledge His voice and His ways and that's a when the real journey begins. He provides the paper and the pencil. You become the scribe writing down his marvelous acts and actions toward you as you realize that His wonder is all around.

There will be times when the lines on your paper will not be straight but crooked because of the uncertainties that lie ahead. Experience Him afresh in your daily walk while His dew covers the

lives of those who believe in the natural and spiritual bodies. See Him everywhere and in everything. Know the seasons of your life by the flowers blooming and the birds singing. Know the weather by the clouds that fill the sky and the sunrays that warm your skin. Know the Hand of God who writes across the universe and signs His name in Love. He is eternal, He is the Crafter of life and He is Lord. And that's a fact! He is alive and loose in the world.

## **II. The first fruits of those who have fallen asleep**

But where does the Old Testament declare His resurrection on the third day? Jesus pointed to the experience of Jonah (Matthew 12:38-41). Paul also compared Christ's resurrection to the "first fruits," and the first fruits were presented to God on the day following the Sabbath after Passover (Leviticus 23:9-14); 1 Corinthians 15:23. As the Lamb of God, Jesus died on Passover. As the sheaf of the first fruits, He arose from the dead three days later on the first day of the week. When the priest waved the sheaf of the first fruits before the Lord, it was a sign that the entire harvest belonged to Him. When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was God's assurance to us that we shall also be raised one day as part of that future harvest. Apart from the Feast of First Fruits, there were other prophecies of Messiah's resurrection in the Old Testament: Psalm 16:8-11 (see Acts 2:25-28); Psalm 22:22 (see Hebrews 2:12); Isaiah 53:10-12; and Psalm 2:7 (see Acts 13:32-33). Hosea 6:2, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

We have already seen that in Paul's view the resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of the resurrection of all his followers. He is the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep. No further comment is needed here: the meaning is made clear in all that precedes this paragraph. But the principle that is involved is important. Paul had been dwelling on the fact of the Resurrection; he has also emphasized the consequences that logically follow from the denial of it. Now he draws further consequences for great importance from what for him, and doubtless for them, is the established fact.

**III. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**

Adam (vv.21-22). Paul saw in Adam a type of Jesus Christ by the way of contrast. The first Adam was made from the earth, but the Last Adam- Christ, (1 Corinthians 15:45-47) come from heaven. The first Adam disobeyed God and brought sin and death into the world, but the last Adam obeyed the Father and brought righteousness and life. Jesus spoke openly about what would happen to him: the crucifixion and then resurrection from the dead. “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elder and chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again” Mark 8:31; also Matthew 17:22; Luke 9:22). Those who consider the resurrection of Christ will probably say that Jesus was deluded or more likely that the early Church put these statements in his mouth to make him teach the falsehood that they themselves conceived. But those who read the gospels and come to the considered conviction that the one who speaks so compellingly through these witnesses is not the figment of foolish imagination will be unsatisfied with this effort to explain away Jesus’ own testimony to his resurrection from the dead. Our first evidence of the resurrection, therefore, is that Jesus himself spoke of it.

The Resurrection does not involve only Christ himself. It has a representative meaning and value for all believers: it is the guarantee that since he was resurrected, and since resurrection is an essential element in the gospel message, all shall rise who put their faith in him. In that representative sense, he is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. The love and power of God that were operative for him will be operative for them.

When the Lord ascended to glory, He bestowed upon us, believers in the Lord, the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Comforter is with us today. The Comforter guides us into all the ways of truth. The Comforter protects us from hurt, harm and danger. Jesus lives and that’s a fact. There are some things I do not know but there is one thing that I know beyond a shadow of doubt. Jesus is alive and that is a fact.

The Church spread on the power of the testimony that Jesus was raised from the dead and that God had thus made him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). The Lordship of Christ over all the nations is based on his victory over death. This is the message spread all over the world. It’s power to cross cultures and create one new people of God was a strong testimony of its truth. The fact of the Resurrection ought to be beyond any further doubts or questionings and should

never even for a moment be set aside in favor of some semireligious, semi philosophical cult of immortality. Faith in God's love and power and redemptive purpose for them and for all mankind is historically based on this mighty act.

As they grasp it afresh, all that it involves, not only for the life that is, but for that which is to come, is to their joy renewed. The gospel is vindicated. They need never again question the love of God. Nor need they ever again question the power of God. Nor need they ever again question the power of God. The Giver of life is the almighty Conqueror of death. For life and death, and for what lies beyond death, they may safely trust themselves to him. Sin was defeated, and its power broken, for those who have faith to believe in, when Christ rose from the dead. Man's spirit can, if he believes, be free forever.

As the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pledge that love will be victorious. In the upper room on the night in which he was betrayed the Master told his disciples, confidently and quietly, with superb faith, that he would see them again. That pledge will be kept for all who put their faith in him. The resurrection was the supreme victory of the Lord of life over death: his followers share it with him. Let the Corinthian Christians hold fast to the faith, to be possessed by it, adds much zest to life as can be found nowhere else. Let modern man recover it! It will unnerve him to stand on his feet and live. And that's a fact.