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The Evidence for Messiah's Resurrection 15: 1-11

The evidence for Messiah's resurrection DIG: Why does Paul remind them of the gospel? What were the first things Paul passed on to the Corinthians? What are the three main points of the gospel? What were the five pieces of evidence? Why the emphasis on the testimony of eyewitnesses? Why the emphasis on God's grace? Why was Paul a special eyewitness?

REFLECT: What hope does knowledge of your future resurrection to eternal life give you? How can this resurrection hope enable you to withstand evil and pain in your life? What would be the consequences if we were not raised from the dead? What evidence does Paul use to prove that Yeshua Messiah really did rise from the dead? Who can you tell about it?

Messiah died for our sins, in accordance with what the TaNaKh says; He was buried, and He was raised on the third day.

Before we get into this chapter, it would be good to define the meaning of **the resurrection**. **The resurrection** is not spiritual, but physical. The Greek word is *anastasis nekron*, which means the *standing up of a corpse*. These bodies of ours

are to be raised; **the resurrection** in Scripture always refers to the body. Thus, it cannot refer to spiritual **resurrection**. In **Paul's** day, in **Corinth** and in the Roman world, there were three philosophies concerning death and life after death. There was Stoicism, which taught that the soul merged into deity at death. There was, therefore, a destruction of the personality. Such a concept makes **the resurrection** a nonentity. Then there was Epicurean philosophy, which was materialistic. It taught that there was no existence beyond death. So, there would be nothing to resurrect. The third was Platonism, which taught the immorality of the soul, believing in a process like transmigration. You still find that teaching in Platonism today in the religions of India and the cults in America. It denies bodily **resurrection**. Because of these philosophies, when **Paul** mentioned **the resurrection** while **he** was in Athens (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click Cb – An Unknown God in Athens – 17:16-34**), the Athenians mocked **him**.[477] Immortality of the soul, yes; but resurrection of **the body**, no! The Sadducees also denied **the resurrection of the body (Matthew 22:23; Acts 23;8)** and this view is still widely held today. We need to understand very clearly that **Paul** is not talking about **a** spiritual **resurrection**. The soul does not die. The second a body dies; the person goes somewhere else. If that person is **a child of God, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:6-8).** However, if a person is not **a child of God**, then **he** goes to **a place of torment**.[478]

The doctrinal problem on which this chapter focuses was not **the Corinthians' disbelief** in **Messiah's resurrection**, but confusion about **their** own. **Paul** was not trying to convince **them** that **Yeshua** rose from the dead, but that one day they, too, would be **raised** to eternal life with **Him**. Nevertheless, to lay the foundation, in the first **eleven verses he** reviews the **evidence** for **Yeshua's resurrection**, a truth **he** acknowledges **they** already believe. **Paul** gives **five evidences**, or **testimonies**.[479] **His death** and **resirrection** was a fact that could be corroborated by people who were still living at the time **First Corinthians** was written.

The testimony of the Church: The first testimony is not stated explicitly, but is implied. The very fact that **the Corinthian believers**, and all other **believers** everywhere, had received **the gospel**, believed in **Yeshua Messiah**, and had been miraculously changed, was in itself a testimony to the power of **the Gospel**, which is the power of **the resurrection** of **Messiah**. **The apostle** told **them** that what **he** was about to say was nothing new to **them**. **Now, brothers, I must remind you of the Good News which I proclaimed to you, and which you received,**

and on which you have taken your stand and by which you were saved (15:1-2a). The first verse is masterly in every respect. It fits the situation exactly**. Paul** does not begin by naming the subject which **he** intends to cover and by stating why **he** intends to do so. **He** immediately places the question of **resurrection** in the context of **the gospel**, because belief in **the Resurrection** is an indispensable component of **it**, not a side issue. Only after reminding **the Corinthians** how important **resurrection** is, can **he** address the difficulty which prevented some of **them** from believing in **it**, namely, **their** inability to imagine how **it** could happen.[480]

Paul's qualifying statement: **Provided you keep holding fast to the message I proclaimed to you. For if you don't, your trust will have been in vain (15:2),** does not teach that true believers are in danger of losing their salvation, but it is a warning against non-saving **faith** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Al – How Shall We Escape If We Ignore So Great a Salvation**). So, a clearer rendering would be . . . "**if you hold fast** to what **I** preached to **you**, or if **you** have not crossed the line from mere knowledge to **faith**, your outward appearance of **faith will have been in vain**." **John** said: **They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us (First John 2:19).** Therefore, it must be recognized that some of **the Corinthians** lacked this **true saving faith (15:34)** and, as a result, did not continue to obey **the Word of God**.[481]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** abundantly gracious offer of **Your righteousness** to all who love and follow **You**! **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21).** Earth's pains will be gone and the wonderful peace and joy of life in heaven will be for all eternity. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** All who are wise love **You** with all their heart for **You** are such a wonderful **Father** to **Your** children on earth and **You** have planned wonderful joys for them in heaven. **Things no eye has seen and no ear has heard, that have not entered the heart of mankind – these things God has prepared for those who love Him (First Ccorinthians 2:9).***

*Praise **Your** wisdom that is able to see into each person's heart to discern if they have real saving faith or if it is just an outward appearance of following you. **Many***

will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Get away from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:22-23)! *It is a joy to love and obey* ***You****. In* ***Your*** *holy* ***Son's*** *name and power of* ***His resurrection****. Amen*

The testimony of Scripture: In **verses 3** and **4** you will see the three essentials of the **gospel:** (1) we are **sinners**, (2) **Messiah died** to save us from **our sins**, and (3) using the perfect tense (a past completed action with continuing results into the future) **Yeshua was raised from the dead** and is alive today. So simple that a young child can understand it, and yet so profound that for more than two thousand years the best theological minds the world has ever produced have yet to get to the bottom of these three truths. **For among the first things I passed on to you was what I also received, namely this:**

1. We are **sinners**. A person cannot be saved unless he understands what he is being saved from. The Bible declares: **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23 NIV). ADONAI** is **holy** and every one of us has **fallen** far **short** of **His holiness. Isaiah** said it this way: **We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way (Isaiah 53:6a NIV).** Consequently, our penalty for our **sins** is spiritual **death**, our eternal separation from **God**.

2. The Messiah died to save us from **our sins, in accordance with what the TaNaKh says. He died.** That is a historical fact. Very few would deny that. This confirms **His death**. Back to the **Isaiah** passage: **And ADONAI has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6b). Paul** put it this way: **God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf, so that in union with Him we might fully share in God's righteousness (Second Corinthians 5:21).** The holiness of **YHVH** demands that we live a morally perfect life. The justice of **Ha'Shem** demands that when we don't, we must pay a penalty for our **sins**. The love of **the LORD** provided that payment: **He sent His one-and-only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).** As **Yeshua** hung on the cross, ALL of our **sins** – past, present, and future – were placed on **Messiah**. And because of **His sin** offering, our **Lord** satisfies every claim of **God's** holiness and justice so that **He** is free to act on behalf of **sinners**.

3. He was buried. This needs to be added. Why is that important? It proves **He** didn't just disappear. It means that they literally had **His** body. **And he was raised**

on the third day (see the commentary on **Jonah As – The Sign of Jonah**)**. The resurrection** is part of **the gospel**. The tomb was empty. A **dead Savior** is no use to anyone. But **Yeshua** is not a **dead Savior**. **He** is our living **Savior**, **standing at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). In accordance with what the TaNaKh says** in all three of **its** major sections – **The Torah (Leviticus 23:9-15), the Prophets (Isaiah 53:10-12a)** and **the Writings (Psalm 16:9-11,** as quoted in **Acts 2:25-32)**; all are to be understood as referring to **Messiah's resurrection (15:3-4).** But is **the** general **resurrection** taught **in the TaNaKh**? Yes, certainly in **Isaiah 26:14, "Your dead will live, [God's] dead body will rise,"** and even more unmistakably in **Dani'el 12:2, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life,"** which corresponds to **Isaiah 26:14, "and some to shame and everlasting contempt."** This double **resurrection** is the same as that taught by **Yeshua: Those who have done good** (Greek: *agathos*, meaning *intrinsically good, as to believers it describes what originates from **God** and is empowered by **Him** in their life*) **to a resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment** (**John 5:29).**[482]

Which **resurrection** do you think you are headed for? If I asked you if you were a sinner, what would you say? **Romans 3:23** says: **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** That includes you and me, doesn't it? Most people feel that being good gets you into heaven and being bad keeps you out. That simply is not true; **we all have sinned**. What would you say sin is? I think we can agree that we are both sinners; now let's define **sin**. Some have said, "I'm not perfect," or "I have made some mistakes." But what do you think the Bible means by sin? Well, the Bible says that **everyone practicing sin breaks God's law – indeed, sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4).** Have you ever disobeyed your parents? Have you ever misused the name of **God**? Have you ever told a lie? This is what **sin** is. It's breaking **God's law**. And any time you break **a law** there is a penalty. If you run a stop sign, the penalty is a fine. If you rob a bank, the penalty is jail. What is the penalty for breaking **God's law**?

The Bible teaches us that **the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a). The wages** of work is money, but the wages of sin is death. In other words, what I earn – the penalty, the punishment of **sin – is death**. **Death** is separation. The Bible speaks of two kinds of **death** that is two kinds of separation. The first **death** is separation of the body and the soul. If I were to die right now my body would fall to the floor, but my soul, the real me, would go somewhere else. But the Bible speaks

of another **death**, one it calls **the second death**. This is separation of the soul from **God**. Now, the penalty of sin is death, spiritual death, and separation from **the LORD**. To put it simply – hell. All this is really bad news. But there is good news.

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). We were spiritually dead and unable to make the first move toward **God** because we inherited Adam's **sin** nature that rebelled and separated us from **Him**. So, **God** made the first move toward us by sending **His** one and only **Son** to die in our place for the payment for our **sins**. We stand before **the Son of God**, guilty of **sin**, and facing a death penalty. But **Yeshua**, as **judge (Jn 5:27)**, comes down from behind the seat of judgment, takes off **His** judicial robe and stands beside us. It is there that **He** says to us, "I will take your place. I will die for you." And if you were the only person in the world, **He** still would have died for you. The penalty for **sin** is death, but **Messiah** died and paid for **sin** so we do not have to go to hell.

It is not what you do for **God** that saves you, it is what **God** has already done for you.
You don't get to heaven by what you do; you get to heaven by what you **believe**.

What is it that I need to **believe** in, to **trust** in, to have **faith** in, to be saved?

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16 and First Corinthians 15:3b-4). If you **believe** this, you are saved.
Nothing else matters.

Salvation = faith + nothing (not baptism, not good works, nothing means *nothing*). **Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Now is the day of salvation (Hebrews 11:6** and **Second Corinthians 6:2c).**

Would you like to be saved right now?

Pray this simple prayer in **faith**. But before you do, I want you to remember that saying a prayer does not save you, **trusting** in **Yeshua Messiah** does. **God, I**

admit that I have sinned. I believe Yeshua Messiah died for my sins and I want to trust Him to save me right now. Lord, please come into my heart and make me a new person. I accept your gift of salvation.

If you were to die right now, where would you go?

Why should **God** let you into **His** heaven?

That's right, because **Yeshua** died to pay for your **sins**.[483]

If you prayed that prayer in **faith** see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw – What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**.

The testimony of eyewitnesses: It is significant that **Paul** says that **Yeshua appeared** to those who saw **Him** after **the Resurrection**. Until **He** revealed **His** identity to **them**, not even Mary Magdalene **(John 20:14-16)**, the two disciples on the Emmaus road **(Lk 24:15** and **31)**, or the disciples gathered together on Easter evening **(John 20:19-20)** recognized **Him**. **The gospel** accounts consistently speak of **Messiah's** appearing after **His resurrection (Mt 28:9; Mark 16:9, 12, 14; Lk 24:31-39; Jn 21:1). He** was recognized only by those to whom **He** chose to reveal **Himself**, and there is no record that **He** revealed **Himself** to anyone else.

One of the requirements for **apostleship** was having seen **the resurrected Messiah (Acts 1:22)**, and the first **apostle** to whom **He appeared** was **Kefa**, that is, **Peter (Luke 24:34)**. We are not told the exact time or occasion for that appearance. We only know that it was sometime after **His** appearance to Mary Magdalene and before **His** appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are not told why **the Lord** appeared to **Peter** first, but it possibly was because of **Peter's** great remorse over having denied **his Lord**, and because of **his** role as a leader among **the apostles** and the early Messianic Community until the Counsel of Jerusalem **Act 15**.

Messiah next **appeared to the Twelve (15:5)** as they were fearfully assembled (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mj – Jesus Appeared to His Apostles**). **The apostles** laid the foundation of the Church **(Ephesians 2:20)**, which from the beginning based its beliefs and practices on **their** teaching **(Acts 2:42)**. Those men whom **the Lord** used to establish **His** Church on earth all saw **Him** in **His resurrected body (Acts 1:22). They** were capable, honest, and reliable **witnesses** to the most important event in history (see the commentary on

The Life of Christ Mi – It Is True! The Lord Has Risen).

And afterwards he was seen by more than five hundred brothers at one time. The quality of specific **witnesses** is represented by **the apostles**, all of whom were known by name and could easily be questioned. The quantity of **witnesses** is seen in the **five hundred brothers** who saw **the** risen **Messiah at one time**. Scripture gives no indication who those people were, or where **Yeshua** appeared to **them**, but **they** were surely well known in the early Messianic Community, and, like **the Twelve**, would often have been questioned about seeing **the** risen **Savior**. Even at the time of **Paul's** writing, more than two decades later, **the majority of them were still alive, though some had died (15:6).**

Later he was seen by James, the half-brother of **Yeshua, then by all the emissaries (15:7). He** was originally a skeptic. Like **his** brothers, **he** did not at first believe that **Yeshua** was **the Messiah (John 7:5).** But now this member of **Yeshua's** own household, this one who for several years did not recognize **Him** as **the Messiah**, was **a witness**, a powerful and convincing **witness**, to **His resurrection**. Perhaps, as with **Paul**, it was the experience of actually seeing the resurrected **Messiah** that finally brought **James** to saving **faith**. In any case, the convincing testimony of a family member and former unbeliever was added to that of **the apostles** and **the five hundred**.[484]

The testimony of a special witness: One of the greatest witnesses of **The resurrection** was **Paul himself**, for as an unbeliever, **he** was thoroughly convinced that **Yeshua** was **dead**. In his letters **Paul** wrote, there are fifty-three references to **the resurrection** of **Yeshua**. The radical change in **his** life – a change that brought **him** persecution and suffering – is certainly evidence that **the Lord** had indeed been **raised from the dead**. **And last of all he was seen by me, even though I was born at the wrong time** to be one of **the** original **apostles. For I am the least of all the emissaries, unfit to be called an emissary, because I persecuted the Messianic Community of God. But by God's grace I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain; on the contrary, I have worked harder than all of them, although it was not I but the grace of God with me (15:8-10).**

At this point, **Paul's** readers would say, "Yes, we agree that **Yeshua** was **raised from the dead**." Then **Paul** would reply, "If you believe that, then you must believe in **the resurrection** of *all* **the dead**!" **Messiah** came as **a man**, one-hundred percent **human**, and experienced all that we experience, except that **He**

never sinned. If there is no **resurrection**, then **Messiah** was not raised. If **He** was not raised, then there is no **gospel** to preach. If there is no **gospel** to be preached, then what you and I have believed **is useless and** we **are still** awash **in** our **sins (15:17)**. If there is no **resurrection**, then believers who have died have no hope. The conclusion is obvious: Why be a believer if we have only suffering in this life and no future glory in the next? **The resurrection** is not just important; **it** is everything, because all that we have now or will ever have hinges on **it**.[485]

The testimony of the common message: The last testimony to **Messiah's resurrection** was that of the common message that every true **apostle**, prophet, and pastor preached. **Anyhow, whether it was I or they – Peter, the Twelve, the five hundred, James,** or anyone else – **this is what we proclaim, and this is what you believed (15:11).** Without question, the preaching and teaching in the early Messianic Community centered on **the death, burial, and resurrection of Messiah.** It was the pivotal message that was proclaimed. There was no dispute about the truth or the importance of the doctrine, which hardly would have been the case had it been a lie. Except for a few isolated heresies, the doctrine of **Messiah's resurrection** has not been questioned within the Church until our modern age of skepticism and humanism. Believers, whether ancient or modern, know only **the Gospel** of **the risen Savior.**[486]