

Strong logic, deductive reasoning throughout the entire chapter.

“If A is true, then B is true, which means C is true.”

Why does Paul become so clearly linear in such deductive reasoning here?

Remember what he had just said about who he was, which made him the least of the apostles? He was a persecutor of the church. He was the last person, or type of person, that you would think would believe in Jesus as the Messiah. So, what happened to him? What made him change, switching sides to the persecuted? The resurrection.

The abrupt expulsion of his former assumptions concerning Jesus was catalyzed on that Damascus road where the resurrected and reigning and living Jesus revealed Himself to Paul, “and lastly, as one untimely born, he appeared to me.” The resurrection catastrophically changed Paul. It changed his mind, for sure, but it also changed his heart and imagination and values. It changed his behaviors and his efforts. The physical resurrection of Jesus *argued* Paul into a transformed life.

Review 3-9 – the historical argument for the resurrection of Jesus

1. Empty tomb

Sir Norman Anderson: "It was the solid fact of the empty tomb and their totally unexpected encounters with the risen Lord Himself that brought them--although not always at once--from despair to triumphant joy." (*Jesus Christ the Witness of History*, p117)

2. Eyewitnesses

C. H. Dodd: "Something had happened to these men, which they could describe only by saying that they had 'seen the Lord.' This is not an appeal to any generalized 'Christian experience.' It refers to a particular series of occurrences, unique in character, unrepeatabe, and confined to a limited period." (*The Founder of Christianity*, p168)

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians sometime between 16-18 years after the resurrection itself. Many of the eyewitnesses he claims are still alive and available to question

3. Changed lives

Paul, of course, is a prime example, but even the Judeans whom he claims are eyewitnesses must have been testifying to the resurrection *at an enormous cost socially, relationally, financially*.

It was common practice for Christians to be thrown out of the synagogue, which was not only being tossed from your religious community, but the social and civic community as well. It would have had drastic financial and social implications. It was at baptism into faith in the resurrected Jesus that one lost family, friends, business, and standing.

These eyewitnesses would have borne such travails and suffering, like the apostles of whom traditions hold that all but one were martyred. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, and this was THE central component of their sacrificial faith, and they KNEW that the resurrection was a farce, it would be insane for them to sacrifice so much.

Wolfhart Pannenberg: “The evidence for Jesus’ resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.” (to *Prism* magazine, March/April 1997)

In fact, that second statement is the real reason that people deny the resurrection of Jesus, because its implications of the authority of Jesus are staggering. People want to live how they want to live, as the poor theologian Billy Joel wrote in *Only the Good Die Young*, "I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints." You see, it is not evidence that moves people to deny the resurrection, it is idolatry, with ironically religious reasons. Aldous Huxley was particularly honest when he spoke of atheism's conclusion of the meaninglessness of life,

"The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics. He is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do. For myself, as no doubt for most of my friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom. The supporters of this system claimed that it embodied the meaning - the Christian meaning, they insisted - of the world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and justifying ourselves in our erotic revolt: we would deny that the world had any meaning whatever." (*Ends and Means*)

Thus, the empty tomb, the eyewitnesses, and the changed lives of Jesus' disciples (by the hundreds) were not philosophical arguments meant to make life easier or to free oneself from some kind of inner morbidity, but were historically verifiable events by which anyone could have easily investigated and proven the falsity of the Christian claim of resurrection from the dead. As Wolfhart Pannenberg explained that early Christians could not possibly have preached the resurrection of Christ publicly and successfully unless both the empty tomb and these hundreds of eyewitnesses really existed, for "How could Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem have proclaimed his resurrection if they could be constantly refuted merely by viewing the grave in which his body was interred?" (*Jesus, God and Man*, p100)

In other words, the resurrection of Jesus *must logically be true* because Christianity would have never been able to make such an audacious claim if there were no eyewitness OR no empty tomb. It would be easily refuted. If there were only an empty tomb, but no sightings of Him risen, then people would argue that the body was stolen (as they tried). If sightings of Him, by themselves, would have been classified as delusions or visions, which were not uncommon claims in the ancient world. But as N.T. Wright puts it, "However, an empty tomb and appearances of a living Jesus, taken together, would have presented a powerful reason for the emergence of the belief." (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p686)

There are objective and historical reasons for believing that Jesus was raised from the dead because the resurrection of Jesus is an objective historical claim. It is not a subjective "he has risen in my heart" or "I've had an experience with Jesus" moment. Even though Paul did meet the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus in a way in which others have not, even those around him at the time, does not mean that Paul argued for such a subjective experience for others in order to prove the resurrection. Rather, look what he does in Acts 25-26 when he defends himself against accusations from the Jewish leadership in Caesarea to King Agrippa (who had been in Judea during the resurrection) and Festus, the Roman governor. It's all about the resurrection. The Jews bring charges against Paul and Paul defends himself and appeals to Caesar. Here is how Festus relates this first tribunal with Paul (25:7-12):

"When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. Rather, they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive." (25:18-19)

So Festus, needing to write up charges according to legal standard of investigative and forensic nature, is confused at what to write back to Rome concerning such charges. Agrippa then wants to hear from Paul, and so Paul lays out his Jewish upbringing and his opposition to the church, his gratitude that Agrippa was accustomed to the "customs and controversies of the Jews" so that he could know *objectively* such things, and begins to explain the historical events of the gospel by saying "I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and

that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” (26:22-23)

At this mention of the resurrection from the dead and the superiority of Christ to enlighten all men, Festus breaks in ‘with a loud voice’ saying, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind!”

Now, here is where we see Paul’s foundational appeal to believe the gospel. He doesn’t defend his sanity by appealing to the Damascus Road and saying, “I’ve seen it! And I hope that one day you’ll have a similar experience.” Rather, look at how he appeals to public, historic, objective facts to be investigated and believed by King Agrippa:

“But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.’” (26:25-26)

Paul had said that he once didn’t want to deal with these historical facts, either, denying them and attacking those who believed them, but now he knows and calls all around him to become as he is, except for those chains. And he appeals to Agrippa’s knowledge *of historical, verifiable* events in Jerusalem and Judea.

Often today people are fine if you believe in Jesus *if it makes you happy*, and that is often the only verification presented by Christians. “Well, it works for me,” seems to be the implication given as to why the gospel is true and believable. And this plays into the intolerant tolerance of the world, which I’m sure is why Christians present it in such a way. It’s easier and more acceptable, less offensive and off-putting. “It works for me, but I wouldn’t dare insist that you must believe it to be true, too!”

But Paul doesn’t ever defend the resurrection of Jesus that way at all! He didn’t believe in Jesus because it fulfilled him. In fact, He didn’t want to believe in Jesus. He tried to exterminate the name. There was nothing which was fulfilling about him at all! He was a threat to everything that Paul had: his righteousness, his self-reliance, his worldview, to social justice, his social acceptance, his peace, his friends, his ability to control his own life, everything! But he had to, because the evidence for the resurrection was overwhelming.

The fact that hundreds of orthodox Jews gave up every social standing, every comfort, every self-exaltation, everything, in order to entrust themselves to a crucified and risen Son of God surely wasn’t wish fulfillment, whatever it was, because it brought suffering and pain and expense, not power. Maybe you’re here today and you’re not sure about this Jesus-stuff. Don’t start with how it makes you feel. You need to deal with the eyewitness accounts, the empty tomb (the inability for the enemies of Christianity to present a body and squash it right away), the transformed lives of cowards becoming martyrs. Can you come up with an alternative historical origin for the beginning and growth of the Christian church?

Many well-meaning Christians present a Jesus who fulfills your greatest desires. Yet, Jesus doesn’t. Jesus is an historical Jesus, a real Jesus, not a dream-fulfiller. What I mean by this is that the true Jesus confronts us and embraces us, judges us and forgives us, and corrects us and speaks tenderly to us. You see, a Jesus that the natural man accepts because it fulfills his desires is only a Jesus which reflects his own values. Yet, what does this Jesus look like when I’m guilty? He is guilt-preaching, hammer-down merciless. What does he look like when I approve of sin? He approves of sin. But a true Jesus, an historical Jesus, differs from me. He has hard edges, conviction, and conflict. He judges me. He loves me. Both without deferring to me. Only a God who can contradict you can love you when you hate yourself and only a God who can contradict you can bring you back when you wander off.

W.H. Auden was an atheist poet who returned to Christ after a long prodigality, put it this way,

“If a man who is in love is asked what gives his beloved such unique value for him over all persons, he can only answer: ‘She is the fulfillment of all my dreams.’ If the questioner has undergone any similar experience, the subjectivity of his answer causes no offense because the lover makes no claim

that others should feel the same. He not only admits that ‘she is beautiful’ means ‘she is beautiful for me but not necessarily for you’ but glories in this admission.

If a man who professes himself a Christian is asked why he believes Jesus to be the Christ, his position is much more difficult, since he cannot believe this without meaning that all who believe otherwise are in error, yet at the same time he can give a no more objective answer than the lover: ‘I believe because he fulfills none of my dreams, because He is in every respect the opposite of what He would be if I could have made Him in my own image.’

Thus, if a Christian is asked: ‘Why Jesus and not Socrates or Buddha or Confucius or Mohomet?’ perhaps all he can say is: ‘None of the others arouse *all* sides of my being to cry “Crucify Him!”’ (*The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose, Vol.II, pp196-197*)

Jesus, the true, real, historical Jesus is not at all what the human soul would request or desire in a Savior. He demands exclusive allegiance, calls you to carry a cross and die, and like Auden wrote that he excites ALL sides of my being to cry out, “Crucify Him!” Thus, the fact that we believe is not because Jesus fulfilled our dreams. No, he transforms our dreams through conviction, repentance, humility, and utter dependence. His resurrection must be true, for nobody would concoct a man like this.

Paul continues with, “Look, there are some serious implications if you continue to reject the historical fact of resurrection. Not least of which is that to deny all physical resurrection is to deny the resurrection of Jesus, and that has implications salvation from God’s wrath, any existence of the Church and all its relationships, any morality/virtue, and any hope at all. Let us follow his deductive reasoning through v19.

QUESTION: How Can One Deny That Resurrection Exists and Still Believe the Gospel?

1. There are those who deny that physical resurrection exists
 - a. They “spiritualize” the resurrection into a subjective experience of ‘deeper’ or ‘more meaningful’ soul growth
 - b. Or, they deny any metaphysical life or after-life, and make everything about here and now
2. Yet, to deny this is to deny the gospel itself, for its central claims is a resurrected Jesus
3. Cultural worldviews rewrite the definitions of the gospel
 - a. Spiritualism - all material things are illusion? (Platonic, Pythagorean)
 - b. Naturalism - all immaterial things are illusion? (Epicurean, Sadducee)
 - i. In either case, the bodily resurrection from the dead is deemed nonsensical.
4. Is it possible that contemporary beliefs, values, and worldviews affect the church?! :)

IMPLICATIONS OF DENYING THE PHYSICAL RESURRECTION OF THE BODY:

1. Implications to the Gospel (v14):
 - a. If resurrection from the dead does not exist, then not even Christ has been raised!
 - i. So, the logical conclusion of denying the physical resurrection of our bodies, because resurrection from the dead doesn’t exist, is to deny the physical resurrection of Jesus.
 - ii. Many claimed this then
 1. Pythagoreans held to a notion of “the soul being released from the body at death, with good souls flying to the upper realms.” (Bold, *Life, Death, and the Afterlife*, p69)
 2. Plutarch, the Roman historian, taught that the soul could attain a divine destination in the abode of the gods only by freeing itself from attachment to the senses and becoming “pure, fleshless, and undefiled.” (*Romulus* 28.6)
 3. This kind of gnostic belief still exists today in the eastern religions such as Buddhism, but also often functionally exists as the concept of ‘resurrection’ in the church, particularly the liberal church
 - b. If Christ has not been raised,
 - i. then our proclamation is empty
 1. If Christ is still physically dead, then the preaching of the gospel, even that of the apostles, *doesn’t accomplish anything good.*

2. “empty” is the word used in v10 and indicates that something is ineffective in achieving its end or purpose
3. So, preaching doesn’t accomplish any end which it sets out to accomplish if Jesus never was raised from the dead
- ii. then your faith is empty
 1. Not only is this preaching ineffective to accomplish good, but so is your reception of the preaching ineffective to accomplish anything good
 2. In other words, both preaching and believing are worthless in every way if Jesus was not raised from the dead physically

2. Implications to the Church (v15):

- a. We are discovered also to be false-witnesses of God!
 - i. It gets worse!
 - ii. Not only is our preaching ineffective to accomplish anything good, and therefore futile and worthless, but we are actively opposing God by making him out to be a liar!
 1. This is serious stuff
 - a. Paul cannot conceive of a “faith” whereby one accepts the apostles as good men and yet denies the resurrection of the dead
 2. Because we testified against God if, consequently, the dead are not raised
 - a. Saying that he raised the Christ, whom he did not raise
 - iii. False witnesses stand under the judgement of God
 1. Exodus 20:16; Deut 5:20
 2. The only other use of this word in the NT is used to describe the men who lied during Jesus’ trial (Matt 26:60), meaning that Paul lump himself together with those who plotted to execute Jesus, if Jesus was not raised from the dead.
- b. Therefore, there cannot be a church, says the apostle, which denies the resurrection from the dead, and also treats himself and the other apostles with favor, acceptance, or honor instead of rebuke, admonition, and judgment
 - i. This is because the central tenet of the Christian faith is the Son of God who was raised from the dead
 - ii. It’s not just about the concept of resurrection, but about the nature and work of Jesus Himself and the redemption of humanity, and indeed, all the earth
 1. N.T. Wright: “The crucial point is not just that they are believing the rubbish about the resurrection, and about Jesus, but that *the new age in which sins are left behind has not after all been inaugurated...*For Paul the point of the resurrection is not that the creator God has done something remarkable for one solitary individual...but that, in and through the resurrection, ‘the present evil age’ has been invaded by the ‘age to come’, the time of restoration, return, covenant renewal, and forgiveness.”
 2. The creation itself awaits such a physical renewal of a physical world with a physical King
 - a. Romans 8:18-23

3. Implications to Your Redemption (16-18):

- a. For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised
- b. If Christ has not been raised
 - i. then your faith is worthless
 1. Here is a value word, “worthless”
 2. This is not merely a recapitulation of the former syllogism, but a new word which means “ineffective because it lied about what it was”
 - a. It has a meaning of deception, falsity, like an idol ‘pretends’ to have the power of God, etc (Acts 14:15)
 - ii. then you are still in your sins
 1. Here is the hammer!
 2. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then your sins are not forgiven and you are not justified before God.

- a. All that was said three weeks ago about God's righteous wrath, judgment, death, condemnation would still be upon you
 - b. So, does the physical resurrection from the dead matter?!
 - c. It has great theological and existential importance that we will be raised from the dead physically as Jesus was raised from the dead physically
 3. The resurrection of Jesus, physically, is the great 'receipt' that proves He 'paid in full' for our sins
 - a. Without a receipt, you have no proof of payment
 - b. The resurrection is the receipt, the proof of your justification before God, that Jesus was a substitute sacrifice
 - iii. consequently also those who fell asleep in Christ were ruined.
 1. They are destroyed, lost, condemned, judged as worthless and evil and enemies of God
 2. They are ruined, not rescued, says Paul, if there is no resurrection from the dead
 3. ILLUSTRATION: The truck and the shadow
 - iv. This is because the object of our faith, the one whom has the power and capability and right and authority to rescue us from our sins and their catastrophic curse, would be DEAD, under the very curse he is supposed to rescue us from
 1. Not because your faith wouldn't exist (it would), but it would be ineffective because its object was ineffective
 2. It is not the presence or perfection of faith in anything which can be said to be that through which we are rescued, but particularly and solely faith upon Christ Jesus, the conqueror of sin and death
4. Implications to Your Present Joy (v19): If in this life alone we hope in Christ, then we are the miserable of all people
 - a. If, because Christ Jesus has been raised, we are told that our sufferings are "light and momentary afflictions producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond compare", then what if the "eternal weight of glory beyond compare" was absent and replaced with "still in your sins?"
 - i. These present afflictions would still be light and momentary, but what comes after *would be horrifically worse!!*
 - ii. Thus, Christians would be the most miserable, hopeless, hapless, futile beings on the planet
 1. Just what many atheists claim for Christians today.
 - b. The miseries that came, particularly then, were sufferings and losses which would have been useless
 - i. Thus, Paul says later, 'you might as well eat, drink, and be merry' if Jesus isn't raised from the dead
 1. This is an allusion from Isa 22:13 where the citizens of Jerusalem were under siege, awaiting their coming doom, and chose to party as if nothing was wrong
 2. It is also a slight slam at the, most likely, Pythagoreans who would have considered such dissolution to be a vice
 - a. The Epicureans were those who denied the afterlife, and would have said, 'eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die'
 - b. Those in Corinth denying the resurrection were most likely anti-Epicurean, and Paul here likens them to such, which would have been repulsive
 - c. So, Paul assumes that we will value the things of God and the life to come and therefore not be given over to some kind of nihilistic hedonism of only pursuing pleasures of this earth
 - i. So, it is a pragmatic argument: if you value morality, the resurrection of the Son of God is vital!

Conclusion: Since Jesus has been raised from the dead, however, we can construct the positive glories for Christians:

1. You are not in a miserable position, but a joyfully expectant one
 - a. Fix your eyes on your hope to come so that your current sufferings become "light and momentary afflictions in comparison to the eternal weight of glory at the resurrection of your bodies."

- b. Learn to see these afflictions as being “productive”, producing that glory for you, so that you value them (not love them!), but see them working out your good (Rom 8:28)
- 2. You are not ruined, but rescued from God’s coming wrath
 - a. You will be raised up “in Him”, clothed in the righteousness of Christ
- 3. You are not in your sins, but justified before God and now his friend
 - a. “If you were to obey for a thousand years, you would not be more accepted than you are when you first placed your faith in Christ Jesus.” (Paul Tripp)
- 4. You do not merely have hope in this life, but look forward to your own resurrection to glory
 - a. This joy cannot compare to the joy of His presence, where its fullness dwells (Ps 16:15)
- 5. Your faith is not ineffectual, but powerful because your Savior is alive to lean on
 - a. Your trust in Him, your dependence upon Him to bring all the good of God Himself, will not fail because death could not hold Him for He is the Son of God in whom the Father delights and will not turn away
- 6. Our proclamation is not ineffectual, but powerful to bring salvation to all who believe and to exalt the greatness of the glory of God in the face of the risen Lord Jesus.
 - a. We have hope that our gospel proclamation WILL bring about the transformation of those who believe
 - b. Those who believe in Jesus will not be disappointed, for they will be raised in power (1 Cor 6:14; 15:43)