

COMPELLED BY THE CROSS

STUDY SIX

The Day Hope Eclipsed Death

1 Corinthians 15:12–26

Christ was raised, and then comes the harvest of those who believed in Him. Everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. That's a promise you can rely on.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem set in motion the final days of Jesus' earthly life known as Holy Week. His ministry had been building up to this week when He would die "for our sins, just as the Scriptures said" (1 Corinthians 15:3). The gospel writers meticulously recorded every key moment of Jesus' heart-wrenching passion: His agony in Gethsemane, the treacherous betrayal, His trials and beatings, and His crucifixion.

On the day Christ died, "darkness fell" and covered the landscape like sackcloth (Matthew 27:45). It was as if creation were mourning the death of its Maker. The light of the sky dimmed as the Light of the world was snuffed out.

From the disciples' perspective, all seemed lost. Jesus' heart stopped pumping, a final breath passed His lips, and His body slumped. Jesus died . . . and along with Him died the hope of the world.

Imagine if the gospel account ended with Christ's death. No rolled-away stone. No empty tomb. No stunned soldiers. No surprised disciples. *No resurrection.* A shroud of hopelessness would still blanket the earth.



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What might have been the consequences if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores this question, and our guide through this bleak subject is the apostle Paul, who also considered the hopelessness of the world if "there is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:13).



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The purpose of this grave journey is to highlight the hope essential to our faith—that our Savior *lives*. Light pierced the horizon creating morning's brightest dawn after history's darkest night. Pray now that God the Father might spark in you a brighter ray of hope through this study.

Father, I admit that the hubbub of Easter can overshadow the true meaning of Christ's resurrection. Ignite in me the same excitement the disciples felt when they saw Jesus alive. Strengthen my faith with deeper convictions and lift me to a higher plane of hope as I look forward to resurrected life with my risen Savior. In His name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Mere decades after Jesus' ministry, some of *His own followers* in Corinth started to question whether He really 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. He reminded them of the essential elements of the gospel:

Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

And then, Paul showed his fellow believers the serious consequences of knocking out one of the legs of the gospel by denying the resurrection.



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Observation: What If There Is No Resurrection?

Observation is the first step in *Searching the Scriptures* because it lays a solid foundation for interpretation and application. Observe Paul’s rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 15:12: “Since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection?” What implication was Paul making about these skeptics?

In 15:13–19, Paul argued against these naysayers by taking their premise to its logical disastrous ends. Complete each statement below using the following phrase: *If there is no resurrection, then . . .*

15:13, 16: _____

15:14a: _____

15:14b: _____

15:15: _____

15:17: _____

15:18: _____

15:19: _____



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

The master logician turned a sharp corner with the phrase, “But in fact” (1 Corinthians 15:20), to lead his readers from darkness to light. What truth did Paul unequivocally proclaim in [15:20](#)? What bright hope follows?

The evidence proves it. The witness declares it. Changed lives verify it, including our changed lives. “Christ has been raised from the dead.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to [15:21–22](#). What caused the night of sin's curse to fall upon humanity? What caused hope to dawn?

Curse: _____

Hope: _____



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What order of events did Paul describe in *1 Corinthians 15:23–26*? Summarize what will happen after death for believers?

I assure you there is reason for joy at the memorial service for a believer. There is a reunion coming. We're all going home, and that truth brings hope to every memorial service, regardless of the kind of death that was endured. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: What Does Our Resurrection Hope Mean?

The interpretation phase explores what the biblical author intended his readers to know, believe, feel, and do. This passage is brimming with significance about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why did Paul say that Christians would be “more to be pitied than anyone in the world” if Jesus was not raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:19)? What did Paul mean?



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After following the line of thinking of the skeptical resurrection-deniers, Paul reminded the Corinthians that “Christ *has* been raised from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20, emphasis added). The resurrection was not a hoax, as many even today contend. How does the fact that the resurrection is true 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 or two timeless theological truths about the importance of resurrection. Finish this statement, “Because Jesus rose from the dead . . .”

When a believer dies, the soul, the invisible part of the person, immediately goes to be with the Lord. When the Lord returns, He will resurrect the bodies and join them to the souls. A cemetery is not death ground; it’s resurrection ground. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection

According to *1 Corinthians 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 *1 Corinthians 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 of witnesses of the resurrection were still alive? It's 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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Application: Not a Hoax . . . but Hope

Since that first Easter morning, Christ's resurrection has filled 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 does the hope made available through Jesus' resurrection lift the weight of these fears off your heart?

Do you know someone who needs hope, perhaps a family member or friend? What do you think Jesus would tell them? What can you say to encourage them using Jesus' words?

The cross was not the end for Jesus . . . nor is death the end for us. Jesus defeated death when He rose from the tomb and will one day put death itself in a grave, never to hold power over anyone again. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26).



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Close your study by reading aloud Paul’s words of triumph and hold this declaration of victory in your heart today as your truest hope.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54–57)



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the cross of Christ and His death for my sins. Thank You, also, that His death was not the end of His life but only a necessary precursor to His resurrection. I cling to the cross for my salvation, but I sing at the empty tomb for Jesus is my hope! “Hallelujah, He is risen. He is risen, indeed!” In His name, amen.

