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The Importance of Messiah's Resurrection

15: 12-19

The importance of Messiah's resurrection DIG: What false teaching was being spread among the Corinthians? Locate the "ifs" in these verses. From these seven statements, what problems emerge both for the Corinthians and Paul if there is no resurrection.

REFLECT: When did you connect the resurrection of Messiah with your own victory over death? What difference has that made to you in terms of hope? Of courage? Your sense of purpose? When have you felt life was futile? What helps you go on when those feelings come?

Without the resurrection, the Gospel is meaningless.



Having established historically the truth of **Messiah's** resurrection (**to see link click [Dr - The Evidence for Messiah's Resurrection](#)**) and the fact that this was the tradition that all the apostles endorsed and were preaching, **Paul** is now ready to move on to the next step in **his** argument. That affirmation in **Messiah's resurrection** formed the basis for **His** double-edged argument in **Chapter 15**. Because **Messiah** was raised, **resurrection from the dead** was obviously possible; and, on the other hand, unless people in general can be **resurrected**, **Messiah Himself** could not have **been raised** because **He** was fully human. The two **resurrections** stand or fall together; there could not be one without the other. In **verses 13-29** the apostle demonstrates that **the resurrection** is not only possible, but essential to the faith, by giving **seven disastrous consequences**, four **theological** and

three **personal** that would result if there were **no resurrection**.⁴⁸⁷

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that not only is it for sure that **You rose from the dead** – smashing **sin's** power, but how wonderful that those who love **You** are united with **You** in both **Your death** and in **Your resurrection**. For if we have become joined together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also will be joined together in His resurrection (Roman 6:5). It is so comforting to know the problems and trials of this world will soon be over and all who love **Messiah** and confess him as **Lord** and **Savior** (Romans 10:9-10), are absolutely guaranteed to be raised up to heaven to live with **ADONAI** forever!*

*Praise **You** that I do not have to wait till heaven to be with **You** – for **You** have promised to be **with** me and **in** me now on earth. **I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper so He may be with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him. You know Him, because He abides with you and will be in You (John 14:16-17)**. What a joy it is to have **You** always **with** me, guide and love me. Praise **You** that even when we sleep or go on a journey, **You** are always awake and always with me wherever I go. For God Himself has said, “**I will never leave you or forsake you**” (Heb 13:5c). Thank **You** for making those who love **You** to be **Your** children, and for being such a wonderful **Father**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of resurrection. Amen*

The Theological Consequences of No Resurrection: The foundation of apostolic teaching was that **Messiah rose from the dead** and that all who believed in **Him** would also be **raised**. In spite of that fact, serious doubts about **it** had infected many of the **Corinthian** believers. It is those doubts that **Paul** forcefully addresses. **His** argument is simple logic. **But if it has been proclaimed that the Messiah has been raised from the dead** (here **Paul** uses the perfect tense (a past completed action with continuing results into the future), **how is it that some of you are saying there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then the Messiah has not been raised; and if the Messiah has not been raised, then what we have proclaimed is in vain; also, your trust is in vain; furthermore, we are shown up as false witnesses for God in having testified that God raised up the Messiah, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised (15:13-15).**

1. Messiah would not be risen: The first and most obvious consequence of there being **no resurrection** would be that **not even Messiah has been raised from the dead**, using the perfect tense (a past completed action with continuing results). “As

anyone should easily deduce," **Paul** argues, "if **the dead** cannot **rise**, **Messiah** did **not rise**." He was fully human; **He** physically lived and **died** and lived again. So if there is no such thing as a physical **resurrection** for all believers, **not even Messiah has been raised**.

But if it has been proclaimed that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, how is it that some of you are saying there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead (15:12)? It seems safest to assume that **these deniers of the resurrection** were a few educated members of the congregation who revived some of the views that were advocated by the Greek philosophers (see the commentary on [Acts Cb - An Unknown God in Athens](#)). **These doubters** were not denying **the resurrection of Messiah** per se, only the future **resurrection** of all believers. But **Paul** will soon point out, you can't have it both ways. **If there is no resurrection of the dead, then the Messiah has not been raised (15:13)**. What would be the effects if it were true that **Messiah had not been raised from the dead?**

2. Preaching of the gospel would be meaningless: And if the Messiah has not been raised, then what we have proclaimed is in vain; also, your trust is in vain (15:14). The second consequence of there being **no resurrection** would be that preaching of the gospel would be **in vain** . . . completely meaningless. As **Paul** had just said, the heart of the Good News is **Messiah's death** and **resurrection** on our behalf: **For among the first things I passed on to you was what I also received, namely this: the Messiah died for our sins, in accordance with what the TaNaKh says; and he was buried; and he was raised on the third day, in accordance with what the Tanakh says (15:3-4)**. Without **the resurrection** the Good News would be Bad News, and there would be nothing worth preaching. It would be an empty, hopeless message for meaningless nonsense, just as worthless a pagan gibberish. Unless our Lord conquered **sin** and **death**, making a way for men to follow in that victory, there is no Good News to proclaim!

3. Faith in Messiah would be worthless: Just as **no resurrection** would make preaching **Messiah** meaningless, it would also make faith in **Him** worthless. Faith in such a gospel would be **in vain** (*kenos*, meaning *empty, fruitless, void of effect, or to no purpose*). A **dead Savior** could **not** give life. If **the dead do not rise**, **Messiah** did **not rise** and **WE** will **not rise**. We then could only say with the psalmist: **Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure (Psalm 73:13)**. If there were no resurrection, the hall of the faithful in Hebrews 11 would be the hall of the foolish. They would have been faithful for nothing. They would have been mocked, scourged, imprisoned,

stoned, afflicted, ill-treated, and put to death completely **in vain**. All believers of all ages would have believed for nothing, lived for nothing, and died for nothing.

4. All witnesses to and preachers of the resurrection would be liars:

Furthermore, we are shown up as false witnesses for God in having testified that God raised up the Messiah, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised (15:15). If there is no such thing as resurrection of the dead for all believers, then every person who claimed to have **witnessed the risen Messiah (15:6)** and every person who preached **the risen Messiah** is a liar, including **Paul** and the other apostles (**we**). If the apostles, the prophets, and the writers of the B'rit Chadashah lied about the heart of the gospel, why should we believe anything else they said? All their teaching stands or falls together, based on **the resurrection**.

Although **Paul** does not mention it specifically, it clearly shows that if **the resurrection** were not true, **Messiah Himself** lied, or at best was tragically mistaken. In either case, **He** hardly would have qualified as the divine **Son of God** or the world's **Savior** and **Lord**. **Yeshua** would not have been a **Victor** . . . but a victim. Or, if the writers of the B'rit Chadashah completely misrepresented what both **Messiah** and the apostles taught, then it would be a worthless document that no reasonable person should trust.⁴⁸⁸

The Personal Consequences of No Resurrection: For if the dead are not raised, then the Messiah has not been raised either; and if the Messiah has not been raised, your trust is useless, and you are still in your sins. Also, if this is the case, those who died in union with the Messiah are lost. If it is only for this life that we have put our hope in the Messiah, we are more pitiable than anyone (15:16-19).

5. All mankind would still be in their sins: Paul restates his major argument. **For if the dead are not raised, then the Messiah has not been raised either.** A dead **Messiah** would be the most disastrous consequence from which all the other consequences would result. **And if the Messiah has not been raised, your trust is useless, and you are still in your sins (15:16-17).** After repeating the consequence that a believer's faith would be **useless**, or **in vain (15:14)**, the apostle points to the additional result that believers would be no better off than unbelievers. We would still be **in our sins** just as much as the most wicked and unbelieving pagan. We would all be in the same boat as the unbelievers to whom **Yeshua** said: **You . . . shall die in your sin (John 8:21).**

If **Yeshua** did not **rise from the dead**, then **sin** won the victory over **Him** and, as a result, continues to be victorious over all mankind. If **Yeshua** remained dead, then, when we **die**, we too will remain **dead**. **The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)**, and if we remain **dead**, then **death** and eternal punishment are the only prospect of believer and unbeliever alike. But **ADONAI DID raise our Lord up from the dead, He who was delivered over to death because of our offenses was raised to life in order to make us righteous (Romans 4:25)**. Because **Messiah** does **live**, we **too** will live (**John 14:19**). The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, the One you killed by hanging him on a cross. God set him on high at his side, Prince and Savior, to give Isra'el the gift of a changed life and sins forgiven (**Acts 5:30-31 The Message**).

6. All former believers would have eternally perished: Also, if there is **no resurrection, then those who have fallen asleep** (Greek: *koimethentes*) **in union with the Messiah are lost (15:18)**. The phrase here **fallen asleep** does not refer to what is often called soul sleep, but was a common euphemism for **death (First Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 27:52; Acts 7:60; Second Peter 3:4)**. If there is **no resurrection**, then every believer is **lost** for all eternity. Obviously the same consequence would apply to every believer who has **died** since **Paul** penned this letter. **Paul himself**, all the other apostles, Augustine, John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley, D. L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, Carl Friedrich Keil, Franz Delitzsch, Alfred Eidersheim, Billy Graham, and every other believer of every other age would spend eternity in torment, without **God** and without hope. Their faith would have been **in vain**, their **sins** would have been unforgiven, and their destiny would be damnation.

7. Believers would be the most pitiful people on the earth: In light of these other consequences, the last is rather obvious. **If it is only for this life that we have put our hope in the Messiah, we are more pitiful than anyone (15:19)**. Without the resurrection, and the salvation and blessings it brings, our faith would be pointless and pitiful. Without **the resurrection** we would have no **Savior**, no grace, no forgiveness, no gospel, no meaningful faith, no life, and no hope of any of those things. Our life would be a mockery, a charade, and a tragic joke. We have no **Savior** but **Messiah**, no **Redeemer** but **Messiah**, and no **Lord** but **Messiah**. As a result, if **Messiah** is not raised, **He** is not alive and our faith is lifeless. We would have nothing to justify our beliefs, our Bible, our preaching, our witnessing, our service for **Him** or our worship of **Him**. And nothing to justify our hope in either this life or the next. However, we are not to be **pitied**, for **Paul** immediately continues: **But the fact is that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen**

asleep (15:20).⁴⁸⁹