

RESURRECTION: HOAX OR HOPE?

1 Corinthians 15:12–26

Many say that Jesus never died. And of course, if you don't have a death, you don't have a resurrection. No death, no resurrection . . . no hope.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

DURING Jesus' earthly ministry, His critics tried every scheme in the playbook to discredit His authority. Some accused Him of breaking the law of Moses. Others claimed He used Satan's power rather than God's. Few ever thought of Jesus as being anything more than just a man—definitely not God incarnate.

Although the gospel accounts in Scripture expose the errors of Jesus' detractors, opponents of the kingdom of heaven still attack the King by dismissing the message of His gospel. One main accusation leveled by skeptics today argues that *Jesus never actually died on the cross*.

While their argument may raise eyebrows, these skeptics have thought this one through carefully. If Jesus never died, then He never could have come back to life. And without His resurrection, those who put their faith in Jesus have no hope of conquering sin and death with Him. If there is no resurrection, then there is no good news.

But . . . what if Jesus *did* die and *did* come back to life? And there is a resurrection? And the message is true?

This *Searching the Scriptures* study considers what it would mean for followers of Jesus if He had never really come back to life. Thankfully, Scripture directs us from questioning *what IF?* to knowing *what IS!* Followers of Jesus have the firm foundation of Jesus' resurrection upon which God calls everyone to place their hope and build their lives by putting their faith in the Son.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Those who trust in Jesus will dwell with Him eternally after death. Yet Christ-followers belong to the family of God *now*, and He desires to engage with His children through prayer. Talk to your heavenly Father before you search His Word today.

Father, although I often feel hopeless in this world, thank You for giving me hope through the resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ. Show me the power of this truth through my study of Scripture today. I ask in the hopeful name of Jesus. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

While many today deny the plausibility of Jesus' resurrection, these doubts are not new. In fact, mere decades after Jesus' ministry, some of *His own followers* in Corinth started to question whether He actually came back to life and indeed whether anyone could experience resurrection at all.

The apostle Paul knew the danger of rejecting this core claim of Christianity, and he addressed his fellow believers regarding this heresy. With grace and truth, he showed them the consequence of turning away from the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.



Observation: What If?

In his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll acts as a tour guide who leads his readers on a journey through the Scriptures to the destination of application. The first step of the journey is always observation. If observation is poor, then interpretation and application will be poor too.¹

Carefully read [1 Corinthians 15:12–26](#). In [15:12](#), Paul launched his discussion by explaining that some of the Corinthians were saying some problematic things. What were they saying?



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In 1 Corinthians 15:13–19, Paul took on those skeptical of the resurrection by taking their very question to its logical end: “What if there is no resurrection from the dead?” Complete each statement below using the following phrase: *If there is no resurrection, then . . .*

15:13: _____

15:14: _____

15:15: _____

15:16: _____

15:17: _____

15:18: _____

15:19: _____

Note below anything Paul repeated in those verses. Remember, repetition functions like a blaring siren, alerting readers to a passage’s most important details.

Often, the words most easily overlooked work like a key that unlocks the meaning of a passage. What keyword did Paul use at the beginning of 15:20? What does this word show about the logical connection between the two main sections of the passage?



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What truth did Paul unequivocally proclaim in 1 Corinthians 15:20?

I'm so grateful the chapter doesn't end at verse 19. Look at the verbal about-face that Paul makes in verse 20. "But in fact." I love the way he writes this. He moves from the hypothetical to the actual. Get rid of all thoughts of a hoax. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to 15:21–22, who caused all of humankind to face the consequence of death? Who provides all humankind with the hope of resurrection?

Death: _____

Resurrection: _____

If Christ did not come back to life, then those who put their trust in Him have absolutely no hope. It's as simple as that. But . . . He *did* come back to life, and now His followers get to experience all the hope that resurrection offers.



Interpretation: What Is

The interpretation phase of Pastor Chuck's Bible study method moves on from what a passage *says* to what it *means*—to what the author intended his readers to know, believe, feel, and do. This passage is brimming with significance about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Paul concluded his argument by saying that Christians are “more to be pitied than anyone in the world” if Jesus was not raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:19). Why did Paul say this? What would be pitiful about a group of people worshiping a Jesus who died but never came back to life?

After following the line of thinking of the skeptical resurrection-deniers, Paul reminded the Corinthians that “Christ *has* been raised from the dead” (15:20, emphasis added). Based on this passage, how does the fact that the resurrection wasn’t a *hoax* provide Christ’s followers with *hope*? See [15:17](#), [22](#), [26](#) for some particularly hopeful words.

Based on your interpretation of this passage, write one to two timeless theological truths about the importance of resurrection? If you feel stuck, see [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org for some helpful insights into these verses.

We’re connected to Adam at the hip. We don’t choose to belong to Adam. But there we are. We experience the second marvelous part of this resurrection message too. Not only is Christ raised, but we, too, are raised with Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection

Paul didn't hold his cards close to his chest. He had no reservation proclaiming his faith in the life-giving resurrection of Jesus. He did have good reason for his belief, though, and he provided this evidence at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15.

According to [15:2–4](#), what is the gospel? In your own words, summarize the “most important” components of the message Paul passed on to the Corinthians.

In [15:5–8](#), Paul mentioned Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. List below those to whom Jesus appeared.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Did you notice how Paul mentioned that most witnesses of the resurrection were still alive? It's almost as if Paul was saying, “Do you need proof for the resurrection? You know the people who actually witnessed it. Go and ask them yourself!”

While followers of Jesus today do not have physical access to the witnesses of the resurrection, Scripture has preserved their testimonies for centuries, and the truths behind these words prove to be powerful and relevant.



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THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



Application: Not a Hoax . . . but Hope

Pastor Chuck Swindoll revealed through his exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:12–26 that Jesus' resurrection is no hoax. His resurrection provides His followers with hope—not just hope for future resurrection but hope available *right now*.

What fears burden you today? Fear of loss or abandonment? Fear of pain or death? How might the hope made available through Jesus' resurrection lift the weight of these fears off your heart?

How might having the hope of Jesus' resurrection affect your relationship with those who also follow Him? What about your relationship with those who do not yet know Him?

Try as they may, even the most critical skeptics cannot prove that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross and come back to life. And just as His physical death was a reality, so also is the spiritual death of all humanity. By God's grace, however, Jesus came back to life, and He stands by, ready to resuscitate the soul of any who would trust in Him.





A FINAL PRAYER

If you do not yet know Jesus and want to place your trust in Him, use this prayer to guide you into a relationship with Him.

Father, I confess that I am a sinner. I have willingly broken my relationship with You and thus condemned myself to death. Thank You for sending Your Son Jesus Christ to die in my place and to accept my penalty. I know I cannot save myself, and I trust in Jesus to save me. I accept Your forgiveness of my sin and the gift of new life. I pray these things in Jesus' gracious and merciful name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

