

*Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (I Corinthians 15:12-20).*

### **1. Doubt And Denial:**

*Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen (v.12-13).* Someone must have come into the assembly in the days of Paul and started the heresy that there was no such thing as the resurrection of the dead, nor the resurrection of Jesus Christ. How could someone once have trusted in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then turn around and doubt such? But with the introduction of any false doctrine, there will be people gullible enough to believe it. Therefore, it became necessary for Paul to set the matter straight. If someone first has some doubt concerning the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, then Satan will use his emissaries of evil to take that doubt and bring it to fruition in denial. If Christ did not raise from the dead, then what was the use of believing in Him?

### **2. Despair:**

*And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain (v.14).* Someone once said the definition of *vain* is a "soap bubble," so pretty and shiny as it floats in the air, but soon breaks and is not to be seen again. The dictionary defines it as useless, worthless, of no value. If someone stands up in a pulpit and preaches on the resurrection, and there be no such thing, then his words are just that; of no value whatsoever, and that is disparaging to anyone who has trust in Christ's death on the cross, His burial and raising from the dead three days and three nights later.

### **3. Deceit:**

*Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised (v.15).* What a blatant lie and deceit on the part of anyone who would come up to you and ask you if you know how to go to Heaven, and then preaches to you the resurrection of Christ from the dead, if the resurrection is not so. This would be the ultimate in "April Fools" jokes, to tell someone that Jesus had risen from the dead and He didn't, if there was no resurrection.

#### 4. Double Indemnity:

*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished* (v.17-16). I call this “double indemnity,” because it is a repetition of the end of verse fourteen, ...*your faith is vain*. There is a statement that is used often that says, “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.” It was President Lincoln who coined the phrase, “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you can’t fool all the people all the time.” And what a fool we would be if after hearing preaching that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and we find out He didn’t, then our faith in Him would be of no value at all. It is like the kid across the street, sticking out his tongue and yelling, “Nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah.” “I fooled you, didn’t I?” “How could you have been so gullible to believe what I said?”

And the same could be said for those who had already died. If there is no thing such as a resurrection, then we would be no better than the dead dog in the street that had been run over by a car. It is over and there is nothing left. The dog – and the person – are passed into oblivion.

As Paul had stated in First Thessalonians 4:13-18, *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.* There is comfort in knowing your loved ones who had believed on Jesus Christ have gone to be with the Lord when they “sleep” in Jesus. As He had risen from the dead and ascended into the presence of Almighty God the Father, so shall He return one day, and those who have been laid to rest in the tomb will be ushered forth with their new, glorified, resurrected bodies and we shall join them in going to be in Heaven during the seven year time of the tribulation on earth.

#### 5. Dread:

*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable* (v.19). Here we are, trying our best to live godly lives and to please the Lord in all we do, and then find out that there is no Lord, because He would have been no better than the rest of us, and was still lying somewhere in a grave. What a dreadful thing to think that all our lives, we could have been like the so-called “sinners” of the world and lived just as they had. As someone stated, *let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die.* (Isaiah 22:13). How horrid it would be if our only hope is in this present life. To have believed on something that was not true, only to die and life be over, how miserable we would be.

## 6. Delight:

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept* (v.20). It is remarkable how one little conjunction can change the structure of any sentence. The word **but** changes the whole meaning of Paul's argument. The people of Corinth had mistakenly thought that there was no hope (I Thessalonians 4:13), because of their misbelieving in the power of the resurrection. **But** Christ has risen from the dead. Christ has *become the firstfruits of them that slept*. And (another conjunction) Christ will return for those who are still alive at the rapture, to take them along with the dead in Christ to be with Him in Heaven.

My friend, are you ready for the resurrection of the dead? If you should die today or tarry until Jesus comes again, would you be able to stand before Him and give an answer for why you should go to Heaven with Him. What would you say, if you were to stand at the gates of Heaven and God came there and said, "Why should I let you into my Heaven?"