

# P Levy 1Cor 15v1-11 Pt2of 2

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you go to Tiananmen Square in Beijing, you'll know that one of the features of the square is a large mausoleum. and on display is the body of Mao Zedong.

Similarly, in the Red Square in Moscow, you can visit Lenin's tomb. It's interesting, isn't it, that you can go to Christian cathedrals and churches and chapels, you can go to Christian universities, schools and hospitals, all of which have been constructed to honour the Lord Jesus Christ.

But nowhere can you go and see Jesus' body or his bones. Why? Well, because absolutely central to the Christian faith is our belief and our confidence, and our hope that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, paying no concession to death.

And so, over these last two weeks, we've been looking at the four that's of 1 Corinthians 15. Do you remember, last week, those of you who weren't here, let me tell you what we did. We looked at the first that, that Christ died for our sins.

That was verse 3. And then, we looked at verse 4, that he was buried. And so, today, we're going to look at the second truth, that, that he was raised on the third day.

[ 1 : 23 ] Verse 4 and verse 5, that he appeared. So, let's just recap. Notice Jesus was truly dead. That's what Paul is saying, isn't he? He was not revived.

He was not resuscitated. He was so dead that they buried him. He was literally dead and buried. He did not faint, as Islam teaches. But, experts in execution put him to death.

They were professionals. The Romans, centurion, the soldiers, they made sure that he was dead.

And he was so dead, they put him in a tomb. Verse 4 tells us that he was raised from the dead.

Now, of course, Jesus made the claim, didn't he, to be God in the flesh. To be God become man.

To become, to be a human being who was God. And that is not a unique claim, is it?

Lunatics. Deranged people can claim to be God. Liars and con men can claim to be God. At one point in our church life, we had a couple of people who were sectioned.

[ 2 : 32 ] And they were sectioned in Ealing Hospital. And my routine was, on Sunday evening, after church, I preached. And then I would go to Ealing Hospital. And I would say, I'd come to see my friends.

They're called Roger and Anna. And I would be taken through these secure doors into the ward.

And one of the things that always amazed me, is when I was in this ward, sitting there in my smart clothes, there would often be people who claimed to be Jesus.

I remember one occasion I was there. And two people were arguing. Two men. In kind of a bit of a state, both of them. And one said, I am Jesus. And the other one said, no, I am Jesus.

And it kind of kicked off on the ward. And so people do claim to be God, don't they? But the Lord Jesus is unique in that he backed up his claim.

How did he back up his claim? He backed up his claim with the resurrection from the dead. No one else who has claimed to be God has been raised.

[ 3 : 32 ] And the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1 that Jesus was declared to be God with power by his resurrection from the dead. If he defeats his greatest enemy, and our greatest enemy, then he must be Lord and God.

Jesus dies, verse 3, to pay the penalty for our sin. Can you see that? He died for our sins. What evidence is there that Jesus paying the penalty for our sin has been received by God the Father, against whom our sin has been committed?

Well, it is the life of Jesus. His death is the evidence of sin. His death is the evidence of paying the wages for sin.

His life is evidence that that sin has been paid for. The Apostle Paul says, the wages of sin, what sin pays you is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It's like going into a shop and paying a price, and they say, do you pay in a price for an item? And they say, do you want a receipt for that? And they give you a receipt. And the receipt is proof of purchase.

[ 4 : 45 ] It is proof that the price has been paid for the goods. And the resurrection is proof that the penalty for sin has been paid for. You will know very well that the laws of creation, they are God's laws.

He created all things. Think of gravity as God's gentle downward pressure, if you want. And if God interferes in the laws of creation, if God suspends the laws of creation, for example, by stealing a storm with a word, or by ceasing the world to rotate on its axis, or perhaps healing a man or a woman with blindness or paralysis without medical attention, or raising the dead.

If God suspends the laws, which are his laws, then it is in order to give you a deeper understanding of some truth that could not be had without the suspension of those laws.

So people who are dead, stay dead. People who are buried, stay buried. But God suspends the laws of creation here.

And God intervenes by his spirit and raises the Lord Jesus from the dead to prove that Jesus is who he claims to be. And so that today you can be saved by believing in your hearts that Jesus rose from the dead.

[ 6 : 11 ] And by confessing with your lips that Jesus Christ is Lord. Now if you look at verse 3, that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day from the dead in accordance with the scriptures.

How do you figure that Jesus was dead for three days? Well he died on Friday and he was dead for a portion of the Friday. He was dead all day Saturday and he was dead for a portion of the Sunday. Like Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days, so the Lord was dead for three days according to the scriptures. So what do the scriptures say? The New Testament quotes the Psalms more than any other book of the Old Testament.

And the one psalm that is quoted more than any other psalm in the New Testament is Psalm 110.

And that is the psalm that says the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand.

He is a priest forever. I will make your enemies a footstool for your feet. And that very psalm tells us that the Lord Jesus was coming and though he dies, he will rise.

[ 7 : 20 ] But notice in verse 4, it tells us that Christ was raised. I think that's really interesting. It doesn't tell us that he raised himself.

He was passive. God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. God raised him. Now I put it to you that the resurrection of Jesus is not as prominent in our thinking as the death of Jesus.

People walk around, don't they, with crosses around their necks. And you don't see people walking around with an empty tomb around their neck. And the empty tomb is not as central.

Now why is that? But I want you to look at these three bullet points again in 1 Corinthians 15 because they make up the Christian gospel. Jesus' death for your sin, his sure death and burial, and his bodily resurrection.

It's a bit like a marriage. We know that marriage in Genesis 2 is about a husband leaving his mother and father and cleaving to his wife and the two becoming one.

[ 8 : 34 ] Three parts to a marriage. There is a leaving and a cleaving and a being united. And you take one of those elements away and you don't have a marriage. It's like a three-legged stool.

You take one of the three, the leaving, the cleaving, and becoming one and you don't have a marriage. And you take one of these vats away and you do not have a Christian gospel. Christ died for our sins.

Christ was buried. Christ was raised on the third day according to the scriptures because death could not hold him down. Death had no grip on the Lord Jesus because the power of death is sin. And Jesus never sinned. So sin and death had no grip or power over him. The penalty of sin has been paid.

He had no sin of his own to pay the penalty. He paid the penalty for his people's sin. Your sin and my sin. And God raised him up by his spirit to show that the penalty was entirely accepted.

[ 9 : 40 ] a perfect life given for the sins of his people. Now the fourth bullet point is in verse 5. Paul doesn't leave it there. And that is absolutely essential.

And so verse 5 that he was buried that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and then he says and that he appeared to Cephas and the twelve.

And that is absolutely essential because the apostle Paul says when you came into this building at this lunchtime he tells you don't leave your brain at the door. And we don't believe this truth today because it suits us.

We believe the truth of the resurrection because it's based on the evidence. So look at verse 5 and 6. And then he appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve and then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time most of whom are still alive though some have fallen asleep but some have died.

Paul is saying isn't it we believe the resurrection because of evidence and actually he says to his writers in Corinth you can go and see them and you can go and talk to them and they are men and women and boys and girls and there are believers and unbelievers there are people that believed in Jesus and there are people that didn't believe in Jesus because the resurrection is not a trick.

[ 10 : 59 ] The resurrection is not a nice little piece of magic it's not a conjuring trick with bones it's not a spiritual resurrection he was seen they talked to him they ate with him talked to the witnesses they sat down with him they saw him eat broiled fish they saw the imprint of the nails in his hands go and talk to the witnesses because there is objectivity here.

So that when the Apostle Paul a reluctant convert goes into the Areopagus and the Greek centre of all academic endeavour and spiritual philosophical speculation he stands up and he uses the very word he uses the word proof God has given proof of the coming judgment by raising the Lord Jesus from the dead there is proof absolute proof now there is such a thing as scientific proof isn't there? you do your experiments you repeat them you conduct your research and you get your results but if you go out on the Ealing Broadway this morning and there is a traffic accident and you are a witness of the traffic accident and you are called as a witness to go before the court regarding it the judge is not going to say let's go back to Ealing Broadway and let's take the cars apart and let's see them smash into each other again would the judge do that?

no he wouldn't he wouldn't say let's repeat the accident and then we'll repeat our conclusions what he would say is this tell me what you saw tell me what the witnesses saw you see even today we draw distinction don't we between scientific proof and legal evidence you can call it proof it is legal evidence it is legal proof that is precisely what the apostle Paul is talking about in verse 5 he says you go and talk to any of them and if you find that there are 500 people who have been to a funeral who haven't found the corpse where it was laid but who have actually seen him and talked him and noticed that he has made no concession to death well you would have to give some credit to that story wouldn't you you see Paul is backing up the claim look at what he says in verse 7 he says then he appeared to James and then to all the apostles James is Jesus' past brother and the author of the letter of James in the New Testament and that caused James' conversion and then he appeared in verse 8 last of all as to one untimely born he also appeared to me I saw him I'm kind of abnormally born the apostle Paul says I had a shorter gestation period than the others I wasn't with Jesus during his life on earth the others were Paul says I saw him on the Damascus road I was Saul and I met the risen Jesus and Paul confirms what the christening faith is about it's about objective facts and then he says let me tell you my story verse 9 for I am the least of the apostles and worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God by the grace of God by the undeserved kindness of God I am what I am and his grace towards me was not in vain it's interesting when you compare that word in the end of verse 2 on the contrary

[ 14 : 37 ] I worked harder than any of them though it's not I but the grace of God that is in me whether it was I or they so we preach and so we believe what is Paul saying there he's saying don't tell me that it was just wishful thinking don't tell me that I was on the Damascus road really hoping to see Jesus I was actually wanting to persecute him and his people don't tell James his brother that he wanted to see Jesus raised he was a reluctant convert and so am I but I saw him he appears to me as one abnormally born so let me ask you for a moment how do you explain the resurrection of Jesus maybe that you've dropped in here this lunchtime and if you have we're really thrilled that you have I often have people say to me Christianity is just brainwashing well please explain to me the resurrection of Jesus please do that here is the evidence here is the legal proof don't attack the credibility of 1 Corinthians

I can show you the manuscript evidence to back up the credibility of this letter and I think that many people who argue that Christianity well it's just brainwashing are really saying it just doesn't suit my moral position I'd rather that Jesus wasn't Lord because then I'd have to change my life how do you explain the fact that Jesus was crucified that he was buried and that he was raised from the dead because that is what it's all about that is the gospel here is the gospel very simply sin separates me from a holy God but God in Christ came and took the fine or the penalty for my sin being death and he took it upon himself and God showed that the payment for my sin was accepted and the resurrection was my receipt and so I can say to you today

I am totally secure about my past though I'm not proud about it I preached to that conference in the summer and an old old friend introduced me and he gave me one of those introductions where he kind of spoke endlessly about how much of a naughty boy I was when I was a teenager and a number of people have come to see me and said well I thought James was wrong to introduce you in that way I couldn't care less why couldn't I care less because my past has been dealt with Brownlow North a great evangelist was preaching I think in Inverness he had lived a pretty awful life before he was converted he'd done things which he was deeply deeply ashamed of and somebody wrote him a letter detailing his past sins and saying they would expose it as he preached Brownlow North got the letter what did he do he got into the pulpit and he read the letter out why because he was confident that his past had been dealt with what about your past truth of the gospel is this isn't it it has been swept away at the cross of the

Lord Jesus if you've trusted in him and so you're forgiven and so the past is dealt with and you can be strengthened in the present because now as a Christian I have the Holy Spirit living in me and I have hope for the future because I know that death was not the end for the Lord Jesus and because I have trusted in the Lord Jesus I am in him and so death will not be the end for me and I have hope for the future because I know that death was not the end for Jesus so listen to this if Christianity is true it is unimportant if Christianity is true it is of infinite importance the one thing Christianity cannot be is of moderate importance if the Christian gospel means anything it must mean everything now Paul goes on if you look on in verse 13 to investigate the implications of the resurrection what if the resurrection is not true let's look what he says in verse 14 in the last five minutes he says what does this mean for our preaching five things he says verse 14 if the resurrection didn't happen then it is empty our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain it is vacuous

I'm always amazed I'm absolutely flabbergasted about those ministers who don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus my experiences of men who preach like that or people who go to churches like that this may don't speak about much at all but if you take the resurrection away what have you got you've got a crucified messiah who is an idealist who is a model but that's all he is what else is there to say look at verse 15 so the first thing is if he did not raise it is vacuous then he says the apostles are liars they're deliberate liars we are even going to be misrepresenting God because they say that Jesus has been raised from the dead and in verse 17 and if Christ has not been raised from the dead well your faith is a waste of time you're still in your sins Paul wrote to the Corinthians earlier and he said your life before it was full of rebellion it was wicked it was evil doers and if

[ 20 : 13 ] Christ has not been raised then that's what you are still that's the third thing the gospel has made no difference their faith is futile a waste of time and then verse 18 and they are lost those who've gone before are lost those who you think are in heaven well they no longer live and in verse 19 you should feel sorry for such people those are the five implications but because it did occur one of the five implications verse 14 our preaching is weighty and it's useful number 2 verse 15 we're not liars but truth tellers number 3 our faith is not empty and futile but it is how we read life and have life in verse 19 we have hope in this life and for the future and in verse 18 we're not to be pitied those of our loved ones who are in Christ are not gone they've never been more alive than they are today we heard yesterday of a man who used to sit at the back in this meeting who had moved to Switzerland John Corcoran and he died yesterday morning where is he now gone no he's more alive than he ever was he's in the presence of

Christ and why is he in the presence of Christ well we know because that Lord Jesus died and was raised look at verse 20 in fact Christ has been raised from the dead the first fruit of those who fall asleep so think of a field and a farmer plows it and sows the seed and he goes out and the first fruits come and the first fruits are indicative aren't they of the harvest that's going to come later and

in verse 20 it's the same expression Christ was number one but there will be millions of followers and the resurrection is not only a receipt it is a guarantee by God that he will do it that your sin is forgiven and you can stand before him clean and he stakes his reputation on it now I don't know if you've been to Rome I went to Rome when I was quite young there's all the relics all the saints all the pictures the Vatican all those things amazing art but actually what is most interesting is if you go to the catacombs and you leave the 21st century expression of Christianity and you go down to the 1st century and what do you find out where

Christians were met and worshipped and buried where do you find a fish scratched in the wall why do you find a fish well because Jonah was in the whale for three days and then he was out like our Lord you find a cross etched in the wall that is 1st century Christianity the art of the 1st century Christians in the catacombs revolved around the four that's of 1 Corinthians 15 that he was died according to the scriptures that he was buried that he rose and that he appeared people today believe that they're not justified by faith but they're justified by death that actually God will just let them into heaven that just somehow by dying they'll make it into heaven but that is a lie don't think this afternoon that you can come and give a nodding acquaintance to these truths if Christianity means anything it means everything some people think that life is simple and Christianity is difficult but the opposite is true in fact life is difficult isn't it but

Christianity is very simple becoming a Christian is very simple it is coming to the resurrected Lord and saying I'm sorry thank you please I'm sorry I've ignored you I'm sorry I've lived my life my way thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sin and to be raised again as the receipt please Lord come into my life and live your life in control of mine sorry thank you please don't go away this afternoon giving nodding acquaintance to this that Christ died that Christ was buried that Christ was raised that Christ appeared this is real this is authentic this is apostolic biblical Christianity sorry thank you please let's pray ending