

Believe in the Resurrection

1 Cor 15:1-11, 20-22
SS Lesson for 04/05/2015

Devotional Scripture: John 20:11-27

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines why people should **Believe in the Resurrection**. The **study's aim** is to accept and understand the evidence for and guarantee of Jesus' resurrection and that our resurrection is totally dependent on that of Jesus'. The **study's application** is to believe in the resurrected Jesus Christ for eternal life. (*Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

Key Verse: 1 Cor 15:22

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The gospel Paul had **preached** in Corinth (2:1-2) had not changed; but he feared that just as there had been declension in the church concerning the message of Christ crucified and its implication for believers, the same was happening with regard to the message of Christ resurrected. As the former message was an essential element in the Corinthians' experience of ongoing salvation (the pres. tense of the verb **saved** focuses on sanctification), so was the latter. To reject bodily resurrection eviscerated "the gospel" and made faith **vain** ("without cause" or "without success"; cf. vv. 14, 17) because it had an unworthy object (cf. 15:13, 17). Believing the gospel includes holding **firmly** to belief in Christ's resurrection. Unless one holds firmly, his belief is "in vain"; cf. Matt. 13:18-22). Paul included himself in the company of all believers when he spoke of receiving the truth of Christ's death and His resurrection on behalf of sinful people. These verses, the heart of the gospel, were an early Christian confession which Paul described **as of first importance**. It was really a twofold confession: **Christ died for our sins** and **He was raised**. The reality of this was verified by the Scriptures (e.g., Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:8-10) and by historical evidence verified by time in the grave and out of it, in the presence of the living. The fact **that He was buried** verified His death, and the fact **that He appeared** to others verified His resurrection. **Peter**, the first male witness, was soon joined by the remaining disciples who composed the Lord's immediate circle. Later a much larger company of believers witnessed His resurrection. The **500... brothers** may have formed the audience who received the commission recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 (cf. Acts 1:3-8). Since **most of** those were **still living** when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, they could be consulted. Some have debunked this Resurrection appearance as simply the pious vision of believers seeing with the eyes of faith. But Paul could have cited the testimony of two for whom that was not true, **James**, the half brother of Jesus, and himself. Like Paul, James probably came to faith (cf. John 7:5 with Acts 1:14) because of an appearance of the resurrected Christ (Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-11). Paul considered himself **abnormally born** because he lacked the "gestation" period of having been with Christ during His earthly ministry (cf. Acts 1:21-22). It seems that **the apostles** were a body wider than the previously mentioned Twelve (cf. comments on Eph. 4:11), but were all distinguished by having seen the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 9:1) which made Paul the last of their company. Because he was the last, like a runt, untimely born, Paul could call himself **the least of the apostles**. He felt less deserving of the office because he had been an opponent of the **church** (cf. Acts 22:4; 1 Tim. 1:15-16) which he now served (2 Cor. 4:5). He realized, however, that his past was simply a backdrop on which to display **the grace of God** (cf. 1:3), the grace to which Paul had been so responsive. Indeed Paul was without peer in his devotion (cf. 9:19-27). The history of the church confirms that his devotion **was not without effect** ("empty"; cf. 15:14). He had **worked harder** than any of the other apostles, as he traveled more, suffered more opposition, wrote more New Testament epistles, and founded more churches. Yet Paul knew and ministered with the recognition that it was not his power but God's (2:4-5) which produced results (3:6). In the final analysis it was not the messenger but the message which was important (cf. 1:18-4:5), and in that regard the apostolic message was that the crucified Christ became the resurrected Christ, which message Paul did **preach** and the Corinthians **believed**.

Paul had explored the logical negations which followed from a denial of the bodily resurrection of Christ (vv. 12-19). He then considered the theological tenet that the destiny of Christians was bound up in the destiny of Christ, and he set forth the positive consequences of this union. Speculation had given way to affirmation: **Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.** And He is the **firstfruits**, an Old Testament word (e.g., Ex. 23:16, 19) here used in the sense of a preliminary installment of what will be both an example and a guarantee of more to come (cf. Rom. 8:23). **Death came** to all those related to Adam by natural birth because of the disobedience of one **man**. As the father of mankind Adam in his sin brought death to everybody (cf. Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:12). But because of the obedience (Phil. 2:8) of another **Man** (1 Tim. 2:5) **resurrection** will come to **all** those related to Him by spiritual birth. Paul would later expand this grand truth in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 5:12-19). Those who are a part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27) will one day follow the lead of their Head (Col. 1:18), but will not do so immediately. There will be a sequence in the unfolding of the final events. Paul was not concerned to detail all future resurrections since he was addressing the church and was primarily interested here in fixing their place in the scheme of things. As he had earlier affirmed (v. 20), Christ was their sample and surety.

As He promised (John 14:2-3) Christ will return for those who compose the church and the dead in Christ will be raised (1 Thes. 4:16). No time frame was indicated in this sequence but a period of almost 2,000 years has now elapsed. Following the resurrection of the church, another period intervenes until **the end** when Christ will deliver His **kingdom to God the Father** (cf. Matt. 13:41-43). Some interpreters dispute that an interval of any sort was hinted at by Paul and find instead the coming of Christ and the consummation of all things as virtually simultaneous events. As in the preceding verse, no time frame was specified and the chronological sequences set forth may indeed be almost momentary (1 Cor. 15:5) but then again they may be prolonged (cf. v. 23). If about 2,000 years can elapse between the first and second phases in this selected presentation of events, a lapse of half that time, that is, a millennium, between the second and third phases should cause no consternation. **Death** as a personification of Christ's ultimate opponent (cf. v. 55; Heb. 2:14) will be nullified. It is not human bodies which will **be destroyed**, as some in Corinth were saying, but the destroyer of bodies, death itself. The reprise of these verses is found in verse 57. It is by the power of **God** that the incarnate **Christ** victoriously mediates His authority (cf. Phil. 3:21). This work of **the Son** will find ultimate completion in the glory of the Father (cf. John 17:4-5). That too is the ultimate goal of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). When God is **all in all** (cf. Rom. 11:36), the new creation will be consummated and the resurrected Christ and His church will share in that experience (cf. Rev. 22:1).

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Paul records in today's lesson that many in his day had seen the risen Christ. These appearances were to individuals, small groups, and at least one group of over 500. What was the nature of Jesus' appearance? Did he look like the human he was of some 33 years? the Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2, 3)? as he appeared on the first resurrection Sunday (John 20:19-23)? as he appeared to John on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:13-16)? Paul's account in today's lesson is not long on details, but his purpose is clear: Christ appeared to show his followers that he was risen from the dead.

Paul had a long and lively relationship with the church in the city of Corinth. He began his work there in a synagogue, but moved to the home of a nearby Gentile when many Jews rejected his message (Acts 18:1-7). Some Jews believed Paul's claim that Jesus was their promised Messiah, and the church in Corinth was thereby composed of both Jews and Gentiles (18:8). All this happened during Paul's second missionary journey, when he spent 18 months in Corinth during the early AD 50s. Corinth was a nexus of commerce between the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire. This was because of its *diolkos*, an ingenious system of cranes, stone tracks, and carriage carts that allowed small boats to be lifted from the Aegean Sea to the east, hauled across the Corinthian isthmus (about 5 miles), and deposited in the calm waters of the Gulf of

Corinth in the west (or the reverse from west to east). This process allowed shipping to avoid the dangerous voyage around the rocky coastline of the Peloponnese. The tolls charged were the economic engine of Corinth. The many nationalities represented in this Greek city made it a melting pot of ideas. The issue of life after death was widely debated in the ancient world, and the various theories of immortality (or the lack of such) would have been represented in Corinth. The theories boiled down to three options, although there were many variations. First, some believed there was no life of any kind after death. A second viewpoint held that the life force or soul of a person was immortal, surviving death of the body. Some holding this view believed the soul of a dead person would be implanted into a new body, whether human or animal (what we call reincarnation today), thus creating a cycle of lives. The third viewpoint was that the human body would be reconstituted at some point after death to be rejoined with the soul to enter a new type of existence. This is the doctrine of resurrection, a view held by most Jews of Paul's day (Acts 23:8). In the end, these three views are mutually exclusive and incompatible—they cannot all be true. Today's study considers one of the most important sections of Scripture that points in the right direction. Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians in about AD 56, while he was in Ephesus.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Gospel and Jesus' Resurrection (1 Cor 15:1-4)

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,
2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.
3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: 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,

What is the Gospel (1)

The gospel is the good news that Jesus died for us (1 Peter 3:18)

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

The gospel is the good news that Jesus was buried for a short while (Luke 23:52-54)

52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

The gospel is the good news that Jesus has risen by resurrection (Matt 28:5-6)

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

The gospel is revealed to man through the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12)

12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

The gospel is all about righteousness and faith (Rom 1:17)

17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

The gospel was written to teach and provide hope (Rom 15:4)

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

The Gospel leads to salvation (2)

Salvation through accepting the good news (Rom 10:16-17)

16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Salvation through the power of the message of the cross (1 Cor 1:18)

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Salvation through the truth of the gospel (Col 1:5-6)

5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

Salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:5-7)

5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

Salvation through the light of the gospel (2 Cor 4:3-5)

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

Elements of the Gospel (3-4)

Birth of Jesus

Birth where God came in the flesh (Isa 40:9)

9 You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Birth of the Son of God (John 3:16)

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Birth of a Savior of the world (1 John 4:14)

14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

Birth of Jesus who has the government on His shoulders (Isa 9:6)

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Birth of Jesus through a virgin was a sign of His divinity (Isa 7:14)

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Sacrificial death of Jesus

Jesus' death had to be fulfilled (John 18:32)

32 This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

Jesus had to die for everyone (Heb 2:9)

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Jesus' death was prophesized (Acts 26:22-23)

22 But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— 23 that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

Jesus' death provided reconciliation (Rom 5:10)

10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Resurrection of Jesus

Resurrection witnessed by many (Acts 2:32)

32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

Resurrection that saints will be united with (Rom 6:5)

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

Resurrection by the power of God (Acts 2:23-24)

23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Resurrection that saves (1 Peter 3:18-22)

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

The Evidence of Jesus' Resurrection (1 Cor 15:5-11)

5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

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

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Evidence through appearances that makes it a reality (5-8)

Reality that leads to the goal of our faith (Phil 3:10-11)

10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Reality that is an essential doctrine (Heb 6:1-3)

6 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.

Reality because it is a trustworthy truth (2 Tim 2:11)

11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him;

Reality because Jesus promised the taking away of the saints (Luke 17:34-35)

34 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35 Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

Reality that brings salvation (Heb 9:28)

28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Evidence through grace (9-10)

Grace that is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Grace through God's will and pleasure (Eph 1:5-6)

5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Grace through mercy (1 Tim 1:13-14)

13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. 14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Grace through justification (Titus 3:3-7)

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Grace that results in blessing after blessing (John 1:16)

16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

Evidence through belief (11)

Belief that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God (Matt 16:15-16)

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Belief that God exists and having faith in Him (Heb 11:6)

6 And 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.

Belief that Jesus is God in the flesh (Col 2:9)

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

Belief in Jesus being the resurrection (John 11:25-26)

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Future Implications of Jesus' Resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-22)

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Implications of the Christian resurrection (20)

Implication of the resurrection is that it brings light to God's people (Acts 26:23)

23 that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

Implication of the resurrection is life to our mortal bodies (Rom 8:11)

11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Implication of the resurrection is Jesus supremacy in everything (Col 1:18)

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Implication of the resurrection is a new hope for us (1 Peter 1:3)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Implications of the power of Jesus' resurrection (21)

Resurrection power for those who believe (Eph 1:19-20)

19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

Resurrection power that leads to a new life (Rom 6:4)

4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Resurrection power that will be manifested by believers being raised (1 Cor 6:14)

14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

Resurrection power that presents the believer into God's presence (2 Cor 4:14)

14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

Resurrection power that transforms our bodies into a glorious body (Phil 3:21)

21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Implications of eternal life (22)

Eternal life given through grace (Rom 5:21)

21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eternal life given as a gift of God (Rom 6:23)

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eternal life given to display unlimited patience (1 Tim 1:16)

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Eternal life given through truth and understanding (1 John 5:20)

20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Eternal life given through mercy (Jude 1:21)

21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Paul's devotion to the Word of God and to the good news of the gospel causes him to be as alert and vigilant as an anti-virus program. There is one "file" (so to speak) which is always searched out by the virus of false teaching, and that is the "gospel" file. Every action, every teaching, is scrutinized by Paul to make sure it does not seek to modify or set aside the "gospel file." Thus, when certain teachers insist that Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to keep the Law of Moses, they find immediate opposition from Paul, who would not allow men to corrupt the "gospel file" (see Acts 15:1-1). When some insist that Titus be circumcised, Paul will not allow it, for the sake of the gospel (Galatians 2:1-5; see 5:3). And when Peter stops sitting at the Gentile table and begins to sit with the Jews, Paul publicly rebukes him (and those who followed him) for his (their) hypocrisy, because his actions imply that Jewish Christians are better than Gentile Christians—and this Paul recognized as a corruption of the gospel (Galatians 2:11-21). It should come as no surprise then that before Paul takes on the error of the denial of the resurrection of the dead, Paul first lays a foundation for his argument by reiterating the gospel. Whatever practice or teaching Paul might encounter, he always judges it by the gospel he and the apostles preach. That gospel must never be corrupted or altered in any way. Several characteristics of the gospel are emphasized in verses 1-11, which we can summarize.

- (1) The gospel is not a message devised by the minds of men, but a revelation from God, received by the apostles and delivered to men by them (see 15:1, 3, 11).
- (2) The gospel is the only message by which men are saved and by which they stand (15:1-2).
- (3) The gospel is "good news" concerning the grace of God, which informs men concerning the only way they, as undeserving sinners, may experience the forgiveness of their sins (15:3, 9-10).
- (4) The gospel is the message which is based solely upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, the One who died for our sins on the cross of Calvary, who was buried, and who was literally and bodily raised from the dead on the third day (15:3-4).
- (5) The sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ are events which were prophesied in the Old Testament, foretold in the Gospels by our Lord, and then fulfilled by Him as God's promised Messiah.
- (6) The gospel is the message which is of the highest magnitude of importance (15:3).
- (7) The gospel saves and keeps only those who receive it and hold fast to it by faith (15:1-2).
- (8) The gospel is false and our faith is vain if any element of it is proven to be false (15:2; 12ff.).
- (9) The gospel is established on the literal, bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, as witnessed by more than 500 people.

When Jesus spoke of His sacrificial death on the cross of Calvary, He always spoke of His resurrection as well. The enemies of our Lord knew this, and from the day of His resurrection attempted to pass it off as a deception perpetrated by His followers (Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15). Paul wants his readers to remember that the resurrection is based upon the most irrefutable evidence possible—the eyewitness testimony of over 500 people on various occasions and over a period of time. We all observed the acquittal of O. J. Simpson when the jury finally rendered its verdict. Many people have very strong opinions about the trial, about the verdict, and about the guilt or innocence of Mr. Simpson. In spite of strong differences of opinion concerning this trial, all of us should be able to agree on one thing: Mr. Simpson's guilt or innocence had to be determined on the basis of circumstantial evidence. One credible eyewitness, who saw the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman, would have radically changed the entire trial. Paul does not appeal to circumstantial evidence to prove the resurrection of Christ from the dead but rather to the testimony of more than 500 eyewitnesses, most of whom are still alive at the time he writes this Epistle to the Corinthians. Few facts in history have been so well attested. The Corinthians should be reminded of the firm basis which the resurrection of our Lord has in history. Luke, the great historian, sums it up in these words: "To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The resurrection is a matter of great import to the apostle Paul. Few men can claim to have been more impacted by the resurrection of our Lord than Paul. First, the resurrection of our Lord was the means by which Paul was converted from an enemy of Christ to a true believer. Three times in the Book of Acts (chapters 9, 22, and 26) Paul's conversion experience on the road to

Damascus is reported. This appearance of the risen and glorified Christ blinded Paul, stopping him in his tracks, and led to his conversion. No wonder Paul saw the resurrection of our Lord as such a significant event. It turned Paul's life upside-down. The resurrection was important to Paul in yet another way—the resurrection appearance of our Lord to Paul on the road to Damascus was the means by which Paul was qualified to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. You will recall that Judas, the disciple who betrayed our Lord, killed himself, leaving a vacancy among the apostles (see Matthew 19:28; Acts 1:15-26). The disciples chose not to wait for “what the Father had promised” (Acts 1:4) and went ahead to select two men who seemed qualified as candidates to take the place of Judas (Acts 1:12-26). It is my opinion that it was not Matthias whom God had appointed to this position, but Paul. I believe Paul's words in our text (15:7-11) indicate that he was appointed as the replacement for Judas. Who would have ever imagined such a thing? The apostles were those whose task it was to be witnesses of our Lord's resurrection (Acts 1:22; 2:32). How could Paul (or anyone else who had not been with the eleven disciples) possibly qualify? What seemed humanly impossible was possible with God. He arranged a private resurrection appearance for Paul. It was as a result of our Lord's post-resurrection appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus that Paul was qualified to be an apostle. Just how important was the resurrection of our Lord to Paul? It was not only the basis for his salvation and apostleship, it was a constant theme in his preaching (Acts 17:30-31; 24:15, 25). It was the reason for Paul's imprisonment and trial before Caesar (Acts 23:6; 24:21; 26:6-8; 28:20). No wonder Paul is so emphatic about the resurrection of our Lord and about the error of those who say there is no resurrection of the dead. The gospel is the starting point and standard for all Christian teaching and practice. Paul takes us back to our origins to reinforce the vital role which the resurrection of our Lord plays in our salvation and Christian life.

(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/30-refresher-course-resurrection-dead-1-cor-15>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Having died, Jesus' body was placed in a nearby tomb, a cave carved out of rock (John 19:38-42). This cave-tomb featured a rock carved so as to be rolled in front of the entrance to close it (Matthew 27:60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53; John 19:41). The chief priests and Pharisees sealed the tomb and stationed soldiers to guard it (Matthew 27:66). Jesus was dead; and as far as anyone knew, that was the end of the story. But something beyond dramatic happened on Sunday morning. There was an earthquake, the stone was rolled away from the entrance to the tomb (Matthew 28:2), and Jesus walked out of the tomb, alive! God had raised him from the dead. In so doing, God showed us that he had accepted Jesus' death as the sacrifice for our sins. We can be forgiven and not have to pay God's penalty for our sins because Jesus has already done so. We can know that death is not the end of the story. Beyond death is life eternal.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Those who know the Lord are thoroughly convinced of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-2)
2. Keep it simple: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again (vss. 3-4)
3. Do not be discouraged by those who doubt the resurrection. There were many witnesses to the event (vss. 5-8)
4. We are unworthy, but God is gracious to do great works through us (vs. 9)
5. God's grace gives our lives value and purpose (vss. 10-11)
6. The resurrection of Christ gives us hope for this life and the next (vss. 20-22)