

Wednesday in the Word
Digging Deeper
April 20, 2022
If-Then

1 Corinthians 15:16-22 KJVS

[16] For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: [17] And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. [18] Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. [19] If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. [20] But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. [21] For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

IF. One of the most influential words in the English language and the crossroad of faith and hope. Believe it or not the dictionary has a long answer for the meaning of the word. In a nut shell it is a supposition; an uncertain possibility. It shows up 71 times in the book of First Corinthians; 11 times in chapter 15 alone. Paul uses this smallest of words with the largest of meanings in verses 12-17, 19 and 29 simply to raise the concept of questioning whether or not there is a resurrection of the dead and focuses this query on the role of Christ in this matter. In the Greek the word 'if' is 'ei' which is a primary particle of conditionality; that is to say, the writer is "supposing the truth of the condition" that some were teaching that there is no resurrection of the dead. His words are most clearly stated in verses 13-14 and alternately restated in verses 16-17. There is no ambiguity in his premise. *[13] But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: [14] And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. [16] For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: [17] And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.* Christianity is set apart from all religion in that it's teaching is strict on the reality of our being raised from the dead. John 11:25, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:14. Not as zombies. Not through reincarnation. Not through revival. We are neither Frankensteins nor ghosts. We are to be raised one day through the power of Jesus Christ to return to physical life in glorified bodies just as Jesus our Firstfruits has done. Philippians 3:21, 1 John 3:2. You will rise from the dead as you. Never again to suffer from sin or it's curse and consequence. Certain Corinthian false teachings along with the Saducean sect had spread the lie that there would be no resurrection and Paul argued the case based on Godly logic. He spends the first ten verses of this chapter to reason the validity of the resurrection using ancient scripture, (see Daniel 12:2) accurate reporting, eyewitness testimony and Apostolic authority to confirm this truth. Our whole faith is based on this fact as one of the many undeniable miracles that construct Judaism as well as Christianity. Paul continues on by creating a standard if/then hypothesis. Basing a supposition on a doubt is dangerous and our author furthers that supposition by laying out a trail of connections that must follow. IF what skeptics and doubters say is true THEN what follows must also be true. A very scary scenario unfolds before us when we choose to believe a false teaching. 1 John 4:1, Romans 16:17. If no one can rise from the dead then neither did Christ. If He did not rise then all Christian teaching and preaching is vain (kenos; empty). If this preaching is empty then our faith in Jesus is empty.

If our faith is in vain then we are still lost in sin. If we are hopelessly held in sin then all who have preceded us in death will perish (appolumi; to be fully destroyed in the everlasting lake of fire. Revelation 20:13-15). Paul's sad statement in verse 19 is particularly disturbing. If all the above is true; *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* (eleeinos: pitiable) Christians are often hated, marginalized, even intolerable but to be pitied would be worst of all. To be hopelessly in pursuit of a life based on a lie, wasting our time, as it were, would indeed be empty. As it is, unbelievers often do see us as such. Of course they are spiritually blind and refuse the truth but we who walk in the Way know better. 2 Corinthians 4:4. Note the wording of verse 19. If **in this life only** we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. We all agree following Christ is a thrill and a joy. We experience changed lives, maturity, self control, deep close friendships. But is this a true result of faith in the One and only God? Are we changing ourselves to fall in line with a simple teaching or is it a reality from a new birth? The answer lies in the resurrection. First of Christ, then of self. He lives again eternally. So do we. We are already born again to this new life. Jesus' rising from the dead initiates us and guarantees us the hope of the continuation of eternal life. Risen, glorified, eternal bodies. If this were not so then following Christ would be a sham. He would be no more than a cult leader and we would be no more than a fellowship to a philosophy. Christian life works well enough since it helps us coexist peaceably but if it ends at death then it falls in rank with every other temporal religion, philosophy and cultic wandering. Resurrection means eternal life. Eternal life means true faith in the Risen Lord of the Universe. Resurrection means we believe the only truth, the only hope, the only successful system of belief. Easter Sunday, Resurrection Day is to us a truly powerful day of celebration. It sets us apart from everyone else but it drives us to draw them in. God is still taking reservations and all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13.