

# The Resurrection Power

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

## Intro

There are many Christian scientists who believe in Christ's resurrection! Ian Hutchinson is one among them and he said, "I'm a professor of nuclear science and engineering at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. So do dozens of my colleagues. How can this be? We really believe in the bodily resurrection of the first century Jew known as Jesus of Nazareth. My Christian colleagues at MIT – and millions of other scientists worldwide – somehow think that a literal miracle like the resurrection of Jesus is possible.

The founders of the scientific revolution and many of the greatest scientists of the intervening centuries were serious Christian believers. For Robert Boyle (of the ideal gas law, co-founder in 1660 of the Royal Society) the resurrection was a fact. For James Clerk Maxwell (whose Maxwell equations of 1862 govern electromagnetism) a deep philosophical analysis undergirded his belief in the resurrection. And for William Phillips (Nobel prize-winner in 1997 for methods to trap atoms with laser light) the resurrection is not discredited by science." (Source: *Ian Hutchinson, "Can a scientist believe in the resurrection? Three hypotheses." Veritas Forum 3-25-16*)

Dr. John Lennox, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford, cites famous contemporary Christian scientists who believe in Christ's resurrection, "...there are eminent, scientists, like Professor William Phillips (Physics Nobel Prizewinner, 1998), Professor Sir John Polkinghorne (Quantum Physicist, Cambridge) and, in the United States, the current Director of the National Institute of Health and former Director of the Human Genome Project, Francis Collins (to name just three) who...affirm their belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which they regard as the supreme evidence for the truth of the Christian worldview."

Not only do these scientists attest to the resurrection of Jesus Christ but about 2,000 years ago many attest to Christ's resurrection. At one time there were more than 500 people who personally saw Christ resurrected. Look with me in what Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15.

## Five Hundred Witnesses to the Resurrection

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (1 Corinthians 15:3-9).*

Several very important factors are often overlooked when considering Christ's post-resurrection appearances to individuals. The first is the large number of witnesses of Christ after that resurrection morning. One of the earliest records of Christ's appearing after the resurrection is by Paul. The apostle appealed to his audience's knowledge of the fact that Christ had been seen by more than 500 people at one time. Paul reminded them that the majority of those people were still alive and could be questioned.

Dr. Edwin M. Yamauchi, associate professor of history at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, emphasizes: "What gives a special authority to the list (of witnesses) as historical evidence is the reference to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St. Paul says in effect, 'If you do

not believe me, you can ask them.' Such a statement in an admittedly genuine letter written within thirty years of the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly two thousand years ago."

Let's take the more than 500 witnesses who saw Jesus alive after His death and burial, and place them in a courtroom. Do you realize that if each of those 500 people were to testify for only six minutes, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing 50 hours of firsthand testimony? Add to this the testimony of many other eyewitnesses and you would well have the largest and most lopsided trial in history.

### **Theme of the Resurrection**

1 Corinthians 15 is the greatest chapter in the Bible on the theme of resurrection. This chapter details for us the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and what it means to those whose faith is placed in Christ. In this chapter the Apostle Paul is concerned with the importance of the fact that Jesus rose and that because He lives, you and I shall live also. That's Paul's theme. He takes on the deniers of the resurrection and shows why there is evidence and why it is necessary that we believe Jesus died and rose again and we shall live as well in resurrection life.

The resurrection is mentioned a 104 in the New Testament, it is the most profound and prominent theme in all of the apostolic preaching of the book of Acts. The first sermon the Apostle Peter ever preached was the great liberating sermon that freed so many thousands of people from their sin on the day of Pentecost. It was a sermon built around the resurrection. *"This Jesus has God raised up of whom we are all witnesses to the fact,"* (Acts 2:32) Peter said.

And when the Apostles were later in the book of Acts filled with the Holy Spirit, it says, *"With great power the Apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."* (Acts 4:33) The central doctrine of Paul on Mars Hill in Acts 17 was the resurrection.

And so, we as Christians gather around the resurrection. It is the core of our faith. You cannot be a Christian and not believe in the resurrection.

In Romans 10:9-10 it says, *"If you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."*

Salvation is predicated on that belief in the resurrection. So when you hear somebody who doesn't know whether they believe in the resurrection, you know you've just met somebody who is not saved no matter what they claim.

### **Jesus, the First-fruits of the Resurrection**

Have you ever wondered what Paul meant when he said in 1 Corinthians 15:20 that *"Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep"* – when there are earlier records of people being brought back to life in both the Old and New Testaments?

For example, we read of:

1. The resurrection of the Sidonian widow's son by Elijah (1 Kings 17:7-24)
2. The resurrection of the Shunammite woman's son by Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-37)
3. There is an obscure record of a dead man being thrown onto Elisha's bones during a Moabite raid. As the dead man touched Elisha's bones, he was raised to life (2 Kings 13:20-21).

In the New Testament, you may well recall Jesus raising at least three people from the dead.

1. The resurrection of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-43)
2. The resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17)

### 3. The resurrection of Lazarus (John 11).

How did their resurrections differ from that of Jesus? Well the answer lies in the fact that in each instance, the persons raised died again. Jesus' resurrection was unique.

When he was raised, he did not die again – he ascended physically into heaven and lives today.

On one occasion Michelangelo turned to his fellow artists and said with frustration in his voice, “*Why do you keep filling gallery after gallery with endless pictures on the one theme of Christ in weakness, Christ on the cross, and most of all, Christ hanging dead?*” he asked. “*Why do you concentrate on the passing episode as if it were the last work, as if the curtain dropped down there on disaster and defeat? That dreadful scene lasted only a few hours. But to the unending eternity Christ is alive; Christ rules and reigns and triumphs!*”

### **We Live Between 2 Easters**

Eric Sauer, a great theologian said this, “*The present age is Easter time. It begins with resurrection of the Redeemer and ends with the resurrection of the redeemed. Between lies the spiritual resurrection of those called into life through Christ. So we live between two Easters and in the power of the first Easter, we go to meet the last Easter.*”

We go to meet the last Easter? So what is the last Easter? It's the bodily resurrection of all believers.

### **Bodily Resurrection of Believers**

This event is really an important key, and that's what the Bible calls the resurrection of the saints. There's going to be a wonderful bodily resurrection of all the believers who have died in Christ.

This is the climax of redemptive history, and it is also the theme of 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:49 says, “*Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust (Adam), we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (Christ).*”

Philippians 3:21 states, “*...He will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body.*”

1 Corinthians 15:51-57, “*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*

*54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

*“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

### **Conclusion**

The famous escape artist Harry Houdini claimed that he could escape any jail cell and set himself free in a short time. He always managed to keep his promise but there was one time where something went wrong. There was one prison cell that gave him the greatest challenge of his life. He entered that cell in his street clothes and took from his belt, a hidden piece of metal. Once he was in, he worked immediately on the cell lock but it was an unusual lock.

For about thirty minutes he worked and got nowhere. Another hour had passed and still he had not opened the door and he was absolutely drenched with sweat. He began to pant in exasperation and still to no avail the lock would not open. Finally after laboring for two hours, Houdini collapsed in frustration and failure, against the locked door. To his great surprise when he fell against the door it swung open! It had never been locked at all!

There are those like Houdini, who are in prison and don't know that the door has been unlocked. Many are in the prison of death and Hades and are trying to get out by their own efforts but don't succeed.

Jesus said, *"I am the Living One; I was dead and I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."* (Rev. 1:18) Yes, Jesus has the keys which unlock the prison door of death and Hades.

He was sent *"to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners"* (Isa.61:1)

Through Christ's death and resurrection He has freed us from the fear and bondage of death (Heb. 2:15) Through Christ's resurrection we have been freed from the power of death and hell. Awesome!

The resurrection power of Christ is living in me! WOW!!