

Your Redeemer Lives

1 Cor 15:12-20

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is the center of Christianity. Which is a bit awkward, because everyone knows the dead don't rise. No wonder then that some people say, 'we can't believe this.' But that is not a new argument. This is exactly what Paul is addressing in this passage. And he says that the resurrection is so central to the faith, that if it didn't happen Christians are of all people most to be pitied. Why is that?

It's all or nothing

Paul says, 'If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain.' If Christ has not been raised we are wasting our time and our lives. The life Christ calls us to is costly – but if he hasn't been raised we are wasting our lives.

But if he has been raised then any cost for Christ is worth it. Rather than it being foolish to give your life for him, it would be foolish not to. When it comes to the resurrection, it really is all or nothing.

What You Believe Matters

Paul says, 'If Christ has not been raised... your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God.' If Christ has not been raised we have believed something about God that is false. Today people argue that there is no such thing as absolute truth (which is itself a claim to truth!). But either God does exist or he doesn't, and either God raised Christ from the dead, or he didn't. Both sides can't be right.

Whether or not Christ has been raised from the dead has profound implications for all of us, Christians and non-Christians, because what you believe about God matters.

Paying the Ransom

The last reason Paul gives is that if Christ has not been raised 'we are still in our sins.' Jesus said he would give his life as a ransom for many. A ransom is a price that must be paid to secure someone's freedom from slavery or prison.

Jesus gave his life to secure our freedom from slavery and captivity to sin. But why doesn't a dead saviour work just as well? After all there are plenty of other religious guides (all dead) to choose from. Why invoke the resurrection? Because if Christ has not been raised we have no idea if the ransom has been accepted. We have no idea which religious guide to choose. But if Christ has been raised, then it powerfully declares that our slavery and captivity to sin has been ended.

It's the Fact that Matters

Paul is in no doubt that Christ has been risen. He can provide a list of eyewitnesses to the fact – and he is one of them. And each of them were the original skeptics – who refused to believe the resurrection until they met the risen Jesus for themselves.

So the resurrection is not 'take it, or leave it.' It tells us that whatever the cost, Christ is worth it; that whatever other 'faith' choices there are, Christ is the one who should have our allegiance and our love; that whatever our past or present Christ has paid our ransom.