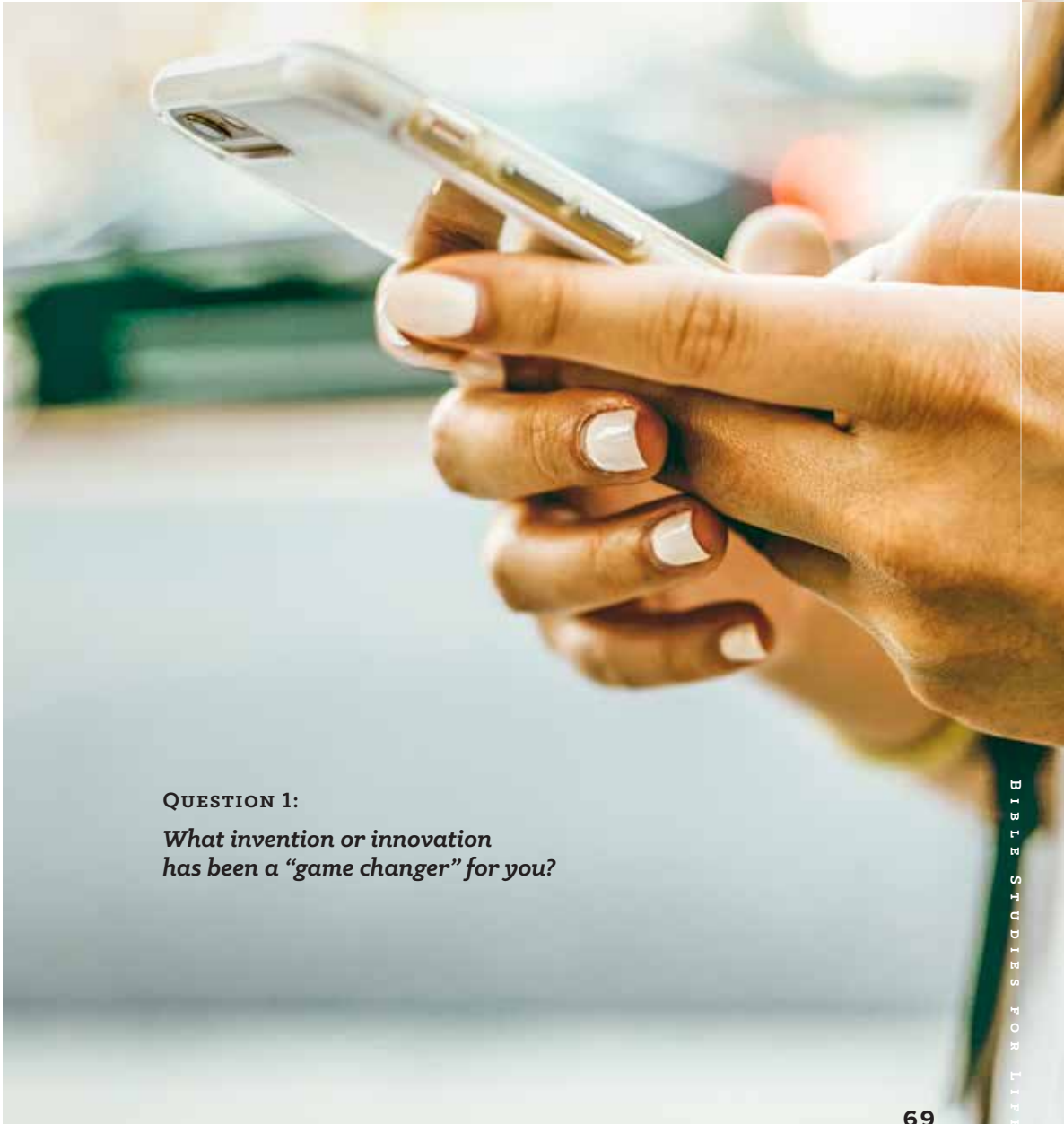


# Special Focus: Why the Resurrection Matters



**QUESTION 1:**

*What invention or innovation  
has been a “game changer” for you?*

## THE POINT

The resurrection of Christ changes everything.

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We live daily with all kinds of inventions that have dramatically changed the way we live and work: The Gutenberg printing press, invented in the 15th century, enabled the mass production of words and ideas. The battery, introduced in 1800, gave us a way to store energy. Thomas Edison's electric light (1879) illuminated what we do day and night.

Inventions like these have truly transformed the ways we live and work, but they have been around so long and are so commonplace today, we no longer give them much thought. Just think how difficult it would be to live in 2020 without lights and batteries.

Not all life-changing events should be taken for granted or overlooked. Christ's resurrection has been a central truth of Christianity for two thousand years, and, sadly, many Christians can repeat the facts of the resurrection while never contemplating the implications of that truth for their daily lives.

Jesus' defeat of the power of sin and death is truly a game changer for our lives—now and forever.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-22

<sup>20</sup> But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. <sup>22</sup> For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

In leading up to this passage, Paul stressed the importance of an actual and historical resurrection. He asserted in verse 14, “if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith.” Paul made this statement to respond to some of the Corinthian Christians who did not believe in the resurrection. He argued that if there is no resurrection, then not even Christ rose from the dead. Paul offered the further conviction that if there were no resurrection, then to proclaim the risen Jesus was to give false testimony about God (v. 15). It was equivalent to breaking the ninth commandment (Exodus 20:16). To summarize Paul’s teaching, if Christ has not been resurrected, ...

- ▶ ... you give false testimony about God (1 Corinthians 15:15).
- ▶ ... your faith in Christ is worthless (v. 17).
- ▶ ... you are still in your sins (v. 17).

Beginning in verse 20, Paul used an analogy to further explain what Christ’s death means for all humanity. The resurrected Christ is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” In the Old Testament ceremony of the firstfruits, the people brought their first (and best) portions of the harvest to give them as offerings to God. The significance of this analogy is that Christ’s resurrection precedes the harvest of others—when His followers will be raised from death. While physical death is inevitable, Jesus’

resurrection demonstrates that our death is not the end of the story.

### QUESTION 2:

***What words or phrases characterize someone who has been “made alive”?***

In an atheistic view, death *is the end* of the story. No matter what you thought, said, or did in this life, you end up the same as everyone else: dead or destroyed. Nothing you have done in life has ultimate significance since you will face no judgment and have no afterlife. This is a sad, horrifying, and utterly hopeless view. In the end, you just die and go back to dirt.

In striking contrast to this view are Paul’s words in verses 21-22 that through one man came death but through another came life. Christ’s resurrection presents a great shift. Adam’s sin brought death into the world, but this shift—what Christ has done—means that death is not *how things have to be*. Through Christ we have a way out of the mess humanity made of life and of God’s creation. A singular historical event in the cosmos has overturned the effects of our sin and its destructive consequence: Jesus’ resurrection has secured new life. Because Christ conquered death and rose again, we have the assurance of this new life, a sure hope in the things yet to come.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:23-28

<sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at his coming, those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he abolishes all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be abolished is death. <sup>27</sup> For God has put everything under his feet. Now when it says “everything” is put under him, it is obvious that he who puts everything under him is the exception. <sup>28</sup> When everything is subject to Christ, then the Son himself will also be subject to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

The resurrection of Christ holds two significant truths:

1. It wasn't just anyone who was raised from the dead; it was God incarnate.
2. Jesus' power over death means He is the Lord of all.

Jesus' resurrection was the ultimate evidence that He is who He claimed to be: God, the promised Messiah, and the Savior of mankind. Only God has power over death and Jesus demonstrated that power through His resurrection.

With everything that comes at us in life—diseases, injuries, heartbreak, financial instability, disasters, and war—what is the worst thing that can happen? Death. Of all our “enemies,” death is the worst. It is a tyrannical foe because it makes no bargains with us; we cannot go back. It reigns over us, for we are all subject to death through our fallen nature.

But Jesus changed that. “The last enemy to be abolished is death.” By defeating death as an enemy, Jesus demonstrated with finality that He is the Lord of all things. Over the course of Jesus' earthly life, the disciples and others saw

Him command many forces. He commanded the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27). He even brought people back from the dead (vv. 23-25). However, when Jesus physically rose from the dead, with a new and incorruptible body no longer subject to death, He demonstrated that even death had finally submitted to His authority.

What would it mean, though, if no subsequent resurrection awaited us? We would have no more than another mythological tale of a *somewhat* powerful god or demi-god: a tale of one who displayed His greatness in some miraculous works, but whose power was limited. But Jesus Christ is neither demi-god nor mythological figure. His resurrection is a sign that all things are subject to Him, including the authorities and principalities of the world. Jesus Christ is alive and reigns as Lord over all.

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### QUESTION 3:

***What kinds of things characterize a life that is submitted to Christ's reign as Lord over all?***

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black sleeveless top and brown pants, is sitting on a rooftop. She is laughing with her mouth wide open, looking upwards. She is holding a red and gold firework in her right hand. The air is filled with falling confetti. In the background, there is a chain-link fence, a tall apartment building, and a clear blue sky.

“THE LIVES OF PEOPLE TODAY DEMONSTRATE THAT THE RESURRECTION IS

STILL CHANGING PEOPLE.

IT IS RELENTLESSLY KILLING SIN IN EVERY TRUE BELIEVER.”

*Adrian Warnock*



## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:54-58

<sup>54</sup> When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. <sup>55</sup> Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting?

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Paul's defense of the resurrection throughout 1 Corinthians 15 clearly shows that Christ indeed rose from the dead; therefore, in turn, we will experience resurrection. Death currently holds power over us, but only for a time. Paul illustrated the end result of Jesus' resurrection by quoting from two Old Testament passages:

1. "He will destroy death forever" (Isaiah 25:8).
2. "I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem them from death. Death, where are your barbs? Sheol, where is your sting?" (Hosea 13:14).

The power of death has been removed by the victory gained through the death and resurrection of Christ. The unique Christian witness in the resurrection of Jesus is the only historically evidenced reversal of death. Everything—both our present daily lives and our future in eternity—hinges on this historical defeat of death.

### QUESTION 4:

***How would you describe the victory that we are offered in Christ?***

Jesus' defeat of death carries two implications:

- ▶ Since death is the consequence of sin (Romans 6:23), then Jesus' defeat of death also demands a defeat of the power of sin. Sin does not have power over those who have trusted in Jesus for new life.
- ▶ Christ's resurrection means we do not live our lives in vain. Everything we do matters. "Your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

### QUESTION 5:

***How has Christ's resurrection changed your life?***

Unfortunately, a host of negative influences still seek to pull us away from the goodness of the One who gives life. The first-century Corinthian believers also faced this struggle. Therefore, Paul encouraged the Corinthians—as well as all believers—to live for the things that lead to life! Since we are free from the bondage of sin, we should share that freedom with the rest of the world. Because Christ rose from the dead, spreading that truth provides freedom to others.

## VICTORY!

*Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 and consider the following question:*

**When has it felt like death or sin was winning a victory in your life?**

*Write your answer below and then cross out each statement.*

*Praise God that death and sin have been swallowed up by Christ's victory.*

**“Death has been swallowed up in victory.**

**Where, death, is your victory?**

**Where, death, is your sting?”**

*Write:*

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## LIVE IT OUT

The resurrection of Jesus is a foundational doctrine and truth that transforms all of life. How will you live out that truth?

- ▶ **Confess any sin.** If there is an area of your life in which you have allowed sin to have power over you, confess that to God. Acknowledge that sin has no power over you because of Christ. Choose to live under His lordship.
- ▶ **Commit to serve others as Christ did.** Find an area of ministry where you can get involved. Do not let hesitancy or fears make you feel inadequate to serve. Live under the lordship of Christ, knowing that you never serve Him in vain.
- ▶ **Share the good news.** Tell someone how the resurrection of Christ has made a difference in your life. Lead the person to trust the resurrected Christ for new life.

The resurrection of our Lord and Savior should affect the way we live today. **Commit to wholeheartedly live for Christ in word and deed, knowing that what we do will have an eternal impact.**