

## Easter 2025, Because He Lives, 1 Corinthians 15, 4/20/25

Open to 1 cor 15 p.1139. I've now hit the age in my life when I can start looking back on the journey and see phases and seasons, you know what I mean? Like when it comes to music, I went through my pop era, and then my grunge era, then into my folk era, now I'm in my...I mostly listen to podcasts era. I can also look back at my journey of faith...there was the "along for the ride" season. Grew up in a Christian home, but quite frankly I didn't really think much about God or spirituality, it was mostly irrelevant in my life. And then I went into a season of "Spiritual Unbelief" I denied that any of this religious stuff was even real. I agreed with the late Physicist Stephen Hawking who once said, *"I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail."*

*There is no heaven or afterlife... that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark."*<sup>1</sup>

For me, that season was short lived, because as crusty as I was about religion on the outside, there was something deep inside me that knew there was more to this life, something greater, something beyond the grave. That was my "Seeking but skeptical" season. Steve Jobs is an example of this- He said that throughout his life he'd had seasons where he did and seasons where he didn't, but as he was facing the prospect of his own death, he found himself believing in God more and more. *"Because, I just can't accept that the body just turns off one day and then it's all over--you're gone forever;*

*and then one day the sun of our solar system goes out and that's the end of human history.*

*There's got to be more to it than that;*

*we can't just be an illusion of consciousness arising from a fortuitous cosmic accident."*<sup>2</sup>

Now there is a big leap from general spirituality to Christianity. If you aren't real familiar with Christianity- in a nutshell, We believe that God came to the earth in the flesh about 2000 years ago, and his name is Jesus. Compelled by his great love for the world, he gave his life as a sacrifice for the sin of humanity by being crucified on a cross on a Friday, which Christians call Good Friday. And he bodily rose from the dead on Sunday (which is why churches meet on Sunday) and Jesus offers us the only cure for sin and death, which is forgiveness for all our sins and eternal life for anyone who trusts in Him. How did I come to believe this? There are several factors, but the greatest of them is what Easter is about, I became convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And just like my journey, each of us are on a journey of faith, whether you are along for the ride, or you think this is a myth or worse a scam...or maybe you are open but skeptical...I want to share with you some why I believe it actually happened like the Bible says it did and invite you to explore it further with me in the weeks to come in a series we are called "You're Not Crazy to Believe That" beginning in May and my Christianity 101 Class starting next Sunday.

<sup>1</sup> From interview with *The Guardian* (2011)

<sup>2</sup> Story from JD Greear's message - <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=5a902b06-8d75-4dc8-b48b-e72c9021e6a9>

Let's start here. Something extraordinary happened in 33AD in Jerusalem that caused 1000s of people to change their entire worldview virtually overnight, that caused people from all kinds of religions, ethnicities and classes to believe that Jesus is God, and to give their lives for their beliefs. Something compelling happened that led a powerless minority to utterly change the world within a century.

We believe the answer is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And this is Paul's entire argument in 1 Corinthians 15, Page \_\_\_\_\_ **Two Reasons for Confidence in the Resurrection of Jesus**

### **#1 Fulfilled Prophecies in the Bible**

Lots of leaders like politicians and sports teams GMs make promises about what they are going to do to give their followers hope for the future. What causes doubt or instills confidence in them is their track record. Do they do what they say they are going to do? Eagles have a saying "In Howie we trust" because of his proven track record. This is one of Paul's key reasons for such confidence in the resurrection. Well look what Paul says. *Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you,*

*which you received and on which you have taken your stand.*

*2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

*3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:*

*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*

*4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*

Paul says that the events of Easter: the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus all happened in harmony with the Old Testament Scriptures written hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Literally thousands of places where the coming of Jesus is foretold. He's saying, "It happened just like God said it would." The coming of Jesus was communicated through direct statements and symbols and foreshadowings all throughout the Old Testament, giving details about where he'd be born, what he would be like, how how we would suffer and die, and be raised from the dead...for example, do you know that the Old Testament predicts Jesus' death by crucifixion 200 years before crucifixion was invented? I don't have time to get into all these with you in detail today, but come to my Christianity 101 Class starting next Sunday and we will. God promised this hope of a Savior was coming and he made good on his promise. These prophecies in the Bible are one of the most credible reasons why we can have confidence in the historical events of Easter.

### **#2 The Eye-Witnesses to the Resurrection**

*5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred*

*of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.*

**7** *Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,*

**8** *and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

Pretend you haven't heard this story of Easter a million times and maybe you haven't and you're new to Christianity, which is awesome and we are so glad you are here. But some of you have heard this story so much we are like, Happy Easter, when's lunch? But get into the drama here... Can you imagine if you went to your buddy Fred's funeral, paid your respects at his casket, got up and said a few words, saw him go 6ft under...and then 3 days later you see him on the elliptical at the gym. This is their experience except so much more. Jesus your Rabbi, the one in whom you put your hope, was just a few days before beaten within an inch of His life and then crucified on a cross, the worst form of torture that the world had ever invented up to this point, and killed. Actually killed, like spear up through the side, blood and water pour out, dead. Roman soldiers are on record to have killed up to 6000 people in a single day. The one thing the Roman Empire knew how to do was kill people. Some critics of Christianity go "Oh Jesus wasn't really dead, he was just mostly dead..." you know like Princess Bride, passed out, and then woke up in the tomb and was like... "whoa, that was close, can someone let me out of here? And can you grab a doctor? I am risen, I am risen indeed, let's start a religion!" No he was all dead. And then suddenly before your eyes three days later you actually see him alive, in the flesh, you see his nail printed hands, you hug him and bow down and worship him.

And notice Paul lists individuals who were deniers of Jesus like Cephas (Peter), and those who were skeptics, doubters like James his half-brother, and even Paul himself who before converting to Christianity, was a staunch anti-Christian Jewish leader who was trying to stamp out this whole Jesus movement. And yet, each of them once they saw the resurrected Jesus themselves they couldn't deny it. It was true!

But he also says he appeared to groups, the disciples when they were altogether, and a group of 500 people at one time. Notice Paul assumes there were some skeptics reading his letter, which is why he says in v.6 "Most who are still living", scholars tell us this is like an ancient footnote. Paul was writing within 20 years after these events of Easter. Go see them and ask them what they saw.

Now many modern people have this view of ancient people as superstitious, incredulous...easy to fool and trick. We think we are smarter than ancient people just because we have access to more data points. What C.S. Lewis calls "Chronological Snobbery." It's just not true. The bodily resurrection of Jesus was every bit as impossible for people to believe back then as it was today. Among the Greeks and Romans of the 1st century, a bodily resurrection was considered ridiculous and a laughable idea, a fairy tale at best. The Jews of the 1st century believed in a final resurrection at the end of time, but an individual resurrection in the middle of history?

Impossible, never would have bought it. Which is why even though Jesus predicted it multiple times they were still like, “Yeah sure Jesus...” “There goes Jesus with his parables again.”

Mary was among the first people to visit the empty tomb of Jesus that first Easter morning. The Gospel of John tells us she saw the stone rolled away, she didn't say... “Oh Happy Easter! Let's celebrate, let's create a holiday with bunnies, and matching pink dresses, and let's hide some eggs...to celebrate Jesus' resurrection...” She doesn't do that. She's crying and says, “Somebody has rolled away the stone and someone must have stolen his body.” That's a rational, logical person, skeptical person...not some easy to fool ancient person. I will say it again, it was every bit as impossible for people to believe back then as it was for us today.

Others say, well maybe it was a hoax, a scam that they all knew was fake but they jumped on. Except that experts will tell you that people will lie for three reasons, money, power, fame. These early Christians got none of those things. The Roman Empire takes away their property and fires them from their jobs and jails them and puts them in gladiatorial arenas and says, “Confess that you made up Christianity. You didn't really see Him risen from the dead. Recant your belief in Jesus as Lord.” If you are a 1st century Christian you aren't going to give your life for a hoax. They died in obscurity, they did not recant because they had such confidence in the historical event of the resurrection.

What about you today? Well if you say, I can't believe this because it doesn't fit in my worldview and understanding of science. Well it didn't fit in their worldview either. They let the facts challenge them, are you allowing the facts to challenge you? If you don't believe, if you can't accept that, then you have to come up with a historically credible alternative explanation for why these people claimed this, and 1000s of people came to faith and it changed the world. And no one in 2000 years of sneering skepticism has been able to do that, or even come close. Dr. Moule of Cambridge concluded, “The birth and rise of the church remains an unsolved mystery for any historian who refuses to take seriously the only explanation offered by the church itself.”<sup>3</sup> Think! Let it challenge you and draw you by the collar into it.

If you are willing to let these things challenge you, here's what happens, the Holy Spirit starts to come inside and change you and give you faith! Head and the heart.

I've been talking most about the head...but let me close with talking about your heart. What I really needed was hope. And maybe you do as well. But we might be facing suffering from chronic pain, scan that we fear may be something scary, the uncertainty of our jobs, our relationships. You might be here experiencing shame about your past and feeling like God could never love someone like you. Or existential anxieties of the future of our world or why we are here...But the hope of Easter gives us the same joyous confidence of our future that it did for those early Christians that changed the world. It provides a real freedom of being completely forgiven and at peace with God, a non-anxious presence because our future is secured. It

---

<sup>3</sup> C.F.D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament*

provides us deep meaning and significance, being called to a mission that is worth living for, and promising to change us from the inside out so that we can love and serve others.

I remember that first Easter Sunday after I came to faith singing that famous Easter Hymn, **Because He Lives**. And the words were so personally true for me. *Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, Because He lives, all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future, And life is worth the living, Just because He lives!*

I want to invite you right now to receive what Christ has done for you. The Bible says, **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,**

**that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."** Salvation is a gift, and like any other gift, you have to receive it!

The heart of Christianity is not a new approach to morality; a new reform to live better or get more religious. The heart of Christianity is something Jesus DID for you that you have to receive. *"Christianity is not about turning over a new leaf but receiving a new life."* The Bible term is "being born again" or "being saved." Has that happened to you? It can right now.

You can make that decision today. Pray.

If you prayed that prayer- Why Jesus Book in the Lobby. Come to **Christianity 101. [Leave this on the Screen the Whole Time]**

If you didn't pray but you thought about it.

If you you are skeptical...you say, I've just got a lot of questions, like how can we even trust the Bible? And if God is good why is there so much suffering in the world? And did Jesus ever even say that he was God? And lots of other questions...

After Closing Song-

If you are a Christian- you don't just get to sit on this good news of Easter. You gotta go somewhere with it like the first Christian church did. You're a sent one now, that's your identity. That's core to who you are. At Brandywine Valley Church we are all about introducing people to Jesus Christ and helping them follow him. We are about demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus through our loving services of others and declaring the gospel message with our words. That's what **Go Week** is really all about.