



ISSUE

23.52

December 26, 2021

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

The Apostles on the Stand

By L. A. Mott, Jr.

After reviewing the case for the resurrection of Christ which had been set forth in Corinth and received by the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 15:1-11), Paul's next step was to show the Corinthians what their faith in the resurrection of Christ forces them also to accept: **"Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"** (v. 12). This question contains the first reference to this **"some"** in Corinth who denied the resurrection and shows what Paul has been aiming at in the first eleven verses of the chapter. Now he is ready to use the resurrection of Christ as the foundation of his argument for a general resurrection. How can one say there is no resurrection if Christ has been raised?

In the second paragraph of First Corinthians, chapter 15, Paul enumerates the consequences that necessarily and logically follow from the position of those who say there is no resurrection. If there is no resurrection then Christ has not been raised, and two sets of logical deductions inevitably follow. The first series of deductions is set forth in verses 13-15 and may be summed up in a brief statement: *The apostles are lying witnesses.* Second set of deductions is set forth in verses 16-19 and amounts to this: *Salvation in Christ is a delusion.* These are the inevitable consequences of the denial of either the resurrection in general or the resurrection of Christ in particular. The denier should be prepared to swallow all the consequences of his denial

or else he must give it up. He has no other choice.

In a former article an elaboration of the various elements in Paul's case for the resurrection of Christ was offered. The case is mainly built upon the eyewitness testimony of the apostles and others who claimed to have seen Jesus alive **"after his passion"** (Acts 1:3, ASV). That case was convincing to many thousands of people in the ancient world, even in the city of Jesus's death and burial where the best possible opportunity for examining the evidence was present. Otherwise the church would never have come to birth.

The case also seemed strong to many in the modern world when they have considered the alternative

to admitting the resurrection of Christ. The logical consequences of denying the resurrection of Christ are the same now as they were in the first century. And one who denies the resurrection should understand the consequences which he is logically bound to accept. He must start by calling the apostles liars and branding the apostolic testimony as perjury. Unless he is prepared to swallow this pill he cannot deny the resurrection of Christ. Paul put it this way:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised. and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised (1 Cor. 15:13-15).

When one reads the Acts of the Apostles he sees them declaring from the beginning in Jerusalem and then wherever they went thereafter that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead and that they were witnesses to the fact (cf. Acts 2:22-24,32; 3:14-15; 4:10, 19:20; 10:39-41). Now either Jesus really was raised from the dead, or the apostles were liars and the whole Christian movement was a hoax.

It will not do to say that the apostles were themselves deluded or mistaken. A close examination of their testimony will clearly reveal the impossibility of this explanation. Consider what they were saying:



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We ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. We examined His body. We saw His hands and His feet where the nails had been driven. We saw His side which had been pierced by the spear (Luke 24:36-43; John 20: 19-29; Acts 10:39-41).¹

Someone may doubt the fact to which the apostles testified. But surely it is impossible to doubt that they knew whether their testimony was true. There is no escape from the conclusion: If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead the apostles were *deliberate liars*. Are you ready for that conclusion? Let me show you what a bitter pill that will be to get down.

The person who charges the apostles with perjury must ask himself what motive they had for such a hoax. That becomes an exceedingly difficult inquiry when it is realized that every selfish motive and every worldly advantage lay on the side of the denial rather than the affirmation of the resurrection. Consider the trouble and hardship the apostles brought upon themselves by their insistence upon the resurrection. **“We are made as the filth of the**

world, the offscouring of all things, even until now,” wrote Paul (1 Cor. 4:13). **“Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour? I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily”** (1 Cor. 15:30- 31). **“For whom I suffered the loss of all things”** (Phil. 3:8).

These are statements from Paul. But the same was true of the other apostles. One should especially weigh the fact that the prime movers in the earliest persecutions were the Sadducees, who **“say there is no resurrection”** (Acts 23:8), and that the reason for their opposition was the insistence of the apostles upon the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:1-2). The apostles were threatened; they were imprisoned like common criminals; they were whipped; they **“hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 15:26), in fact they finally gave their lives. James the brother of John was killed with the sword. Then one by one all the others, with the exception of John, went to a martyr’s death for the Lord. They would give their lives for Christ. But one thing they would never do.

* I am aware of an assumption here—namely, that this testimony is not something invented by the authors of these books but is a true record of the actual testimony of the apostles. But that assumption will be readily granted by the reader when he realizes that the author of the Gospel of John was himself one of the apostles and that all the scholarly investigations of Luke and Acts have shown that the author was at great pains to get his facts right. I believe most all the classical scholars who have investigated the latter will agree with their colleague Sir William Ramsay who wrote early in the Twentieth Century: “The present writer takes the view that Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness” (*The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Hodder and Stoughton: New York, 1915, p. 81). And: “Luke is a historian of the first rank. . . . This author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians” (*ibid.*, p. 222).



Not one of them would ever recant his testimony.

So, here is the situation. The person who denies the resurrection of Christ is logically forced to believe that the apostles to a man were ready to suffer all the abuse and persecution that a hostile world could heap upon them, even unto death—all for a lie that they knew all the while to be a lie.

If you think you can get that pill down without suffering intellectual indigestion, then go ahead and swallow it. But I must say that your position seems irrational to me. I believe the apostles told the truth. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and is living now. Christianity is not founded upon fable but upon fact—fact historically attested by evidence that is strong indeed.

Christ is alive! You better believe He is alive. He is coming again to judge the world. One day He will be your judge. But He wants to be your Savior now. Will you let Him?

Vanguard 1.22 (Nov. 27, 1975): 16-18
(electronic version)



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