

What If The Resurrection Is Not True?

- Ron Stullenbarger -

"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. 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" (1 Corinthians 15:13-19 – NKJV).

If Christ didn't rise, then sin killed Him, death held Him, God did not validate His work on the cross, He is Himself condemned, and He certainly can't provide salvation for you. What is it that the gospel offers? The forgiveness of sins. How is it that the gospel offers forgiveness of sins? Because our sins were paid for in full by the death of Christ. We know it was the satisfactory offering before God because God validated His work on the cross by raising Him from the dead. He was *"declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). But if He didn't rise, then there's no divine validation. He is captive to the sphere of death and so are we. All our sins still cling to us and they accuse us before God like so many wolves waiting to tear us to shreds.

We need a Savior to free us from sin. We need a Savior to satisfy the just wrath of God against sin. We need a Savior who defeats sin. If Christ didn't rise, then sin won. If there is no resurrection, Paul says, there is no forgiveness. There is no penalty paid. There is no reconciliation provided. There's no justification, no salvation, no eternal life, no heaven cause the New Testament says, *"He was raised for our justification"* (Romans 4:25). That's the validation for the world to see and for all human history to know by the record of the New Testament.

If God raised Him from the dead, then that indicates that His sacrifice satisfied God. Only because of that satisfaction and that resurrection can we in Christ be justified. Romans 6:3-11 tells us that we are buried with Him in His death and we rise to a new life in His resurrection. That's the symbolism of baptism. We're united with Him and His death and resurrection. We die to the penalty of sin, as He pays it on our behalf. We die in Him in that sense, and we rise in Him to newness of life. But if He didn't rise, we have no new life; we are still in our sins.

Only as a resurrected Christ can He become to us wisdom and sanctification and righteousness and redemption, to borrow Paul's words in the first chapter of this letter. *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD'"* (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).