

April 12, 2020

Speaker: Eric Naus **Series:** Resurrection Sunday

Passage: 1 Cor. 15:1-11

Community Group Questions: "Of First Importance"

1 Corinthians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Christians in the church at Corinth. At Chapter 15, Paul responds to some theological confusion among the Corinthians about the nature of the resurrection. In this chapter, Paul writes some of the most helpful teaching on the resurrection of Jesus and his people in all of Scripture. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 aloud as a group, and then work through the following questions:

1. Paul gives several lines of evidence as to why the resurrection of Jesus really happened. First, we see the "evidence of consistency." Paul and all the Apostles consistently preached that Jesus died and rose again. Compare verse 1 with verse 11. The same gospel that Paul "preached" (the death and resurrection of Jesus) is the same gospel that the Corinthians received, and it's the same gospel that all of the Apostles preached. Do you find it compelling that the earliest Christians consistently preached the resurrection of Jesus, without a single known defector? How does this evidence counter the claims that Jesus' resurrection was just a large hoax made up by the earliest Christians?
2. Most scholars believe that Paul quotes an early Christian creed in verses 3-5, based on the structure and choice of words. "Christ did for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, he was buried, he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" was likely the very wording that the earliest Christians would recite and proclaim together. 1 Corinthians was written about 55 A. D. (only about 20 years after Jesus died and rose again) and Paul refers to this creed which he "received" much earlier. Therefore, this is some of the earliest known content of what the earliest Christians believed and proclaimed. How does this "evidence of antiquity" counter the claim that the resurrection was just an evolving story or legend that only took shape decades after the time of Jesus? Does it encourage you to know that Christianity is not a passing fad or trend, but something historic and consistent? How so?
3. In verses 6 and following, Paul adds several other well-known appearances of Jesus. Take time to locate, identify, and discuss every resurrection appearance listed in this passage from verses 5 to 11. Note that Jesus appeared over the course of several days, to several people, to individuals, to groups and large crowds, to unbelievers (James and Paul), to believers, and in all sorts of settings. There are many other appearances recorded in the gospel accounts which could also be added to this list. How does this "evidence of eye-witness testimony" help us respond to the following alternative explanations for the resurrection of Jesus?
 - a. The hoax theory (it was all a big lie)
 - b. The hallucination theory (they were hallucinating, or perhaps they saw a ghost or spirit)

- c. The swoon theory (Jesus didn't really die on the cross, he just swooned, then revived, and tricked them into believing that he rose)
 - d. The developing legend theory (it was a story which was embellished and evolved over time)
4. Do you agree with the following statement? "Christianity stands or falls, based on whether Jesus really rose from the dead. If he didn't rise again, we should dismiss it all. If he really did rise again, we can build our faith from there, and stake our life on him." What do you conclude, based on the evidence?
 5. Has there ever been a time in your Christian life where you went through serious faith doubts? How does this passage and the evidence we've considered help you in that struggle?

Prayer suggestion: Thank God for raising Jesus to life and giving us historical evidence that Jesus' claims are true. Pray for one another in our journey of belief, that our faith would be strengthened and secured.