



# SAVED BY THE RESURRECTION

WEEK 5  
04.01.18

## FOCUS VERSE

### Romans 5:10

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

## LESSON TEXT

### I Corinthians 15:1-9, 17

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

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17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

The Resurrection—  
the heart of the  
Christian faith—  
changed our  
eternal destiny.



## CULTURE CONNECTION

### The Eternal Conqueror

Should you have a love for history, several names may immediately come to my mind when thinking of a conqueror: Genghis Khan and his Mongol Empire, Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire, Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire, and Julius Caesar and his Roman Empire, to name just a few. These men forged mighty empires by conquering weaker nations and tribes. However, history shows that the Babylonians were conquered by the Medes and Persians, the Medes and Persians were defeated by Alexander, and his vast empire was divided among four generals upon his death. The conqueror became the conquered. That

is the story of history.

One lesson from history is yet to be written. Genghis Khan, Alexander, Nebuchadnezzar, and Caesar all died and faded into the tomes of history. Jesus Christ also died, but His resurrection proves that He is the mighty Conqueror. From the birth of His kingdom on the Day of Pentecost, His realm has continued to expand. The day is coming when He will establish His literal kingdom that shall have no end. At that time, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. He is the eternal conqueror of death, Hell, and the grave.

### OUTLINE

#### I. THE PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

- A. Christ Rose According to Scripture
- B. Christ Rose on the Third Day
- C. Seen by Credible Witnesses
- D. Seen by the Writer Paul
- E. Historical Proof

#### II. THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

- A. Christ Is Risen from the Dead
- B. Overcame Death and the Effects of Sin
- C. Believers Risen with Christ through the Spirit
- D. Dead in Christ and Believers Will Rise in the Rapture

#### III. PARTAKERS OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION—THE BLESSED HOPE

- A. The New-Birth Experience
- B. Changed from Mortality to Immortality

### CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

The fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians is exceptional among the chapters of the Bible. Within this chapter the apostle Paul articulately

expounded the doctrine of the Resurrection, which is the heart of the Christian faith. Resurrection means “1. a raising up, rising (e.g. from a seat): Luke 2:34; 2. a rising from the dead” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). When Christians mourn the passing of born-again loved ones, they receive comfort through the expectation of the resurrection of the dead.

To better comprehend Paul’s purpose in broaching the subject of resurrection, it is helpful to understand the mind-set of the culture with which he was dealing. Corinth was a Grecian city, located approximately forty-eight miles west of Athens. Consequently, the Greek belief in the immortality of the soul but rejection of the resurrection of the body permeated the Christian community. (See Acts 17:31-32.) Wycliffe Commentary explains that Greek ideology held that the body was the source of all mankind’s weakness and sin, but death liberated the soul from the weak and sinful body. In their mind, the resurrection of the body would cause the liberated soul to descend back into the captivity of the body.

The Pulpit Commentary ascribes the following six sections to I Corinthians 15:

1. The evidence of Christ’s resurrection (verses 1-11);
2. The resurrection of Christ is the

foundation of our faith in the general resurrection (verses 12-19);

3. Results to be deduced from Christ's resurrection (verses 20-28);
4. The life of believers an argument for the Resurrection (verses 29-34);
5. Analogies helpful for understanding the subject (verses 35-49);
6. Conclusion and exhortation (verses 50-58).

Obviously, Paul in I Corinthians 15 made a grand effort to rebut the philosophy of the Greeks and to establish the validity of the Resurrection and its necessity to salvation.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. THE PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

#### A. Christ Rose According to Scripture

Old Testament prophecies concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ are few. There was speculation about life after death, but there seemed to be little or no direct connection between that conjecture and Israel's religion. Interestingly, while Israel's neighboring nations believed in a resurrection, the chief concern of the Israelite priesthood and rabbinical leaders was for a holy nation. Consequently, there was little said in Old Testament times about an individual's eternal state.

David, the great psalmist, spoke of the resurrection of Christ in his song of preservation and eternal trust:

*"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10).*

It is readily apparent that David did not refer to himself as God's Holy One; the reference was prophetic of Jesus Christ. The words of this prophecy, while not directly stating that a resurrection would occur, indicated that through some means death and decay would not affect the body of the Messiah.

The prophet Isaiah also alluded to the Resurrection. (See Isaiah 53:10.) Most theologians agree that Isaiah was speaking prophetically about Jesus, and the reference to "prolonging his days" refers to His resurrection.

Although Old Testament prophecies of the

Resurrection are sparse, Jesus Christ "anticipated His own resurrection. At first He used only vague terms, such as, 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' But later He spoke plainly, and whenever He mentioned His death, He added, 'The Son of man . . . must be raised the third day'" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia). He fulfilled the prophecies of His resurrection just as predicted.

### B. Christ Rose on the Third Day

By the beginning of the New Testament era, Pharisaic doctrine included the belief of a resurrection, although the religious sect known as the Sadducees still rejected the notion. Jesus' teachings did not introduce the doctrine of resurrection into Jewish religion, but He did state most of the prophecies concerning His own resurrection. (See Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 20:19; 27:63-64; Mark 9:31; 10:33-34; Luke 18:32-33; 24:46; John 2:19-21.)

Repeatedly, Jesus taught His disciples that He would rise on the third day after His death. Those who heard these initial prophecies attested to their validity and fulfillment later as they penned what would become Scripture. (See Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-7; John 20:1-9.)

When the apostle Peter preached the first sermon of the newly established church, he focused on the resurrection of Jesus as a key element of his message.

*"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance" (Acts 2:24-28).*

In preaching to the household of Cornelius and opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles, Peter again brought attention to the Resurrection (Acts 10:40). In his letter to the

Corinthians, the apostle Paul also joined in proclaiming the risen Christ (I Corinthians 15).

The reality of the Resurrection is vital to the eternal redemption of believers. Had Jesus not risen from the dead, death would be the final destination of the body. However, Jesus taught that the body—regardless of the spiritual status of the individual—has an eternal destination (Matthew 10:28).

In addressing the issue of the Resurrection to the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul spoke of the body becoming incorruptible and mortality putting on immortality (I Corinthians 15:53-54). If the body of a believer must become incorruptible to experience eternal salvation, then the body of the wicked must also become immortal to endure eternal damnation (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

### C. Seen by Credible Witnesses

In virtually any judicial system, a credible witness's account of an event is of far greater value than what someone might later write concerning the event. While the written accounts of Jesus' resurrection are invaluable to believers today, the most precious records are from those who were eyewitnesses to His resurrection. The first ones who could have given an eyewitness account of Jesus' resurrection were the soldiers who stood guard over the tomb. However, greed, fear, and intimidation by their superiors immediately sealed their lips. But in spite of the concerted efforts of the Jewish establishment to conceal His resurrection, many eyewitnesses have revealed its truth.

In that early Sunday morning hour, the first one to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection was Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:14-16). Middle Eastern culture did not generally give women a place of great prominence or recognition in the time of Christ. Still, He chose to make His first post-resurrection appearance to a woman.

At some juncture, perhaps later the same day, Jesus appeared to two disciples and walked with them as they made their way to the village of Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31). At the outset of Jesus' manifestation to them, neither Mary nor these disciples recognized Him because His appearance was different (Mark 16:12). However, when He called Mary by name and when He broke bread with the

two from Emmaus, they suddenly realized in whose presence they were.

Later that Sunday evening, Jesus manifested Himself to a gathering of the disciples, probably the ten since Thomas was not present (John 20:19-24). Fearing for their lives, the disciples were meeting behind closed and locked doors. Suddenly, Jesus was standing in their midst. On another day and in a different assembly, when Thomas was present, Jesus appeared again, proving to Thomas that He had indeed risen. Over the course of the next forty days, Jesus manifested Himself to various disciples at different times and places, with His final appearance being on the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem before approximately five hundred witnesses.

### D. Seen by the Writer Paul

Some time after Jesus' ascension, He appeared to Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul. Most biblical commentators decline to speculate as to the timing of this event, but those who do usually associate the occurrence with Saul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus. (See Acts 9:3-7.) Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, did not refer to Saul's vision on the road to Damascus, only to his hearing the voice of one who identified Himself as Jesus.

Some Bible scholars hold the view that this physical appearance of Jesus to Saul took place during Saul's three-year stint of seeming solitude in Arabia (Galatians 1:15-18). Regardless of the time of Jesus' manifestation to him, the fact remains that Paul identified himself as being a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:8). Given Paul's trustworthiness in all other areas of apostolic authority, it is reasonable to accept his credibility in this also.

### E. Historical Proof

Aside from the Bible, the availability of history from the New Testament era is scarce. Josephus, the renowned and revered Jewish historian of the first century, lent his voice to the validity of the resurrection of Jesus. He wrote: "He was [the] Christ. And . . . those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day . . ." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18,

Chapter 3, Paragraph 3).

History further reveals that there is a tomb in Jerusalem—the grave in which Jesus’ body lay—that is devoid of human remains. While the skeptic would dispute the idea that the empty tomb is the actual burial place of Jesus, it is illogical to think that an inaccurate identification of a site of such historical significance would pass down through the ages.

## II. THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

### A. Christ Is Risen from the Dead

The power of the resurrection from the dead is far more than just the mere raising of the carnal, mortal body from death to life. In exposing the error of the Sadducean doctrine, Jesus taught that once resurrection occurs, the individual acquires some of the characteristics of the angels of heaven (Matthew 22:29-30). The resurrected individual does not become an angel as some doctrines purport, but there is an acquisition of some angelic attributes.

These traits are discernible by a comparison of Jesus’ life on earth before His death and the occurrences after His resurrection. During the earthly ministry of Jesus He raised individuals from the dead (Matthew 9:18; Luke 7:11-15; John 11:43-44), but these people evidently returned to their mortal body rather than taking on the distinctions of angelic beings.

When Jesus arose from the dead, however, He did not retain the mortal body that He possessed before the Crucifixion. Rather, His was a new, spiritual body that possessed the ability to enter sealed rooms without using an entryway (John 20:19-24), to appear and disappear at will (Luke 24:13-31), and to adopt a different appearance at will (Mark 16:12). While these characteristics make up a portion of an angel’s attributes, they also reflect the true physical power of the Resurrection. Greater than the physical accomplishments of the Resurrection, however, are its spiritual achievements for all mankind.

### B. Overcame Death and the Effects of Sin

*“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (I Corinthians 15:55).*

*“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).*

The most astounding power of Christ’s resurrection is twofold in nature:

1. It gives power over the sting of natural death (Revelation 20:6; 21:8). While all humanity not living at the time of and included in the rapture of the church will suffer natural death, one must understand that all affected by natural death will take part in a resurrection. Some will participate in the first resurrection, of which Jesus is the first fruits, and the remainder in the second resurrection just before the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:5-6). The born-again believer who dies before the rapture of the church will experience a genuine peace that will accompany his departure from this life—a peace that comes through the knowledge that death is not the end but only a doorway into everlasting life. Knowing that great joy awaits the child of God at the resurrection should remove the distress of death.

2. It gives power over the eternal effects of sin. Mankind, due to Adam’s sin, is consequently born with a sinful nature. Being born into sin relegated humanity to eternal punishment and separation from God. However, Christ’s resurrection proved His power over those eternal ramifications. Through Jesus Christ we are delivered from the eternal damnation caused by sin!

### C. Believers Risen with Christ through the Spirit

From the genesis of the Bible through the last page there is a consistent flow of typology. Christ’s resurrection, though an actual physical event, had immense spiritual typological relevance as well. Paul, writing to the Roman Christians, clarified this typological application where the new believer rising from the water of baptism reflects a type of the Resurrection.

Just as Jesus rose from the grave to a new life containing new characteristics, so believers rise from the watery grave to a completely new lifestyle.

*“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was*

*raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).*

After His resurrection, Jesus did not live with the restrictions of a fleshly body. Following the watery burial of baptism, one obtains release from the restraints of the sinful flesh, releasing him to worship God in a newfound liberty and infusing him with the power to live a holy, separated life.

### **D. Dead in Christ and Believers Will Rise in the Rapture**

It would seem that one of the favorite subjects of the apostle Paul was the Resurrection, for through his writings to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Philippian, the Thessalonians, and to Timothy, we are able to glean insights into its mysteries. It is impossible to study the Resurrection apart from the rapture of the church. Although the term “rapture” does not appear in Scripture, the apostle Paul explained the “catching away” in conjunction with the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

In the Book of I Corinthians, Paul stated that he was explaining a “mystery” to the Corinthians. This mystery involves the transition that must occur from the present corruptible, fleshly state of the believer to the incorruptible condition necessary to enter heaven. Paul further declared that not everyone would enter into the sleep of death, but that at the return of Christ for His church many would be alive and well.

Both the living and the resurrected believers’ bodies will be changed instantaneously (I Corinthians 15:52; I John 3:2). The Greek word *atomos*, translated as “a moment” in I Corinthians 15:52, literally means “indivisible or an atom of time” (Strong’s Concordance). With the advent of computer nomenclature, one could say that the change from corruptible to incorruptible will occur in a nanosecond. Following this sudden change is another extraordinary event—being caught up along with the believers resurrected from the dead to meet the Lord in the air (I Thessalonians 4:17). This event is known as the rapture of the church.

### **III. PARTAKERS OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION—THE BLESSED HOPE**

### **A. The New-Birth Experience**

The prerequisite to participation in the resurrection of the dead in Christ or the rapture of the church is the new-birth experience.

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5).*

Some individuals tend to downplay this experience or try to explain away its relevance, and others embrace the idea but fail to understand the experience.

Actually, Jesus established the pattern for salvation during His dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3, which also inspired the use of the term “new birth.” Jesus explained to Nicodemus that a person must be born again to see the kingdom of heaven. When Nicodemus failed to understand Jesus’ analogy of a new birth, Jesus explained that a person is born of the flesh once, but he also must be born of the Spirit in order to experience salvation. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7).

What is the new birth? The new birth consists of repentance of sins, baptism by immersion in water in Jesus’ name for the remission of sins, and receiving the Holy Ghost as evidenced by speaking in other tongues. Upon experiencing the new birth, one should then walk in newness of life—a lifestyle that reflects the living presence of Jesus Christ within. With the new lifestyle comes the blessed hope of participation in the resurrection or the rapture of the church.

### **B. Changed from Mortality to Immortality**

*“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall*

*be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (I Corinthians 15:53-54).*

Obviously, when Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians he was referring to the change that occurs at the first resurrection. However, it is also applicable to the second resurrection.

Paul’s description of the change that must occur at the resurrection often is perceived primarily in the way that it will affect the human body, since the soul of mankind already is eternal. The soul is not eternal in the sense that God is eternal, that is, without beginning. The soul comes into existence when life enters the body.

Genesis 2:7 states that mankind “became a living soul” when God breathed life into Adam, indicating no previous existence of the soul but a distinct point of beginning. Both the Hebrew and Greek words translated as “soul” in the Scriptures carry the general meaning of “that which breathes.” After coming into existence, however, the soul apparently is not predisposed to death as is the body, for Jesus indicated that mankind could not kill the soul (Matthew 10:28). So it is eternal in the sense of undying and unending.

The human body, because of the fall of Adam, is subject to death and decay. Scripture implies that before sin’s seduction of Adam, the human body was not susceptible to death or to the decay that now naturally occurs following death. Hence, the present

body of mankind cannot participate in the eternal, but it must experience a dramatic change into an eternal state. Paul described this as the changing of the mortal into the immortal, and from the corruptible (perishable) to the incorruptible (unending existence). It is only through this change that the believer can coexist in eternity with God.

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

On January 27, 2006, in an Italian court, a former seminary student turned atheist brought a lawsuit against a priest for allegedly disseminating false ideology through the propagation of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. The lawsuit alleged that Jesus never really existed but was a fabrication of the Roman Catholic Church and asked the court to determine the validity of His existence. Enrico Righi, the priest named in the lawsuit, stated that he was not concerned with the outcome of the trial because of the incredible amount of evidence validating Jesus’ existence.

Certainly, the evidence that supports Jesus’ existence—Scripture, eyewitnesses, and history—also corroborates His resurrection. The fact that Jesus rose from the dead as the first fruits of the Resurrection and ascended into heaven gives us a blessed hope that we also can participate in the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the rapture of the church.



## REFLECTIONS

- Discuss what Old Testament prophecies might apply to the resurrection of Christ.
- Discuss Jesus’ prophetic statements about His resurrection.
- Discuss the various eyewitness accounts of Jesus’ resurrection.
- Reflect on the power of the Resurrection as it relates to our new-birth experience and the Rapture.