

Raised Up with Christ

1 Corinthians 15; Ephesians 2:1–7¹

As of First Importance...

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:

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

We'll see in just a minute at least one of the ways that might work, but Paul went on:

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ¹ Corinthians 15:1–8 ESV

And, of course, this is the gospel—the good news—by which we have been saved. Christ has died; Christ was buried (to modify the old liturgy a bit); Christ is risen; and to this truth, there were eyewitnesses, and lots of them. There were people who saw, heard, spoke with, and even ate with the Lord Jesus Christ during those days between His resurrection and His ascension to the right hand of His Father.

Both Mike and Jeremy read about some of these just a little earlier. In John we heard about Mary Magdalene, who met Jesus just outside the tomb early that morning, and supposed that He was the gardener until He called her name, and Mark indicated that Mary the mother of James, and Salome were also there. Then, Mary Magdalene

¹⁰ ...went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹ **But** when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, **they would not believe it.** ^{Mark 16:10–11 ESV}

Then, later that day, as afternoon turned to evening,

¹² ...he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³ And they went back and told the rest, but

once again,

they...

(the rest—the 11)

...**did not believe them.** ^{Mark 16:12–13 ESV}

And, finally, according to Mark 16,

¹ All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

¹⁴ ...[Jesus] appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. Mark 16:14 ESV

And we should hold that last bit firmly in mind on this Sunday among all Sundays when we inevitably turn our attention to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ ...[Jesus] appeared to the eleven themselves...

the inner circle, the most faithful of the disciples who had walked with Him for the last three or four years. He appeared to them,

...and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, **because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.** Mark 16:14 ESV

As Jesus Himself said, particularly to Thomas on one of the occasions when He appeared to them:

²⁹ ...“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:29 ESV

By that metric, we ourselves have still more reason to believe, as I read a moment ago. After He appeared to Peter and the 12,

⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep...

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15.

⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 1 Corinthians 15:6–8 ESV

If Christ Has Not Been Raised.

So, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is, by any legal standard, an established fact, and that's good news. Christ has died, and more still, He died for us. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 3:

³ ...Christ died **for our sins** in accordance with the Scriptures... 1 Corinthians 15:3 ESV

And in Romans 4, as we saw some time ago now, Paul was writing about Abraham's faith, and he said that

²³ ...the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It...

that is, “faith”,

...will be counted [as righteousness] to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord...

So, you can already see the importance of the resurrection, even in that, but listen to this next part. He, Jesus,

²⁵ ...was delivered up for our trespasses... Romans 4:23–25 ESV

once again then, Christ died for our sins, but in Romans 4, Paul went on to say that He was

...raised for our justification. Romans 4:23–25 ESV

He died to pay the penalty for our sins—the debt that we could never pay ourselves—but He was raised for our justification. He was raised to make us right with God.

And it's not that one factor in this equation is more important than the other; it's just that you *cannot* have one without the other. Without the death of Christ, the resurrection's not even possible; but without the resurrection of Christ, his death has no real significance. As we saw in 1 Corinthians 15:

¹⁴ ...if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

That's what Paul was talking about in verse 2. And furthermore, "if Christ has not been raised," then

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.

So, if there is no resurrection—if the dead are not raised—then the Apostles were liars and the Scriptures are mere fantasy. See, there is **no such thing** as Christianity without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Those who advocate for some sort of religion with a dead Jesus who still happens to be a wonderful moral example, are false teachers and need to be exposed as such, for

¹⁷ ...if Christ has not been raised...

it doesn't matter if we believe in some version of a Jesus who **died**, even if we're inclined to think that He died for us. If he has not been raised, then

...your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Not only that, but if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then

¹⁸ ...those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If Christ has not been raised, then every Christian who has gone ahead of us to glory is actually still lost and still dead in their trespasses and sins. Now maybe some would insist that they are not lost, but have simply ceased entirely to exist, and some might add that if they lived as good, moral, "christian" people in spite of that fact, then at least they probably had a pretty good life. We could maybe consult the martyrs about that one, but even if they did—even if they thought that life was better with a Christian ethic, the Apostle went on to write:

¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ^{1 Corinthians 15:14–19 ESV}

Because there is no Christianity if Christ has not been raised. We can play at it, and many do, but if there is no resurrection, then that's all it is. It's just play. So, Christ has died. That's good. He paid for our sins on the cross. Further, according to the Scriptures, he was buried, this to fulfill prophecy the prophecy of Isaiah 53, verse 9:

⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ^{Isaiah 53:9 ESV}

But also to make it clear to all that he was really most sincerely dead, making it all the more remarkable that He walked out of that tomb, once again “according to the Scriptures”, on the third day, proving once and for all that He was and is

the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.²

Christ is Risen Indeed.

So, Christ has died, yes, absolutely, but Christ **has** risen; and for our part, we can build our lives on this sure foundation.

²⁰ ...Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ^{1 Corinthians 15:20 NIV843}

And this is of first importance to all who trust in Him, for,

²¹ ...as by a man...

(as by Adam, the Father of the human race)

...came death, by a man...

(Jesus Christ),

...has come also the resurrection of the dead. ^{1 Corinthians 15:21 ESV}

²² For as in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ^{1 Corinthians 15:22 ESV}

So, the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ speaks to the future resurrection of *our* physical bodies as well.

Christ's resurrection is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection...⁴

as we are taught in the Heidelberg Catechism. Furthermore, because He did not merely rise from the grave, but ascended all the way to the right hand of His Father and ours, now

² ed., CRCNA (Christian Reformed Church in North America), ed., “Nicene Creed”, *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Publications, 1988), 8.

³ *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

⁴ CRCNA, ed., “The Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 45”, *Ecumenical Creeds*, 30.

...we have our own flesh in heaven—a guarantee that Christ our head will take us, his members to himself...⁵

And this is why the apostle made the point that this matter of the resurrection is “of first,” or primary “importance,” because it is *only* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ that all those who are in Christ—all of us who have been brought to Him by grace, through faith—truly have life.

And we can't overemphasize this. We can't attribute too much importance on the resurrection of our Savior. There's even a song that we sing, and it's a good song, but it includes the line, “His dying breath has brought me life...” and that's simply not true. Yes, with one of His dying breaths He cried out, “It is finished”—paid in full—so with His dying breath He announced the forgiveness of our sin, but if death is where His story had ended, then that's where our story would end too.

Now I know, poetic license and all that, but this is important. It was His resurrection that brought us life, not His dying breath.

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then **at his coming** those who belong to Christ. ¹ Corinthians 15:22–23
ESV

Raised Up with Christ.

Still there *is* more to this than the resurrection of the body. Paul wrote in another place, Ephesians, chapter 2,

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Ephesians 2:1–3 ESV

Which is a pretty bleak assessment of the human condition, if you stop to think about it. But this too is not the end of the story. He went on to say:

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive...**

past tense; here and now. It does not say He will one day make us alive at the resurrection when Christ returns. It says, He made us alive already, because He

...made us alive **together with Christ...** Ephesians 2:4–5 ESV

and

²⁰ ...now Christ is risen from the dead... ¹ Corinthians 15:20 NKJV6

⁵ CRCNA, ed., “The Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 49”, *Ecumenical Creeds*, 32.

⁶ *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

So, even now, so are all those who have been brought to God through faith in His name. We were dead in trespasses and sin,

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus... Ephesians 2:4–6 ESV

And this is not only a guarantee of life to come, but it is also a description of the life that we have right now through the resurrection of Jesus Christ our faithful Savior. Paul said,

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 ESV

Because He lives, we live. Because He is risen (and He is risen, indeed), we are risen. Because He has been raised up and seated at the right hand of the Father, we too have been

⁶ ...raised us up with him and seated...with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:6–7 ESV

Even so, on this Resurrection Sunday morning—just one Lord’s Day among all the Lord’s Days when we gather to worship and celebrate the resurrection of our Savior—hear the Word of the Lord.

¹ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things Colossians 3:1–2 NIV84

because what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal, and because Christ has risen indeed, a day is coming when

⁵³ ...this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

And,

⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers...

Since Christ has died, Christ is risen, and the victory is already yours by faith,

...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:53–58 ESV