

The Resurrection: Reality or Fantasy? [Inquiring (Skeptical) Minds Want to Know]

1 Cor. 15:3-29, 54-55 Many people do not realize that the earliest account we have of Jesus' resurrection is Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Why did Paul write about the resurrection? I find it very interesting that Paul wrote of the resurrection to confront those who were skeptical about it. This is a very important fact. Why is it important? It is significant because people in our day do the same thing. Many individuals deny the resurrection of Christ because they have a hard time believing that such a miracle is possible. Even Christian writers have a problem with it. New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann has many followers today. He said that we must view miracles such as the resurrection as mythological. This means we must de-mythologize the New Testament in order to take it seriously. When asked why he doesn't believe in the resurrection of Christ Bultmann said, "I don't believe it simply because dead men don't rise."

Do you know anyone like Bultmann? Do you know people who reject the resurrection of Christ because they cannot believe it *can* happen? If you are like that or know of others who are, Paul's words are for you. He wrote to skeptics in the first century and his words are relevant for skeptics today. What does Paul say about the resurrection? It may surprise you to hear what he says. Paul said that ...

- **Belief in the resurrection is not just wishful thinking (1 Cor. 15:19)**
 - Faith-based living is confident expectation rather than fanciful illusion [Christian hope is not a dream that disappears when awakened by reality (1 Cor. 15:19)]
 - Belief in the resurrection is not tolerating a miserable today by dreaming of a better tomorrow (1 Cor. 15:19; 1 Pet. 1:3-4)
 - Resurrection-based faith brings fullness of life rather than freedom from struggle (John 3:36; 10:10; Eph. 3:14-21; James 1:2-3)
- **Belief in the resurrection is based on historical evidence (1 Cor. 15:3-8; 19-20)**
 - We must remember that a sincere fantasy will not produce an authentic faith [Fact-based faith is far more reliable than faith-based (faith in faith) beliefs (John 20:30-31; 1 Cor. 15:3-8)]
 - Walking by faith rather than sight requires us to trust the eyes of faithful witnesses [We are walking on paths paved by those who've been where we're going (1 Cor. 5-8; Heb. 11:1-2; 12:2; John 1:1)]
 - We can believe the testimony if we trust the one who gives it [Knowing the witness helps us to believe the testimony (John 14:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:7-8)]
- **Belief in the resurrection lifts us to a higher level of living today as well as tomorrow (1 Cor. 15:32-34)**
 - The resurrection reminds of who we were created to be ["Be all you can be" is a command rather than a cliché (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 6:5-7; Eph. 2:1-6; Cor. 6:18-20; 1 Cor. 15:32-34; Col. 3:1-14)]
 - We can have confidence for tomorrow by doing the right thing today [Wishful thinking is often simply wishing for the wrong things (Luke 12:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; 15:32)]
- **Belief in the resurrection transforms a victim into a victor (1 Cor. 15:20, 54-55)**
 - Christ's resurrection is the "fruit" that proves the "tree" is still alive [A tree that bears fruit cannot be dead (Rom. 6:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:20; Heb. 2:14-15)]
 - The resurrection means that death is an enemy that cannot defeat us (1 Cor. 15:54-56)
 - "Only where there are crucifixions are there resurrections" (Friedrich Nietzsche)