

Pastor Jim Lloyd

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Title: Resurrection Questions

Text: 1 Corinthians 15

VICTORY is a wonderful thing, but in order to have victory you have to have a battle. If you've ever been HEALED, you know that healing is a grand thing, but in order to be healed, you have to have a sickness or injury. RESURRECTION is one incredible thing, but in order to have a resurrection, there has to be a death. Death is one of those topics most would rather not talk about, but not talking about something doesn't make it less real. 15 years ago, Diane's doctor said, "She's going to die." A little over 4 years ago, I was diagnosed with cancer and had a mass the size of a soccer ball removed. Whether we wanted to talk about it or not, death was a possibility that we were confronted with. A friend of ours on Facebook reluctantly told of her recent cancer diagnosis. She told her girls, "I am going to die. You are going to die - BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO BE TODAY! After the doctor said that Diane was going to die, she said, "Whether I live or die, I win." Those who die without Christ - those who have only been born once, will die a regular death AND an eternal death. But as a believer in Christ - those who have been born again or born twice, only die once. And because of the resurrection, we will live eternally. Because He lives, we will live also.

In the last nine days, I've been to two funerals. Both were men. It was noted in both funerals that both men had a sense of humor. Both were ministers. So let's assume that in my whole life, I had never attended a funeral or knew anything about death. I would have learned a few things these past nine days - Good people die. Funny people die. Men die. Preachers die. My ignoring the topic doesn't make it less real. ILLUSTRATION: Professional golfer Paul Azinger was diagnosed with cancer at age 33. He had just won a PGA championship and had ten tournament victories to his credit. He wrote, "A genuine feeling of fear came over me. I could die from cancer. Then another reality hit me even harder. I'm going to die eventually anyway, whether from cancer or something else. It's just a question of when. Everything I had accomplished in golf became meaningless to me. ALL I WANTED WAS TO LIVE." Then he remembered something that Larry Moody, who taught a Bible study on the PGA tour, had said to him. "Zinger, we're NOT in the land of the living going to the land of the dying. We're in the land of the dying trying to get to the land of the living." Jesus said, "*What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own life?*" If it's really possible to live forever, there's no more relevant issue than the one we're dealing with this morning - IF a man dies, shall he live again? The Bible says, "*If only in this life we have hope, then we are of all people to be pitied.*" The more you live, the more you realize that life is coming to an end. Every day on this side of my birthday becomes a day closer to my DEATH day. LIFE is futile if there is no hope beyond the grave. Vance Havner said, "The hope of dying is the only thing that keeps me alive."

In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul deals with this question in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word "gospel" means good news. And the good news is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides positive answers to three of the most important questions we can ask about life after death.

- 1. Is There Life after Death?** The answer is YES! Jesus' resurrection proved it. Verses 3-5 contain the essence of the Christian's belief. ³*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* The Old Testament had predicted that the Messiah was going to die. It said that He would be led like a sheep to the slaughter. Jesus' death was not the accidental death of a martyr. It was the deliberate death of a person who offered His life as a sacrifice. God laid on Him ALL of OUR sins; He became OUR substitute on the cross. A woman wrote J. Vernon McGee: "Our preacher said that on Easter Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed him back to health. What do you think?" McGee replied, "Dear Sister, beat your preacher with a leather whip for thirty-nine heavy strokes. Nail him to a cross. Hang him in the sun for six hours. Run a spear through his heart. Embalm him. Put him in an airless tomb for three days. Then see what happens. See if he JUST swoons." Jesus Christ died AND He was buried AND He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Jesus was laid in a BORROWED tomb. When you borrow something, you're just going to use it temporarily. Jesus Christ came back. He strolled out of that tomb very much alive. When the women went to the tomb to anoint His body, they discovered the tomb was empty. The angel said, "*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here; he is risen just the way he said that he would.*" Now, Paul says emphatically, "*We know Jesus is alive because we have seen him.*" Peter saw Him alive. He ate breakfast with Him and had discussions with Him. The twelve disciples saw him alive. They were in the Upper Room when

suddenly Jesus appeared and said, *"See the nail prints in my hands."* He appeared to 500 people at once AND He appeared to the Apostle James, who was beheaded for the belief that Jesus was alive. Paul said, *"Last of all, he appeared to me, too."* So the resurrection verifies that there is LIFE AFTER DEATH. When I was in grade school, we questioned whether man would ever make it to the moon. Reasons were offered as to why it was unlikely. "Well, it's so far and there's no oxygen on the moon. And the gravitational pull is supposed to be one-sixth that of the earth. How do we get there and get back into the atmosphere?" Then on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong walked on the face of the moon. We don't ask that question anymore, because the demonstration eliminates the discussion. Jesus Christ DEMONSTRATED that there is life after death. In verse 12, Paul seems a little perplexed as to why people even asked the question. "If it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" Now, we cannot prove that Jesus came back from the grave. It's not on Facebook or Youtube. We can't put it in a test tube or show a video. It happened before anyone of us were born. Jesus doesn't come physically and preach from our pulpit so that we see Him visibly. But there is ample evidence to believe. We have the eyewitness testimonies in Scripture. We have the testimony of millions of people whose lives have been changed by Christ over the centuries. The Easter hymn says - "You ask me how I know He lives. He lives within my heart!" We have the calendar and the church. And we have the Holy Spirit convicting us in our hearts today that He's alive. So YOU have the option to examine the evidence and BELIEVE it OR DISBELIEVE it. Winston Churchill chose to believe. Churchill arranged his own funeral. I found that interesting, in that, the two funerals I recently attended had been arranged by the deceased themselves. In Winston Churchill's funeral, there were stately hymns in St. Paul's Cathedral and an impressive liturgy. But at the end of the service, Churchill had an unusual event planned. After the benediction was said, a bugler high in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral on one side played "Taps," the universal signal that the day is over. There was a long pause. Then a bugler on the other side played "Reveille," the military wake-up call. It was Churchill's way of communicating that while we say "Good night" here, it's "Good morning" up there. Now why would he do that? Because he believed in Jesus Christ, who said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me though he were dead, yet shall he live."*

- 2. What Is Life after Death Like?** In verse 20, Paul teaches that Jesus demonstrated it. *"Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."* "Firstfruit" means an example of that which is to come. In other words, if you want to know what it's like to die and live again, look at the experience of Jesus. First, there was a separation from the body. Just before Jesus died, He said, *"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."* Jesus' dead body was buried in a tomb, but His spirit went to be with the Father. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, *"This day you're going to be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). When we die, our spirits go immediately to be with God while our body goes to the grave. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:8, *"To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."* WHITE GLOVE ILLUSTRATION: Just as it's the hand that animates a glove, so the spirit energizes a body. When the spirit departs, the body, like a lifeless glove, is put aside. We don't return to reinhabit a number of other bodies like reincarnation teaches, and we don't go to a place where we're purged of our sin for years. We go directly to be with God when we die. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. So there's a departure of the spirit from the body, then comes the resurrection of the body. After three days, Jesus came back into that tomb to reinhabit that same body. The grave clothes were left behind. He showed his disciples the nail scars in His hands and feet. In John 5:28, Jesus said, *"Now don't be amazed at this. But the time is coming when all that are in the grave will hear his voice and come out."* If God has the power to make matter out of energy, if He has the power to make Adam out of the dust of the ground, then He has the power to recreate our decomposed bodies. The Bible says, *"Nothing is impossible with God."* When Jesus suggested that He was going to open up the tomb of Lazarus, Lazarus's sister Martha objected. "Oh no. He's been dead four days. There's already a bad odor. His body's already beginning to decompose." Jesus said, *"Martha, you're going to see the glory of God."* He rolled the stone away, and He called out, *"Lazarus, come forth"* (John 11:43). Some suggest that if Jesus hadn't specifically called Lazarus to come forth, that all those in that graveyard would have come forth. This man who had been dead for four days came out of the grave. It won't matter if you've been dead four days, four centuries, or four millennia. When Christ commands it, there will be a resurrection of the body! 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says the Lord will come down from heaven with the spirits of those who have fallen asleep, and there will be a loud command and the dead in Christ will rise first. Some of the old-time believers insisted on being buried facing east because they believed that Jesus Christ was going to return in the eastern sky. When they came up out of the grave, they wanted to be facing Jesus! Someone suggested that today, in our carnal mindset, we want an airtight crypt and a watertight

casket. I've bought my gravesite. It won't be long until my tombstone will be paid for. BUT I haven't purchased a casket yet. I'm looking for one with a light, easy open, flip-top lid. I just want to come out of there as fast as I can! Now some skeptic may say, "Aw, that's too fanciful to believe." Let me ask you a question: If you never saw a birth, and I tried to describe it to you, would you believe it? How many have seen a real live birth? This tiny, unseen little sperm from a man is combined with this tiny, unseen little egg from a woman, and they form a cell, and those cells begin to multiply. Nine months later, out comes this baby with hands, arms, eyes, and starts screaming. You'd say, "No way. You've got to be kidding me." That's a miracle we see over and over again, but we take it for granted because it is so common. It is no more difficult for God to raise the dead than it is to create life. Our resurrected body will be a physical body. In Luke 24:31 Jesus appeared in the Upper Room with the disciples, and they thought he was a ghost. *"He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I, myself. Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.'"* When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still struggled to believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them, *"Do you have anything here to eat?"* They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it in their presence. Jesus ate AFTER He rose from the dead. I've not given a lot of thought about eating in heaven, although I've probably given more than enough thought to eating here. I don't suspect that we'll have to worry about fat grams or high blood pressure or cholesterol. The Bible says we'll sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Our resurrected body will eat. How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have? God has demonstrated in the plant life what happens. You take a shriveled-up kernel of corn, and you put it in the ground. It decomposes, and in a couple weeks a little green shoot comes up. It becomes a corn stalk and then produces a fruitful ear of corn. Take a petrified, shriveled up body that's been put in the ground. It decomposes, but one day, by the power of God, it is going to come up a glorified body. It is sown a NATURAL body; it's going to be reaped a SPIRITUAL body. It is sown a PERISHABLE body; it's going to be raised an IMPERISHABLE body. It is sown a WEAK body; it's going to be raised in POWER. In verses 38-41, Paul says you just trust God. ³⁸*"But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. ³⁹All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. ⁴⁰There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory."* God is able to create a body that will perfectly fit into its intended environment. He creates fish with scales so that they can survive under water. He creates birds with feathers so they can fly in the air. And He's able to create us with a resurrected, immortal body that will never perish, spoil, or fade. In verse 52 He says, *"The dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."* Now, that's good news! This 60-year-old body is missing a right kidney, a right adrenal gland, tonsils, appendix, gall bladder, some teeth and hair by the day. I'm not planning to pick up where I left off. I plan on collecting my GLORIFIED body. He says the perishable will clothe itself with the imperishable and then the saying that is written will come true: "Death will be swallowed up in victory." You read in the Gospel of John that Jesus was on the shore and He made a campfire. He had caught some fish, and He cooked them, and then He walked with the disciples on the shore. Heaven is going to be a place of activity. Jesus said, *"In my Father's house there are many rooms."* You know what it's like to go to Disney World or to Universal Studios? You get these brochures, and there are all these things that you want to do, and you try to compact them into a day. Jesus said in His Father's house are many rooms. I picture one room of just worship. We go into that room and just worship the Lord. We can sing "Amazing Grace" and "This Is Amazing Grace!" We'll hear Jesus teach, and we can listen to Paul. We'll hear the best music ever heard. *"Eye has not seen and ear has not heard what has been prepared for those who love Him."* Someone suggested there might be an instant-replay room where you can go and relive any moment in history exactly like it transpired. I don't know about that. I've read that there is a "great gulf fixed." This I do know - there won't be any revisionist history. We will be able to see exactly what happened. Maybe there's a question & answer room where you can hear the Lord answer the tough questions that we've never been able to answer here. How about an instructional room where you can learn how to do things you didn't have time to do on the earth? Heaven is described as a city. A city is a place that is abuzz with activity. In my Father's house there are many rooms, many activities. How many fishermen do we have here? If Jesus fished after He rose from the dead, maybe we'll go fishing with our resurrected bodies. It is my understanding that our bodies are going to be identifiable bodies. Even though Jesus' body was changed somewhat, He was recognized by the disciples when He wanted to be. The Bible teaches us when we're raised from the dead, we will retain our personalities and have fellowship with one another. The Bible

says we're going to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If we're going to know those guys we've never met, then it makes sense to me that we're going to be able to identify each other. To me, that's one of the warmest tugs of heaven – to be able to be with people we loved on earth, to be reunited with NO threat of DISUNITY or SEPARATION ever again! Perhaps there is an arrival board up in heaven with a schedule of who's coming each day. *"It IS appointed unto man once to die."* *"All the days ordained for me were written before one of them came to be."* All the friends gather inside the gate. After you meet Jesus Christ, He'll walk you through. There they will be, cheering when you come in! The old song goes, "Friends will be there I have loved long ago, and joy like a river around me will flow. Yet just a smile from my Savior, I know, will through the ages be glory for me."

- 3. How Can We Obtain Eternal Life?** Well, Jesus purchased it. If life after death were for sale, how much would it cost? Doesn't matter – we couldn't afford it anyway! You can't afford eternal life. Heaven is the dwelling place of God, a place of perfection, and we have forfeited our right to be there because of our sin. The only purchase price is the blood of a perfect person – and you and I don't qualify. So we don't deserve it and we can't earn it. The good news is that Jesus Christ stepped in to pay the debt for us. 1 Corinthians 15:56-57 says, ⁵⁶*"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."* When Jesus Christ died on that cross, He paid our sin debt in full! So, you can't EARN it, but you HAVE to receive it! I can think of two reasons why you would refuse such a fantastic offer. 1. One is your LOVE FOR SIN. There's a sense in which eternal life doesn't cost you anything. There's ANOTHER sense in which it costs you EVERYTHING! We are to confess Him and be baptized as a line of separation, saying, "I'm leaving the old world behind, and I'm going on to a new life with Christ." You may be so in love with materialistic things or the party activities of this world that you won't give them up. You may rationalize and make excuses, but the bottom line is, you're too in love with this world to receive the hope of eternal life. For you, death will be TAPS (Day is Done), not Reveille. 2. The second reason people reject the offer of Christ is because of PERSONAL PRIDE. Maybe you have a keen mind, and your greatest asset is your greatest liability. There's plenty of good evidence to verify the resurrection of Jesus, but it can't be proven, and you have to accept it in faith, like a humble child. Or maybe you've achieved a lot of status and you've accumulated a lot of money, and you have to come to Christ like a pauper, and it's hard to swallow your pride because you can't boast of a new discovery or a personal achievement when you come to Him.
- 4. Conclusion: Life with Hope.** Golfer Paul Azinger recovered from chemotherapy and returned to the PGA tour. He did rather well. But, that bout with cancer changed his perspective. He wrote, "I've made a lot of money since I've been on the tour, and I've won a lot of tournaments, but THAT happiness is always temporary. The ONLY WAY you will ever have true contentment is in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I'm not saying that nothing ever bothers me and I don't have problems, but I feel like I've found the answer to the six-foot hole. I know I'll spend eternity with God and I have a promise – that as a child of God, He'll help me deal with anything. He promises to offer me contentment, regardless of what life brings – even cancer." If a man dies, will he live again? YES! Jesus proved it. Jesus demonstrated it. AND Jesus Christ purchased it for you. It's up to you, if you haven't already, to receive it.