

# "The Final Lie: The Resurrection Never Happened"

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

April 24, 2011

Easter Sunday

During Lent, we had special worship services. Our theme was "Lenten Lies". We considered lies from Satan. He lies to us in order to fool us and lead us away from God. These lies seem pretty good and right, but are really false and injurious to us. But now is Easter - a time of happiness and rejoicing for many people. Some people are happy because of Easter candy, new clothes, and family dinners. We are happy for a different reason: that 2,000 years ago, a man who called Himself the Son of God was crucified and dead and three days later became alive again. However, Satan has one final lie for us. He says, "Jesus' resurrection never happened."

How could it be? When the women went to Jesus' tomb, it was empty. And that's true. All people agree about that - Christians and non Christians. If it was not empty, then Jesus' enemies could have produced Jesus' body as proof that He was still dead. All stories and preaching would stop. But they didn't do that. They couldn't do that. They had no body to show.

How do people explain the empty tomb? Satan has influenced people to come up with stories to explain why the tomb was empty. Some people think that Jesus never really died on the cross. He became very weak and fainted. His friends took His body and put it in a tomb. The cool air revived Him. He walked out of the tomb and His disciples mistakenly thought He had risen from the dead.

Other people think that Jesus died and was buried, but the disciples stole His body and hid it. Then, they proclaimed that Jesus was alive.

Some people think that the women went to the wrong grave on Easter morning. They did not find the body. They wanted so much for Jesus to be alive. So, they began to imagine that they saw Jesus alive. The other disciples wanted to believe that so they, too, imagined that Jesus was alive.

Many people believe these stories. Satan has fooled a lot of people. Even some Christians believe Satan's lie and say, "It doesn't matter if Jesus physically rose from the dead and became

alive. He spiritually became alive again and that is most important." Is that true? Maybe you have doubts, too. If Jesus did not really become alive again, is that important?

Jesus not rising is not a new idea. Jesus' apostle, PAUL, wrote our text to a church in the Greek city of CORINTH a few years after Jesus died. There were some people in that church who were saying, "It is impossible for dead people to come back to life." Paul writes, "If people cannot rise from the dead, then Christ himself has not risen."

Is that important? Paul says, "Yes, it is very important." If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is worthless. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then He is a liar because He prophesied that He would die and then rise again -- several times. Or, maybe He is just crazy, thinking that He could rise from the dead. But one thing is sure: He is not the Son of God. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, we are believing a liar or a lunatic. We are wasting our time.

And Paul says that, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then he - Paul - is a liar because he has proclaimed Jesus' resurrection. The same is true today. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then I -- your pastor -- am also a liar because every week I tell you that Jesus is alive. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then you cannot trust me and you are wasting your time listening to my sermons.

But, the most important thing is: Paul says that, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then we still have our sins. We are enemies of God. We are born in opposition to Him. We live in opposition to Him: doing wrong things and not doing good and right things. God requires us to live perfect and holy and we have failed. We earn His anger and punishment. Jesus appeared and promised to sacrifice Himself for our sins. Jesus would accept God's anger and punishment so that we could be forgiven and go free. Jesus promised to rise again to prove that He had accomplished. But if He didn't rise, we have no forgiveness, no salvation. We are still at odds with God. Is there any way to get forgiveness and become right with God? We cannot know. Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." But if He could not become alive again, He certainly is not the truth, not the way to God, and incapable of giving life. We have no comfort or assurance.

And, finally, Paul says that, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then all people who believed in Christ and died aren't not living in heaven, but gone. If Jesus did not rise, then all of your family and friends who trusted Him and died are gone - period - and you will never see them again. That means when you die, you will dissolve away, too. For if Jesus, the Son of God, could not rise from the dead, can you? Of course not.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead and become alive, that really changes our attitude and life. If Jesus did not rise, we should close up this church and quit following a dead Jesus. We are wasting our time. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, our life has no purpose or meaning. We are born, we live, we die, and we fade away. If Jesus couldn't defeat death, then we won't either. Maybe we should just give up. An old saying says, "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." Maybe we should use our time in wild partying and drunkenness because we are just going to die anyway. If we are just born, live our miserable existence, and then die, then maybe we should just kill ourselves now because there is no hope for the future.

Satan's lie -- Jesus did not rise from the dead -- is very destructive and depressing. But it IS a lie. In our last verse, Paul writes, "But Christ has indeed risen from the dead." Angels announced that joyous news to the women. Jesus appeared to the women. The disciples did not want to believe Jesus was alive and imagined seeing Him. Jesus appeared to His disciples. His disciples saw Jesus alive. They touched Him, ate with Him, and lived with Him. Five hundred believers saw Jesus. And Paul, who had been an enemy of Jesus, saw Him. All of those other invented stories to explain the empty tomb are just that -- invented stories. The truth is Jesus Christ bodily rose from the dead and became alive again. This is most important and changes everything in your lives.

It means that all of Jesus' promises are true! He is the Son of God as He said. He has all power as He claimed. He can conquer death and the grave and He has conquered death and become alive. He can conquer any problem in your life.

Jesus' resurrection means that your sins are all and completely forgiven. He died on the cross to forgive them. He rose from the dead to prove it. And He has succeeded. Jesus' resurrection shows that God the Father accepted Jesus' work on the cross. He has forgiven you! He has accepted you! You have peace with God.

Jesus' resurrection also means that we have hope for the future. We are not born, live, die, and that's it. God's Word for today says, "Jesus is the first person to rise from the dead. many more will rise from the dead." Who are those "many more"? People who are "in Christ" will also defeat death and live again. You who have been baptized and had your sins washed away; you who believe that Jesus Christ died for you; your life is not over when you die. Death is not the end, but a new beginning. Death is the gate to eternal life with Christ in heaven.

Jesus' rising from the dead and becoming alive is a good reason for celebrating today. Jesus' resurrection changes our whole life and attitude. We can live joyful lives, despite our pain, problems, and suffering. We have peace with our God and that is the most important thing. Satan's lies, temptations, and attempts to hurt us cannot succeed. Jesus defeated Satan on the cross. He rose from the dead to show that. We have no need to fear. Satan has no power over us. We belong to God now and rest in His protection.

Jesus' rising from the dead also means we look to the future without fear. We live at peace with God now. In the future when we die, that doesn't change. Jesus defeated death and lives. We, also, will defeat death and live at peace with God in heaven. We can eagerly look to the future with excitement and joy. God has better things planned for us. And, because Jesus rose from the dead, we will get them.

One time, a newspaper writer went to a local church and asked six children, "What does Easter mean to you?" This was at a church, so you expect a religious answer. Four of the six children answered, "Easter means Jesus died on the cross for our sins." I was surprised. Good Friday means Jesus died for our sins. Easter means Jesus rose from the dead and became

physically alive. That's not an invented story, a dream, or a lie. It is the truth. Don't overlook it. Don't forget it. Jesus' resurrection means you have forgiveness and peace with God. Jesus' resurrection means you, too, will rise and live forever. And all of Satan's wiles (fool) and lies can never change that. Amen.