

**RESURRECTION DAY 2021**  
**I CORINTHIANS 15:12-22**  
**RESURRECTION - FACT OR FICTION?**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Corinthians chapter 15 as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I have called our study this morning, ***RESURRECTION - FACT OR FICTION?***

The reason being is simple. Without the resurrection of Jesus our faith would be in vain and thus, the enemy tries to negate the resurrection and sadly, many believe his lies.

The great 18<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher, John Locke said this regarding the resurrection, ***“Our Saviour’s resurrection is truly of great importance. In Christianity, so great that his being or not being the Messiah stands or falls with it.”***

That is absolutely true. And I pray as we go through our study that you would see that the evidence for the resurrection stands strong and the only logical conclusion is to believe that Jesus rose from the grave!

Also, listen to what one commentator said about this. He wrote,

Timothy Keller has written: “If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn’t rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said?” If Jesus really defeated death, that gives credence to every claim he made. If Jesus did not defeat death, every claim he ever made is proven false.

In the words of Jaroslav Pelikan: “If Christ is risen – then nothing else matters. And if Christ is not risen – then nothing else matters.”

- Stephen T. Um, 1 Corinthians – The Word of the Cross, p. 255

And as we go through I Corinthians chapter 15 I think you will see that if there is no resurrection, then our faith is empty, it is useless, we might as well just go home!

But the wonderful thing here is that Paul is going to show us the emptiness of unbelief and the joy of believing that Jesus rose from the grave.

And I am not speaking of an empty faith or blind faith. Again, I think the evidence is overwhelming in regard to the fact that Jesus rose from the grave!

Let me share this with you. We are told,

Who would you guess is the most successful trial attorney in the entire world? *The Guinness Book of World Records* says, “Most successful attorney: Sir Lionel Luckhoo, who succeeded in getting his 245th consecutive murder acquittal by January 1, 1985.”

This is an absolutely astonishing feat that nobody else in the world has ever come close to replicating. Two hundred forty-five consecutive murder trials either won before the jury or won on appeal. I would suspect he’s a very bright person and that he has tremendous analytical skills.

He certainly must be a world-class expert on what constitutes reliable, admissible, and persuasive evidence.

Wouldn’t it be interesting to get an opinion on the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from a monumental legal expert like Sir Lionel Luckhoo?

During his own spiritual journey Luckhoo did take his expertise in law and went through the question of whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands up to the test of legal evidence.

He ultimately concluded: ***“I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.”***

Our everyday experience tells us that dead people do not come back to life. Yet here we have the most successful attorney on the entire planet applying the legal tests of evidence to the historical accounts of Jesus Christ's resurrection and concluding with absolute confidence that his resurrection is a reality.

Having looked at the evidence, he then did the most logical thing in the world: he gave his life to Jesus Christ. Like Sir Lionel Luckhoo, we should examine the evidence for ourselves.

- <http://bit.ly/3ahHYEX>

But, like I have said, there is a large portion of American's who actually do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus. A recent survey showed that only 66% of Americans believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And, as bad as that number is, only 40% of the seminaries in our country believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ!

That should be shocking to you because what they are teaching these future generation of pastor's, leader's is a lie! They are teaching them that there is no resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no blood atonement and now that they are leading congregations, they are teaching people the same thing that they were taught and now believe!

You see, this was not just a problem in Paul's day, but it is a huge issue in the church today and Paul is going to hit this very hard, as he should, and may we listen to what he is telling us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

Make no mistake about it, the resurrection of Jesus is essential to our salvation.

Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 10:9-10, **“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”**

Do you see how important this is to our faith? You see, believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only essential for salvation but it’s the very cornerstone of the Christian faith.

I have broken the verses we will be looking at this morning into three main points. They are,

***DOUBT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION – I CORINTHIANS 15:12***

***IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION – I CORINTHIANS 15:13-19***

***EMPTY MESSAGE – I CORINTHIANS 15:13-19***

***FALSE HOPE – I CORINTHIANS 15:16-19***

***HE IS RISEN – I CORINTHIANS 15:20-22***

With that said, let’s begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 12 and let’s see what the Lord has for us on this day we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we look at this topic – ***RESURRECTION – FACT OR FICTION?***

**I CORINTHIANS 15****VERSE 12**

Keep in mind that in I Corinthians 15:1-11 Paul shares with us that Christ rose from the dead because it is the heart of the Gospel. And his proof was that there were eyewitnesses who could testify of His resurrection, they saw the risen Lord, over 500 people! And many of those people were still alive when Paul wrote this letter so if anyone doubted this fact, they could ask these eyewitnesses who saw the risen Lord!

This is what Paul wrote beginning in verse 1 of I Corinthians chapter 15, **“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy 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; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”** I Corinthians 15:1-11.

Some may argue, *“Where is the evidence of the resurrection?”*

Paul tells the Corinthians that they themselves are evidence of the power of the Gospel which includes the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul preached the Gospel to them, they received it, placed their feet firmly upon it and through it they were saved.

Of this, church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette wrote in the History of the Expansion of Christianity,

It was the conviction of the resurrection of Jesus which lifted his followers out of the despair into which his death had cast them, and which led to the perpetuation of the movement begun by him. But for their profound belief that the crucified had risen from the dead and they had seen him and talked with him, the death of Jesus and even Jesus himself would probably have been all but forgotten.

- Kenneth Scott Latourette, History of the Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 1, p. 59

They saw the risen Christ and it changed their lives. They were willing to die for what they saw and believed.

And think about it. Mohammed died on June 8, 632 A. D. at the age of 61 in Medina. His tomb is visited by tens of thousands of people each year, but what are they going to see?

They come to mourn his death, not celebrate his resurrection!

But we, as Christians, don't go to visit an occupied tomb but we come to see the risen Lord, for as He rose from the dead it gives to us assurance of the new life we have in Him, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrected life that is to come!

Here is the thing, do you want to mourn over a dead spiritual leader or rejoice in the risen Lord?

You see, only the tomb of Jesus is empty, only Jesus is risen!

“When the Garden Tomb was discovered in 1885, the godly General Gordon was convinced that this was the place where the body of Jesus had lain. The Garden Tomb, hidden for centuries, was covered with rubbish twenty feet high. When they first cleared the spot, with great caution they gathered all the dust and debris within the tomb and carefully shipped it to the Scientific Association of Great Britain. Every part of it was analyzed, but there was no trace of human remains. If this is the real tomb of Christ, then Jesus was the first to be laid there and he was also the last.” (Source Unknown)

And there are many testimonies to what the resurrection of Christ has done in the lives of believers.

Dr. Simon Greenleaf of Harvard University, a very verbal skeptic of Christianity, had written a set of books called *THE LAWS OF LEGAL EVIDENCE*. He was challenged by his students to apply these books to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He accepted the offer, and in the process, he became a Christian.

His conclusion was *“The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best-established events of history, according to the laws of legal evidence administered in the courts of justice.”*

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is there for all to believe and receive, but many reject it, and that is foolish. They are rejecting the good news, the Gospel that God has given to us to save us!

And what Paul is doing here is he is calling forth these witnesses to the resurrection, to establish beyond all controversy that Jesus was raised from the dead in a resurrection body.

By the mouth of two or three witnesses it is to be established and in a court of law, two witnesses are sufficient but here we see over 500 witnesses of the risen Lord.

Not only that, but, as I have said, many were still alive when Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians. So what Paul said could be checked out, it was not a friend of a friend was told that her sister's brother's friend saw the risen Lord, they could go right to the source!

Yes, no one saw the actual resurrection of Jesus, but many saw the risen Lord!

Of this Spurgeon said, "I suppose, brethren, that we may have persons arise, who will doubt whether there was ever such a man as Julius Caesar, or Napoleon Bonaparte; and when they do, - when all reliable history is flung to the winds, - then, but not till then, may they begin to question whether Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for this historical fact is attested by more witnesses than almost any other fact that stands on record in history, whether sacred or profane."

Also, we need to understand that the Corinthian Christians didn't deny the resurrection of Jesus, but they did deny their own resurrection.

You see, they were influenced either by Greek philosophy (which considered the resurrection undesirable, thinking the state of "*pure spirit*" was superior), or by the thinking of the Sadducees (which thought the world beyond to be just wishful thinking).

The bottom line is that the Corinthian Christians believed we lived forever, but not in resurrected bodies.

So what is wrong with that? Is there anything wrong with that?



Yes, there is a huge problem with that line of reasoning. And Paul let's them know what that problem is. You see, Paul is showing them that if they deny their own resurrection then you have to deny the resurrection of Jesus, you can't have one without the other!

This is not pick one and ignore the other. You see, it is all or nothing.

And I will stick with what Jesus said in John 14:19, "**A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.**"

He lives, He rose from the grave in a glorified body! I think we clearly see that. And because Jesus rose from the grave, that means that we too will live and have a glorified body one day!

Please understand, and I know that I have said this already, but I really need to drive this point home, it is that important.

The resurrection is not merely important to the historic Christian faith; but without it, there would be no Christianity. It is the singular doctrine that elevates Christianity above all other world religions.

Listen carefully to this report. And keep in mind that only 40% of the seminaries in our country believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ! And now, what they have taught to their students, these pastors are teaching to their congregations and we are seeing the results of these false teachings.

We are told in a report called, ***Just Overlook the Resurrection and Believe in Jesus,***

As Easter approaches, many people in American society wrestle with the question, can't we just overlook the resurrection and believe in Jesus? Some say, there are so many good teachings in Christianity that we should be able to focus on them without having to believe in a resurrection.

While these statements may seem strange, they are not far from the truth in many people's minds.

The Barna Research Group surveyed people's belief in the resurrection of Christ and explored Americans' definition of the Easter holiday, asking a nationwide, representative sample of adults how they would describe what Easter means to them, personally. The results indicated that *most Americans consider Easter to be a religious holiday, but fewer identify the resurrection of Jesus as the underlying meaning.*

*“While a majority of Americans indicated some type of spiritual connection with Easter, the research also showed that a minority of adults directly linked Easter to the Christian faith's belief in the resurrection of Christ. In all, 42% of Americans said that the meaning of Easter was the resurrection of Jesus or that it signifies Christ death and return to life. One out of every 50 adults (2%) said that they would describe Easter as the most important holiday of their faith.”*

Perhaps the most staggering of statistics from the Barna survey is the fact that only two percent of the American population believes that Easter is the most important holiday of their faith.

Why is this the case?

Perhaps it is because so few place any importance on the possibility of a resurrection.

- <http://bit.ly/3a5YXd1>

Look at how far we have moved from the truths of God found in the Word of God. And if you lean in that direction of not seeing the resurrection of Jesus as important, Paul is going to hit that hard and heavy to prove his point.

He already has shared with us the eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord and now Paul is going to drive home this point and show them the foolishness of believing or should I say not believing in the resurrection of our bodies.

### VERSES 13-19

I have broken these verses down into two main points.

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not true, then what was given was an – *EMPTY MESSAGE!*

And this is found in I Corinthians 15:13-15. Look again at what we are told, “**But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up - if in fact the dead do not rise.**”

Think about that for a minute. If there is no resurrection from the dead, no life after death, then the message that they were preaching was a false message. It had no weight to it because it was not true!

And if that is true, then what is the point of reading the Bible, what is the point of any of this? Let’s just go home and eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die! That is all there is, if you are going to deny the resurrection!

And some people truly believe that. They believe after we die that is it, life is over, there is no afterlife. What a hopelessness that is. Maybe that is why so many people are depressed as they look at this life, the things that have happened to them or are happening to them, and if this is all there is, then what is the use?

And here's the thing. If the message was false, then the apostles were preaching a lie to the people!

Think about things that you believed were true and later on in life, you found out that they were not true.

When I was growing up my mom told me that if it is hot outside and I was running around a lot, not to drink milk because it would curdle in my stomach.

Yes, I believed that. And after I was married, in nursing school, my wife was going to give me a glass of milk after I was working outside in Arizona. I told her, ***"I can't have milk now, it will curdle in my stomach!"***

After she got up off the floor from laughing, she said, ***"Joe, you are crazy! There is hydrochloric acid in your stomach, don't you think that would take care the curdling problem?"***

Okay, I was wrong, way wrong when I thought about it! And I believed that for some twenty years of my life!

But there are many things that we believe that are not true.

For instance, we are often told to wear a cap in the cold because 90 percent (or about that) of our body heat escapes through our heads. I am sure you have heard that before.

But the reality is, according to the British Medical Journal, you just lose about 7 to 10 percent of your body heat there - not much more than you would lose through any other exposed part of your body, whether hands, shoulders, or ankles.

I tell my wife to wear a hat when it is cold outside because you lose a lot of heat through your head! I was wrong, again! I know, some of you are thinking, ***"Wow, Joe was wrong. That is hard to believe!"***

Okay, maybe my thinking is wrong on that one as well!

What about drinking coffee or caffeine products causes you to become dehydrated?

Not true.

Drinking coffee makes you dehydrated, goes the common theory. And yes, caffeinated drinks do have a slight diuretic effect, but researchers have not found any increased risk of dehydration in coffee drinkers compared to non-drinkers.

Again, I believed this as well! Okay, I am getting depressed, how many things more am I wrong about? I don't want to know!

One more, and that is something that I was told when I was young. You don't eat and then go swimming!

Okay, you were probably told the same thing and you probably believed it as well. I don't think I am the only one who believed that. Maybe the milk curdling in your stomach was all me, but eating and swimming, we still hear that you are not to do that!

But you know the deal. Wait at least 30 minutes after eating before jumping into the pool, or else your digestive tract will use up the blood that should be going to your arms and legs and you will cramp up and you will drown!

This is nonsense, according to Duke Primary Care Timberlyne physician Mark Messick, who says, ***“the body does supply extra blood to aid in digestion, but not enough blood to keep your arm and leg muscles from properly functioning. Your biggest danger related to eating and swimming is probably a minor cramp.”***

It is easy to believe a lie, I guess the moral of the story goes.

But Paul's point is more than just this empty message that the apostles were giving if the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not true.

And that is another important point here. If there is no resurrection, then what was given to people was a – *FALSE HOPE!*

Listen again to what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:16-19, **“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”**

Winston Churchill wrote, *“There is no worse mistake in public leadership than to hold out false hopes soon to be swept away. The British people can face peril or misfortune with fortitude and buoyancy, but they bitterly resent being deceived or finding that those responsible for their affairs are themselves dwelling in a fools’ paradise.”*

Make no mistake about it, false hope destroys faith and imagine this. Jesus said that He would be raised from the dead the third day. The apostles taught that they saw the risen Lord.

And now, it is all false?

Hope is so important in our lives as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

Larry Carter, president of Great Lakes Christian College, tells the following true story:

I remember when I was a kid, some 40 years ago, playing on a Little League Baseball team.

One of the things our coach did was host a picnic for the team at the beginning of the season. After we ate hot dogs and burgers, he sat us down for a pep talk. He asked, “How many of you have a dream to one day play in the Major Leagues?”

Almost every hand shot up. Every kid with his hand up believed he could do it. You could see it in their eyes. He then told us, “If that is to happen - that dream begins now!”

I was so inspired by that challenge - all of us were - that we practiced and played hard and we went undefeated for the next few years. All-Star teams from other leagues would play us and lose!

Some 25 years later I became a Little League coach. I brought all the kids together at the beginning of the season to give them a pep talk - the same one my coach had given me.

I asked my team the same question, "How many of you have a dream to one day play in the Major Leagues?"

Not one hand was raised. Not one kid believed he could do it. You could see it in their eyes. I was speechless.

The rest of my talk was meaningless, so I said, "Really? Nobody? Well, go get your gloves and let's throw."

I thought about that day for a long time. What had happened in the 25 years since I was a kid? What had come into their lives to steal their dreams? What had convinced them they would never be more than what they were?

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They lost hope and that destroys faith. And apply that to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If He was not raised from the dead, then what is the use, what is the point, it is meaningless if they believed a lie!

One author put it like this, "If there were no Resurrection, the pagans would be right. The 'foolishness of the Cross' (1:18) would be just that, and men such as Paul and the apostles who had suffered for the gospel (4:9-13) could only be pitied. Those who lived for the pleasure of the moment would be right and the sacrifices of Christians would only be cruel, self-inflicted jokes."

And let's think about that for a minute. If this was not true, and the disciples knew that it was not true, why did they all suffer for the Gospel's sake? That would be foolish and yes, some may endure something like that for this lie, but there would be at least one who would see the foolishness of it and say that this was a lie. But they didn't because it was not a lie!

But, if Christ did not rise from the dead then our faith is empty, and we are still lost in our sins!

Martin Luther put it like this, *“Everything depends on our retaining a firm hold on this doctrine in particular; for if this one totters and no longer counts, all the others will lose their value and validity.”*

And Spurgeon wrote, *“If Jesus rose, then this gospel is what it professes to be; if He rose not from the dead, then it is all deceit and delusion.”*

Do you see how important the resurrection of Christ is?

You see, if death had power over Jesus, if He was defeated by death, then Jesus is not God and if He is not God then He can't pay the penalty for our sins!

And, as I have said, our sins are still upon us because if Jesus Christ is not risen, He can't save us!

And Paul takes this to the logical conclusion as he continues on here. He says that if Christ hasn't risen from the dead then those that have died in Christ have perished, there is no hope, life is over!

And then the nail in the coffin if this is true. You see, if we have placed our hope in an empty faith, if we are still in our sins, then we are the biggest fools around!



Listen to how Paul put it. He wrote in I Corinthians 15:17-19, “**And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.**”

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, “**And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is mere delusion [futile, fruitless], and you are still in your sins [under the control and penalty of sin]; And further, those who have died in [spiritual fellowship and union with] Christ have perished (are lost)! If we who are [abiding] in Christ have hope only in this life and that is all, then we are of all people most miserable and to be pitied.**”

The Living Bible drives home that point once again as it says, “**and you are very foolish to keep on trusting God to save you, and you are still under condemnation for your sins; in that case, all Christians who have died are lost! And if being a Christian is of value to us only now in this life, we are the most miserable of creatures.**”

Paul is telling us that if we believe these lies spoken by these disciples of Christ, then we are the most pitiable, the most pathetic people around!

But if you deny the resurrection, if you truly believe it is a lie, then what do you do with the rest of the Scriptures that hang on the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Again, listen to these words from Spurgeon who tells us, “*The fact is, that the sliver thread of resurrection runs through all the blessings, from regeneration onward to our eternal glory, and binds them together.*”

Look at how it is played out in our lives:

The divinity of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus – **“and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”**

Romans 1:4.

The sovereignty of Jesus rests on the resurrection of Jesus - **“For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.”** Romans 14:9.

Our justification rests on the resurrection of Jesus – **“who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”** Romans 4:25.

Our regeneration rests on the resurrection of Jesus – **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”** I Peter 1:3.

Our ultimate resurrection rests on the resurrection of Jesus – **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”** Romans 8:11.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is so important that our faith rests in the fact that He did rise from the dead!

Thus, if people can get you to deny the resurrection, then everything about Jesus is worthless!

The same is true for Creation. If God did not create the heavens and the earth and man just evolved over time, then there is no Adam and Eve.

If there is no Adam and Eve, then there is no original sin.

If there is no original sin, then our sin has not separated us from God.

If we are not sinners separated from God, then there is no need for God to become flesh and dwell among us to pay in full the penalty for our sins.

Thus, evolution was created to move people away from God and the need for a Savior just as denying the resurrection is moving people away from God and the only hope for their salvation!

If you don't believe that evolution is a belief, then listen to what one man has to say about why he rejects creation and believes in evolution.

Dr. Wald is one of the foremost biologists in this country. And He said regarding evolution and why he believes in it, that *“Spontaneous generation was totally disproved 100 years ago by Louis Pasteur . . . That leads us only one possible conclusion. That life arose as a super natural creative work of God. I cannot accept that philosophically, because I don't want to believe in God. I choose to believe that which I know is scientifically impossible, spontaneous generation arising to evolution.”*

You see, he has all the right information, he just refuses to apply it properly.

I believe the same is true for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The information is out there, it shows that Jesus rose from the grave, but, because people don't want to believe in Jesus, they reject what is true.

It is as Paul said, **“Professing to be wise, they became fools.”** Romans 1:22.

Most of you remember Houdini, the great magician. Houdini claimed that on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death he would come back from the dead.

Thus, on that date a group of his followers gathered together at his grave site in San Francisco waiting for him to return, and they waited, and waited and nothing happened, maybe he got lost?

But here we are, still lost in our sins if there is no resurrection from the dead. We have believed a lie, and thus, we have no hope!

But Paul does not leave us in this condition, we do have hope, we have hope in what God has done for us as he tells us as we read on here in I Corinthians chapter 15.

#### VERSES 20-22

Paul has given us the facts of Christ's resurrection, the eyewitness testimony, and now he is just restating that fact – Christ is risen!

Now we need to understand this point that Paul makes regarding Firstfruits.

Firstfruits was a Jewish feast that took place on the day after the Sabbath following Passover.

At this feast, which took place in the spring, they would bring a sheaf of grain and wave it before the Lord, and it represented a fruitful harvest that was to come as they gave to the Lord. (Leviticus 23:9-14).

Here is the interesting part regarding this feast. Jesus rose from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits and thus, as Paul said in Romans 6:5, **“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”**

Trapp put it like this, *“As in the Firstfruits offered to God, the Jews were assured of God's blessing on the whole harvest; so by the resurrection of Christ, our resurrection is insured.”*

It is as Paul said in Romans 8:23, **“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

What a glorious promise that God has given to us, that we will be raised in a new body one day!

Why can't these bodies be raised up?

Paul explains that as he shows us that through Adam, we have all be born into that sin nature and with it came spiritual death, separation from God. And these bodies of flesh and blood can't inherit the Kingdom of God because of sin and thus, we must be changed, we must get new bodies for our spirit and soul to dwell in!

You see, Christ has come to give us life once again as Paul said in I Timothy 2:4-6, "**who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.**"

Now please don't come to the wrong conclusion that Paul is saying or speaking of some kind of universal salvation, where everyone is saved in the end, that is not at all what he is saying here in Timothy or Corinthians.

Listen carefully to what he does say here in I Corinthians. All who are *IN* Adam will die and all who are *IN* Christ will be made alive!

Thus, if you are not in Christ, if He is not your Lord and Savior, then you will not enter into that eternal life with Him, your spirit will remain dead because we have all been born into Adam and thus, we need to be born again!

Here is what we see. That there is an order.

Christ is the beginning, He was the Firstfruits and there is coming a bountiful resurrection from the dead.

The word “**coming**” is PAROUSIA in the Greek and in general terms it speaks of a person’s appearance.

But when it is spoken of Christ, it relates to His Second Coming, as Matthew 24:27 tells us, “**For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**”

Now for some, they have a hard time with Jesus being the Firstfruits because we read in several instances in the Bible of people who were raised from the dead long before Jesus was!

So how could Jesus be the first?

Think about it for a minute. They died and were resurrected once again in their physical bodies that eventually died once again but Jesus was raised in glory, He received a new body that will never fade away and that is what we are waiting for in our own lives.

Thus, the order is as follows:

Jesus is the start, He is the Firstfruits of the harvest that is coming.

Then there is the harvest of the saints which has an order:

From Pentecost till the Lord comes in the Rapture all the dead and those who are alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and receive their new bodies. (I Thessalonians 4:16).

Next are those who come to Christ during the Tribulation Period and are martyred for their faith, they will receive their resurrected bodies at the end of the Tribulation Period. (Revelation 20:4).

The Old Testament saints some feel will receive their resurrected bodies here at the end of the Tribulation Period while others feel it will be at the time of the Rapture. The resurrection of the Old Testament saints, I believe, will occur simultaneously with that of the Tribulation saints. (Daniel 12:2).

Lastly, those who are born during the Millennial Kingdom and those who enter into the Millennial Kingdom after the Tribulation, those who survive the Tribulation Period and are saved will get their resurrected bodies at the end of the Kingdom Age, after Satan's short rebellion.

There is an order!

Josh McDowell, a Christian apologist, said, *“After more than 700 hours of studying this subject and thoroughly investigating its foundation, I have come to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, OR it is the most fantastic fact of history.”*

Those are the only two options you have. But as you look at the evidence, it is overwhelming that Christ has risen from the dead! To deny it you would have to negate the facts, and there are many who are willing to do that, but their eternity apart from Christ is all that awaits them!

Let me share the words to this song by John Elefante, “This Is How the Story Goes” and you will see that – ***EVERYBODY LIVES FOREVER WE JUST HAVE TO CHOOSE WHERE!***

And this is how the story goes  
 You must believe it all, my friend,  
 From the beginning to the end  
 Cause everyone lives forever  
 We just have to choose where, my friend  
 And this is how the story goes  
 You must believe it all, my friend,  
 From the beginning to the end  
 Cause everyone lives forever  
 We just have to choose where

I said, "Hey, brother, is there anything I can do  
 To make you feel better from the pain?"  
 They tell us we're all terminal, but I don't believe a thing they say  
 They're only words  
 Science and technology to help us numb the pain  
 But far beyond any science, there is one thing that I'm sure of

A Virgin had a Son  
 And a stone was rolled away  
 So how can we be terminal?  
 Because He lives today

Well, I've seen this all before, the same familiar faces  
 Everywhere I look, there's war in unfamiliar places  
 And do you ask yourself, "Will it ever end?"  
 When you put your faith in Him, my friend

What can save your life is an illusion  
 'Till you finally come to one conclusion  
 Just one conclusion

It's only by your own admission  
 That you'll be healed by the Physician  
 They are not human hands that touch you  
 A willing heart and He will come through

And this is how the story goes  
 You must believe it all, my friend,  
 From the beginning to the end  
 Cause everyone lives forever  
 We just have to choose where, my friend  
 And this is how the story goes  
 You must believe it all, my friend,  
 From the beginning to the end  
 Cause everyone lives forever  
 We just have to choose where

Cause the Virgin had a Son  
 And the stone was rolled away  
 So how can we be terminal?  
 Because He lives today



Now you lie here silent  
 You can't move, nor can you speak  
 I know that you feel helpless,  
 But your faith has not grown weak  
 You've overcome the darkness by the Blood of the Lamb, my friend  
 Now rise up from here  
 You are healed, no longer broken  
 No more pain and no more fear  
 I am a witness to Your miracle  
 I will tell them what I've seen

Cause a Virgin had a Son  
 And a stone was rolled away  
 So how can we be terminal?  
 Because He lives today

Now the path is laid before you, don't trust your good intention  
 Use the map that's on your heart and trust in His direction  
 Then your legs grow weak and you feel you're done  
 Fix your mind upon the Risen One

What can save your life is an illusion  
 'Till you finally come to one conclusion  
 Just one conclusion

And this is how the story goes  
 You must believe it all, my friend,  
 From the beginning to the end  
 Cause everyone lives forever  
 We just have to choose where, my friend  
 And this is how the story goes  
 You must believe it all, my friend,  
 From the beginning to the end  
 Cause everyone lives forever  
 We just have to choose where

- John Elefante, This Is How the Story Goes

The tomb is empty, I pray if you don't know Jesus Christ that you come and see and  
 receive Him into your life as Lord and Savior.

What you need to do is admit you are a sinner, believe that God became flesh, dwelt among us and went to the cross of Calvary to pay for our sins and was raised from the dead on the third day. Ask Him to be Lord and Savior of your life and you will be saved!

It is not that there is no evidence, but if you reject Jesus and His resurrection, then you are denying the facts and you are believing a lie that others are giving to you.

But, like I have said, the tomb is empty, won't you come and see!

And for those of us who do believe in Jesus, I pray that you have been encouraged in your faith. That believing in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus is not some blind faith, but the evidence speaks for itself. Thus, may we share with others the hope that is in us!

Let me close with this for you to think about. We are told,

In "The Case for Christ," Strobel reviewed the medical evidence for Jesus' death on the cross with physician and research scientist Alexander Metherell, who concluded the idea that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross is "a fanciful theory without any possible basis in fact."

Strobel also noted a "staggering" amount of first-century testimony from people who claimed to have seen the risen Christ - too much testimony for it to have been hallucination.

"If you were to call each one of the witnesses to a court of law to be cross-examined for just fifteen minutes," Strobel wrote, "and you went around the clock without a break, it would take you from breakfast on Monday until dinner on Friday to hear them all. After listening to 129 straight hours of eyewitness testimony, who could possibly walk away unconvinced?"

After also noting circumstantial evidence for the resurrection and evidence that Christ's tomb was empty on Easter morning, Strobel concluded Jesus truly did rise from the dead. "If my conclusion in the case for Christ is correct," he wrote in the book, "your future and your eternity hinge on how you respond to Christ."

Wellum, professor of Christian theology at Southern, said “the evidence for the resurrection is well known and it consists of three interlocking pieces: 1) the fact of the empty tomb, 2) the resurrection appearances of Christ and 3) the transformation of the disciples and the establishment of the church. This data is interlocking since one piece of the data without the others would not provide a good case.”

However, Wellum told BP in written comments, “it is not the mere fact of the resurrection alone that is important but the meaning.”

“The skeptic can still always admit that Christ may have been risen from the dead without thinking that His resurrection has universal significance,” Wellum said. “Maybe Christ’s resurrection is one of those strange events that occur from time to time in history. After all, given the non-Christian’s worldview, they will look at even the ‘fact’ of the resurrection within their overall worldview.”

Within the Christian worldview, Wellum said, Christ’s resurrection “demonstrates at least three truths”:

— “By Christ’s death and resurrection, death has been destroyed because as the Lord and Messiah, He has come to reverse the effects of sin, death and destruction (e.g., Hebrews 2:14-18).”

— “Christ’s resurrection demonstrates that salvation has been accomplished ... that sin[’s penalty] has been paid and thus the power of death has been broken.”

— “Christ’s resurrection demonstrates that judgment has come and will come to this world (Acts 17:31). Because of the resurrection, all humanity will be judged by Jesus Christ.”

Christians must show that their explanation of the resurrection makes more sense than alternative explanations, Wellum said.

“The significance of the resurrection of Jesus cannot be properly understood as simply an isolated phenomenon of brute power, or a freak accident of nature which belongs to Ripley’s Believe It or Not. The resurrection is not a strange or isolated event which has no intelligible links to the past and no relationship to the future,” Wellum said.

“Rather, the significance of the resurrection and the context in which to understand the death and resurrection of Jesus is the Old Testament Scriptures,” he said. “For Jesus’ Messianic death and resurrection is the fulfillment of the plan of God to bring about both redemption and judgment. It is not an accident of nature, but the result of God’s plan, purposes and intention.”

- <http://bit.ly/3aifhrf>

Make no mistake about it, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact, it is not fiction. Thus,  
***THE TOMB IS EMPTY – WON’T YOU COME AND SEE!***