

## **1 Corinthians 15:12-19** **The centrality of the resurrection!**

### **Introduction:**

In the fictitious book titled, *A Skeleton in God's Closet*, a world-famous archeologist, claims to have found the 2000-year-old skeleton of Jesus Christ in an ancient tomb in Palestine. Hence, the title—*A Skeleton in God's Closet*.

At first the evidence for the authenticity of this archaeological find seems insurmountable. Many of the world's leading archaeologists are convinced that the bones discovered are in fact the very bones of Jesus Christ. If they really are the bones of Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead.

The hero of the book is also an archeologist. Since he is a Christian, the news of this discovery rocks his world. At first, he is depressed, then he is sad, and then he is angry. As news of the archeological find travels around the world chaos erupts, lives unravel, millions lose hope, and stock markets crash.

This book forces the reader to ask a very important question—what are the negative implications of Jesus Christ not rising from the grave?

Maybe you have wondered similar things.

Is the resurrection really that important?

Is it really the lynchpin of Christianity?

Does the resurrection of Jesus Christ really affect me personally?

Yes, the resurrection is really that important and yes there are many negative implications of Christ not rising from the grave.

This brings us to 1 Cor. 15:12-19.

In these verses Paul lists four negative implications Christ not rising from the grave.

*Let's look at each implication in detail.*

**First, if Christ was not raised, we are liars!**

**1 Corinthians 15:14–15 (ESV) — 14** And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. **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.

Paul says that if Christ has not been raised, we are liars. Even worse, we are misrepresenting God.

It is a lie to say that Christ rose from the dead, when he did not rise from the dead. This is a moral issue.

There are some who think that Christianity is good for society, even though it is not true, because it makes people moral. But if Christ did not rise from the dead, then Christians are not moral people, they are liars. A religion based on lies is not good for society, it is bad for society.

But Christians are not liars since Christ really did rise from the grave.

Consider these historical facts.

**It is a fact that Jesus died...**

All the non-Christian historians of Jesus day report that Jesus died (Josephus, Tacitus, Thallus, and the Jewish Talmud).

Furthermore, the Romans soldiers in charge of his crucifixion were professional executioners and they were convinced for several specific reasons that Jesus died on the cross.

**It is a fact that Jesus tomb was empty...**

Response... The disciples stole his cold dead body from the tomb... people die for what they think it is true but not what they know to be false.

Another response... The romans or Jews stole his cold dead body from the tomb... then why didn't they bring it forward as evidence that Jesus was actually dead?

**It is a fact that Jesus was seen by eyewitnesses after his resurrection ...**

We read about this in 1 Cor. 15:1-11...

The appearances of the risen Christ are very believable for many reasons-

He was seen in different places  
Over a period of forty days  
He was seen eating and drinking  
Walking and talking  
He was seen over a dozen times  
He was seen inside and outside  
He was seen by over 500 people at once  
He was seen by males and females alike.  
He was physically touched by many.

All the witnesses could have been cross examined because they were still alive when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

Response—But everyone believed in resurrections back then... not true—it has been established by several historians that people back then were just as skeptical as us of bodily resurrections.

**It is a fact that Jesus has transformed the lives of millions of people ...**

Over 10,000 Jews converted to Christianity within weeks of his resurrection. This is astonishing considering the cost involved.

They went from believing that it was blasphemy, (punishable by death) to worship Jesus to worshipping Jesus themselves.

People lives are still being transformed...

Consider the story of Homicide Detective J. Warner Wallace. He writes,

“I was a committed atheist when I first heard a pastor preach a sermon that described the resurrection of Jesus. This pastor seemed to actually believe Jesus rose from the dead and was still alive today. I assumed it was just another example of “blind faith”; another well-intentioned church leader believing something for which he had no supporting evidence. I was familiar with the rules of evidence and the process by which we can determine the truth about past events. As a detective, I was doing this for a living. I decided to investigate the resurrection as I would any unsolved case from the distant past. As I applied my skills as a detective, I became more convinced that the New Testament gospel accounts reliably describe the life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus.” (Wallace, *A Cold-Case Approach to the Resurrection*, 4)

*The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ was not a lie... it truly happened.*

*Consider this....*

Every other religion but Christianity must be accepted on blind faith. In other words, their truth claims are not based on or rooted in historical events in the past.

You have to accept Muhammad, Joseph Smith, and the Buddha’s testimony on blind faith...

This means that they can’t be falsified. They must be accepted on blind faith. On the other hand, Christianity’s truthfulness is based on historical events (the resurrection) that can be tested or falsified.

This means that Christianity is the only world religion that is historically defensible. And it can be defended very well.

### **Application:**

*Since Christ rose from the grave, Christians are not liars!*

I get it Dave... I believe that Jesus rose from the grave.

But are you living like it is true?

Are you living with hope? Do other see the hope in your life?

Are you afraid of death? You should not be...

Are you constantly giving thanks for the hope of heaven???

Or are you living like this life is all there is???

*Denying the resurrection has implications....*

*First, if Christ was not raised, we are liars!*

### **Second, If Christ was not raised, we are guilty!**

**1 Corinthians 15:17 (ESV) — 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**

Why would we still be in our sins or guilty of committing sins if Christ remained in the grave? Because Christ’s resurrection is a crucial step in our justification. If there is no resurrection, there is no justification, if there is no justification we are still in our sins, which means we are still guilty, which means we are barred from heaven.

But since Jesus rose from the dead, we will be justified.

In romans 4 Paul connects our justification with Christ's resurrection.

**Romans 4:23–25 (ESV) — 23** But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, **24** but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, **25** who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

In verse 25 we read that Jesus was delivered up, or died for our sins, and was raised for our justification. What does this mean? What does it mean that Christ was raised for our justification?

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death...”

Everyone who sins deserves to die and never rise to glory. Death is the permanent penalty for sins.

Christ never sinned, but he died. He did not die for his sin, he died for our sin. When he died, our sins were paid for.

Side note- How could one man, pay for the sins of millions of people? He was not just a man, he was fully man and fully God.

After Christ died, Christ rose from the dead. Why? Death could not hold him down. In the resurrection, the father publically declared, “My son is perfect, my son is righteous, my son never sinned, therefore, death can't rule over him.”

In the resurrection Jesus was justified. The word justification simply means to be declared righteous. In the resurrection God the father declared that Jesus Christ was perfectly righteous, because he was perfectly righteous. He never sinned and his resurrection proved this fact.

What does this have to do with us? I am not Jesus. I get that God declares Jesus Christ righteous because he was righteous. That is why he rose from the grave. But what about me?

**Ephesians 2:5–6 (ESV) — 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,

Through our union with Christ, we were raised with Christ, therefore, we receive the verdict that Christ receives.

We are just as justified as Jesus.  
We are just as righteous as Jesus.  
We are just as sinless as Jesus.  
We are just as guiltless as Jesus.  
We are just as shameless as Jesus.

### **Application:**

Many of you agree with what I'm saying intellectually, but you often feel guilt and shame.

Some of you are thinking, how can I be justified when...

I looked at porn this week.  
I yelled at my kids and spouse last weekend.  
I yelled and screamed at the guy who cut me off....

I had abortions in the past.  
I committed adultery...  
I struggle with SSA...  
I abused drugs and alcohol and woman...  
I stole things...  
I have not read the Bible in months....

If Christ rose from the dead, and you are currently trusting him, you are just as justified as Jesus Christ himself.

We get the verdict he earned!!!

*Denying the resurrection has implications...*

*If Christ was not raised, we are liars.*

*If Christ was not raised, we are guilty.*

**Third, if Christ was not raised, we are hopeless!**

**1 Corinthians 15:17–18 (ESV) — 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.**

To “fall asleep” in Paul’s letters means to die (7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-15).”

Paul says that if Christ has not been raised from the dead those who have died will perish? In other words, they will cease to exist once their body is laid in the grave.

This is the worldview of the materialist. Materialists believe that once we die, we cease to exist. There is no spiritual realm, there is no after life, there is no heaven, there are just worms that eat our decaying bodies.

In other words, if you are a materialist, there is no hope beyond the grave.

**Illustration:**

Tennis was my life in Junior high, high school, and college. I loved working hard, competing, and always trying to improve my game. All I thought about, read about, dreamed about was tennis.

The last few weeks I have been training out at my son’s tennis academy. It is me, a few other guys my age, and a bunch of teenagers.

It has been very discouraging. Why? I’m realizing that I’m never going to be as good as I used to be, in fact I’m getting worse. There are certain things I just can’t do with my racket anymore.

My son is getting better and I’m getting worse. Two years ago, I destroyed him in the court, now he is destroying me.

Plus, my body is breaking down. My knees talk back when I walk up stairs, I frequently ice my right elbow, and my lower back is not happy.

And I’m only 45.

Aging involves loss.

Loss of hearing  
Loss of hair  
Loss of stamina  
Loss of coordination  
Loss of muscle  
Loss of memory  
Loss of flexibility  
Loss of endurance and speed  
Loss of libido

Then you start to lose all your friends, as they start dying...

Then you face the prospect of a nursing home, lonely, and no longer able to control your bladder.

Let's face it... It pretty much goes downhill after age 25.

If there is no life beyond the grave, aging is incredibly hopeless.

### **Application:**

Fortunately, Christ has been raised...

All those trusting in Christ will die, but they will not perish.

**1 Corinthians 15:54–55 (ESV) — 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?”

We have hope...  
Christ has risen from the grave...  
He has taken the sting out of death...  
The best is yet to come...  
You will receive a glorified resurrection body...

*Denying the resurrection has implications...*

*If Christ was not raised, we are liars.  
If Christ was not raised, we are guilty.  
If Christ was not raised, we are hopeless.*

**Fourth, if Christ was not raised, we are pitiful!**

**1 Corinthians 15:14 (ESV) — 14** And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

**1 Corinthians 15:14 — 14** And face it—if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. (Modern translation)

Paul says that if Christ has not been raised from the dead then our preaching and our faith is in vain. The word vain means without affect, empty, fruitless, purposeless, or pointless.

**1 Corinthians 15:19 (ESV) — 19** If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

If our only hope is in this life, then we are to be pitied because we made great sacrifices for nothing...

All of the hardship we endured for following Jesus was useless, pointless, and meaningless.

**Illustration:**

Useless toil...

Raking leaves when I was a boy to earn money to buy a bike... raked them all up into piles after hours of raking only to have a gust of wind blow across the grass...

All that hard work for nothing.

**Application:**

If Christ did not rise, we are pitiful...

All our hard work for Jesus accomplishes nothing and just leads to more suffering...

But Christ did rise...

Since he rose...

Self-denial for the kingdom is worth it.

Sacrifice in marriage is worth it.

Saying no to lust is worth it.

Serving others when tired is worth it.

Training our kids is worth it.

Getting persecuted for evangelism is worth it.

Praying and fasting is worth it.

Giving our money away is worth it.

A little later Paul wrote another letter to the Corinthians.

**2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (ESV) — 16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. **17** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, **18** as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

What is the light and momentary affliction?

**2 Corinthians 11:23–29 (ESV) — 23** Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. **24** Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; **26** on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; **27** in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. **28** And, apart

from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

Paul said that prison, beatings, and receiving the forty lashes were light and momentary affliction...

How in the world can Paul say this? Because Christ rose from the dead.

The eternal glory that awaits us for outweighs the suffering of this life... if we believe this theological reality, we will push ourselves hard, motivated by God's grace, and relying on God's spirit.

Because we know that our hard work is not in vain. God will reward the faithful. God will reward you in heaven, yes you, when you live for his glory.

The resurrection means that our hard work will be rewarded.

### **Conclusion:**

In the book, *A Skeleton in God's Closet*, the skeleton discovered in a tomb in Palestine was not the skeleton of Jesus, it was a highly fabricated hoax.

Yet the initial claim that Christ's bones had been discovered, caused the hero of the story to realize that denying the resurrection of Jesus Christ has huge implications.

We looked at four...

*If Christ was not raised from the dead,*

we are liars.

we are guilty.

we are hopeless.

we are pitiful.

But it is a fact that Christ has been raised. As a result,

We speak truth when we speak of the resurrection.

We are justified.

We are hopeful.

We will be rewarded...

Christianity is not primarily a code of conduct or a set of rules. Christianity is rooted in a historical event that happened 2000 years ago. Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead. If you put your trust in Jesus, you too can have hope for this life and the life to come. Let's pray...