

The Resurrection Ascension and Return of Jesus Christ, Part 1

We Believe In Jesus' Bodily Resurrection ([1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#); [Luke 24:4-7](#); [36-48](#); [Revelation 1:17-18](#))

INTRODUCTION

How important is the belief that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead? Isn't it enough to follow Jesus' moral teachings and example? Don't the miracles attributed to Jesus—including especially His Resurrection—cast a shadow of doubt on the whole religion?

For those to whom Jesus is just a myth, the Resurrection is a major reason why they think Jesus is a myth. The dead cannot come back to life. Therefore, Jesus is a myth and Christianity is just a religious fantasy.

For those who view Jesus' death as a martyrdom, the Resurrection is simply a metaphor representing His legacy which lives on in the minds and hearts of His followers. So Jesus is merely a legend, and Christianity is only a code of morals.

But the Scriptures say that Christ's Resurrection is *OF FIRST IMPORTANCE!* Paul wrote,

For what I received I passed on to you AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8 NIV)

Paul went on to write about the resurrection, and argued . . .

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Corinthians 15:13-19 NIV)

The problem with all of the alternate interpretations of Jesus Christ's Resurrection, is the empty grave—which skeptics have never been able to explain or refute—as well as the testimony of eyewitnesses—who saw Him die and who saw Him after His resurrection, and who risked everything, including their lives, proclaiming the Resurrection.

In addition, we have the testimonies of tens of millions over the last two thousand years who have experienced new life through their belief in the Resurrection. For the Scriptures say, ***That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*** (Romans 10:9 NIV)

And so, we believe Jesus really died, and that He really rose from the dead, proving He was who He said He was. Because, as Paul wrote, Jesus ***was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead . . .*** (Romans 1:4)

In this message, I'd like to consider just some of the implications of this belief in Jesus' Resurrection.

JESUS' BODILY RESURRECTION

First of all, Jesus' resurrected body was a material body. We believe that because He invited His disciples to touch Him. He even ate with them. Luke records in his gospel, . . .

While [Jesus' disciples] were still talking about [what the two disciples had told them when they saw Jesus as they were traveling to Emaus], Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise 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 did not 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 TOOK IT AND ATE IT IN THEIR PRESENCE. (Luke 24:36-43 NIV)

But if Jesus' body was material—"flesh and bone"—how do we explain His apparent sudden appearance and disappearance?

While [the disciples] were still talking about this, Jesus himself [suddenly] stood among them . . . (Lk. 24:36a)

And regarding the two disciples who were walking to Emmaus, Luke said that ***As***

they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; BUT THEY WERE KEPT FROM RECOGNIZING HIM.
(Luke 24:13-16 NIV)

The explanation of Jesus' apparent sudden appearance and disappearance, speaks to both His deity, as well as to our perception—or lack thereof.

It wasn't that Jesus dematerialized and was transported from one place to another. Jesus—as fully God—is omnipresent; He is everywhere, all the time. That's why He could say He would be with us and never leave us.

The problem is with our inability to perceive God—who is Spirit—whereas our perception is physical. But God can open our eyes to see into the spiritual realm; He did it many times in the Old Testament. When Jesus was suddenly recognizable, or seemed to suddenly appear to His disciples, God simply opened their eyes so they could see Him.

The implication of this fact is awesome! Jesus is here with us, right now! He promised us He would be.

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.
(Matthew 18:20 NIV)

And when we leave this place, Jesus will go with each one of us! He has promised us. ***And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.***" (Matthew 28:20 NIV) ***"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*** (Hebrews 13:5 NIV)

OUR BODILY RESURRECTION

Another implication of Jesus' resurrection is that His Resurrection was the first—or "first fruits"—of all who will be resurrected. We too will be raised from the dead and given material bodies with which we may interact with this physical world.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2 NIV)

... our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21 NIV)

In the beginning, before sin and death entered into mankind's experience, we were created physical beings; that's what God designed us to be. The only difference between what we were designed to be and what we are now, is sin and death.

But God is restoring His creation to its condition before sin and death corrupted it. We will once again be physical creatures, but without sin and its consequences.

I don't imagine I need to inform or convince anyone here of Jesus' Resurrection. And I'm confident that most—if not all of us—are well aware of the hope that we too will be raised from the dead and given new, glorified bodies, that will never have to endure suffering, pain, illness or death again.

But what I believe we need to constantly be aware of is the question that begs to be asked: In light of Jesus' Resurrection, . . .

HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

While there are probably many things we can and should say about this, let me just touch on three things the Bible says we should do in light of Christ's Resurrection and our hope of resurrection.

First, we ought to **live with a passionate desire to know the power of Christ's Resurrection in our lives**, as Paul did, when he wrote . . .

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11 NIV)

This *knowledge of the power* of Christ's Resurrection is so important that Paul specifically prayed for the Ephesians that they might know that Resurrection power:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know . . . his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,
(Ephesians 1:18-20 NIV)

That Resurrection power includes a position of authority, because as Paul went on to say in Ephesians 2:6, ***And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,*** (Ephesians 2:6 NIV)

What is that power and authority for? It is a power and authority over sin and Satan!

We are no longer under the bondage of Satan's deception and corruption of sin.

Second, in light of Christ's Resurrection and the hope we have of resurrection, we ought to **live with the objective of giving our lives to God, knowing that in return, He will give us eternal life.**

You may have seen the article in the local paper on Tuesday about how young Europeans are going to places like Syria and joining Islamic jihad and radical Muslims. An image in a recent video clearly showed a 22-year-old Frenchman by the name of Maxime Hauchard, who took part in the beheading of more than a dozen Syrian soldiers.

Hauchard gave an interview to France's BFM television in July, in which he said, "We're waiting for death. My objective is to be a martyr."

These radical Muslims are willing to kill and die for their beliefs. What are we willing to do for ours?

Jesus said, ***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*** (Luke 9:23 NIV)

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24-25)

If we really believe that Jesus will raise up our dead bodies and give us new bodies that will never die again, or be sick, or grow old, or suffer pain, then we should spend our lives serving Him and others in love and sacrifice.

Thirdly, in light of the Resurrection and the hope we have, we are to live a life of purity, because ***Everyone who has this hope*** [of receiving a new body like Jesus'] . . . ***purifies himself, just as he is pure.*** (1 John 3:3 NIV)

We're ***to offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is [our] spiritual act of worship.*** [We must] ***not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind.*** (Romans 12:1-2 NIV)

We must avoid anything that corrupts or defiles our bodies, because our bodies don't belong to us alone. As Paul wrote, ***Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV)

CONCLUSION

Exiled to the island of Patmos, the apostle John received a revelation of Jesus Christ. And he wrote, ***When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*** (Revelation 1:17-18 NIV)

[Just as we have bodies of] ***flesh and blood, [Jesus also] shared in [our] humanity so that by his death [and Resurrection] he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*** (Hebrews 2:14-15 NIV)

Jesus said . . . , "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26 NIV)

If you do believe, and confess "Jesus is Lord" with you mouth, you will be saved from death and the power of sin.