



16 May 2025

If ...

It has been almost a month since we celebrated Easter, celebrated the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Each Easter season many articles are written about Jesus' resurrection from an expansive range of perspectives. This year one article began with citing some of the events related to the resurrection from the gospel accounts. The writer summed up a medley of comments about seeing "the works of the miracle every day" by telling us,

"Whether or not Jesus rose after his crucifixion is not something one has to believe is factually true in order that it be profoundly true."



To evaluate that idea we need to, as it has long been said, ask and answer the question, "What saith the Scriptures?" What does the inspired, the God-breathed-out word of God which is without error and infallible say to this? If Christ was not raised from the dead, what does that mean for us, for the Christian faith?

You may recall God speaking to us through the apostle Paul in chapter 15 of his first letter to the church at Corinth. Early in the chapter Paul cites just a sliver of the historical evidence for the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (3-9).

Then a few verses later he gives us a number of *if* questions and statements.

“Now *if* Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among 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, your faith also is in vain. Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, *if* in fact the dead are not raised. For *if* the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised; and *if* Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. *If* we have hoped in Christ only in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied” (12-17; italics added).

*If* is such a small word, but it can be huge in its meaning.

Paul repeatedly poses and answers questions to tell us what it means *if* the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is not true.

If the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is not true,

- there is no resurrection of the dead for anyone, as well as Jesus;
- if Jesus was not raised the preaching of the gospel is worthless, and we are false witnesses of God;
- if Jesus was not raised our faith is in vain, and we are still in our sins;
- if Jesus was not raised those who believed in Christ and died have perished without God;
- if Jesus was not raised Christians are of all people most to be pitied.

Having demolished the notion that Christ was not physically raised from the dead, Paul concludes with a positive declaration.

“But the fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man death came, by a Man also came the resurrection of the dead” (20-21).

The physical resurrection of Jesus is essential to the Christian faith.

Yes, indeed, *Christ is risen from the dead!* He is our risen and living Savior and Lord, our God. Be thankful and rejoice! Celebrate His resurrection not just on Easter, but today, every day.

Pastor Lyle