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Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	Resurrection in the Old Testament	4
Chapter 2	Purpose of resurrection not understood	6
Chapter 3	Stir caused by Jesus resurrection	14
Chapter 4	Our bodies will be resurrected	22
Chapter 5	Jesus died and rose again	27
Chapter 6	Jesus appearance after the resurrection	36
Chapter 7	Physical and resurrected bodies	43

Forward

Jesus' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith.

(1) Just as he promised, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that he will accomplish all he has promised.

(2) Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ is ruler of God's eternal kingdom, not a false prophet or imposter.

(3) We can be certain of our resurrection because he was resurrected. Death is not the end—there is future life.

(4) The power that brought Jesus back to life is available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life.

(5) The resurrection is the basis for the church's witness to the world. Jesus is more than just a human leader; he is the Son of God.

We all have bodies—each looks different, each has different strengths and weaknesses.

All believers are promised life after death and bodies like Christ's (1 Cor. 15:49), resurrection bodies.

Life is only for a short time, but in our new resurrected body, we will live for all eternity. Preparation for eternity is now.

Chapter 1



Resurrection in the Old Testament

Psalm 17:15

**But because I have done what is right, I will see you.
When I awake, I will be fully satisfied; for I will see you face to face.**

The word *awake* shows that David believed in life after death. Although belief in resurrection was not widespread in Old Testament times, several verses show that it was partially understood.

Some of these are Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 49:15; Psalm 139:17-18; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2, 13.

Isaiah 26:19

**Yet we have this assurance:
Those who belong to God will live;
Their bodies will rise again!
Those who sleep in the earth
Will rise up and sing for joy!
For God's light of life will fall like dew
On his people in the place of the dead!**

The people realized the pain of being away from God's presence, and yet they are assured that they will live again. God turned his back on his people when they disobeyed, but a small number never lost hope and continued to seek him.

No matter how difficult times may be, we have hope when we keep our trust in him. We must wait patiently for God to act?

Some people say there is no life after death. Others believe that there is, but it is not physical life.

But Isaiah tells us that our bodies shall rise again. According to 1 Cor. 15:50-53, all the dead believers will arise with new imperishable bodies—bodies like the one Jesus had when he was resurrected (see Phil. 3:21). I

Daniel 12:2

Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

This is a clear reference to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, although the eternal fates of each will be quite different.

Up to this point in time, teaching about the resurrection was not common, although every Israelite believed that one day he or she would be included in the restoration of the new kingdom.

This reference to a bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost was a sharp departure from common belief. (See also Job

Chapter 2



Disciples didn't understand purpose of Jesus' resurrection

Matthew 17:22-23

One day after they had returned to Galilee, Jesus told them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed.

He will be killed, but three days later he will be raised from the dead." And the disciples' hearts were filled with grief.

Once again Jesus predicted his death (see also Matthew 16:21); but more important, he told of his resurrection. Unfortunately, the disciples heard only the first part of Jesus' words and became discouraged. They couldn't understand why Jesus wanted to go back to Jerusalem where he would walk right into trouble.

The disciples didn't fully comprehend the purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection until Pentecost (Acts 2).

We shouldn't get upset at ourselves for being slow to understand everything about Jesus. After all, the disciples were with him, saw his miracles, heard his words, and still had difficulty understanding. Despite their questions and doubts, however, they believed. We should do no less.

The disciples didn't understand why Jesus kept talking about his death because they expected him to set up a political kingdom.

His death, they thought, would dash their hopes. They didn't know that Jesus' death and resurrection would make his kingdom possible.

Luke 18:31-34

Gathering the twelve disciples around him, Jesus told them, "As you know, we are going to Jerusalem. And when we get there, all the predictions of the ancient prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true.

He will be handed over to the Romans to be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. They will whip him and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again."

But they didn't understand a thing he said. Its significance was hidden from them, and they failed to grasp what he was talking about.

Some predictions about what would happen to Jesus are found in Psalm 41:9 (betrayal); Psalm 22:16-18 and Isaiah 53:4-7 (crucifixion); Psalm 16:10 (resurrection).

The disciples didn't understand Jesus, apparently because they focused on what he said about his death and ignored what he said about his resurrection.

Even though Jesus spoke plainly, they would not grasp the significance of his words until they saw the risen Christ face to face.

How Jesus proved reality of the resurrection

Matthew 22:31-32

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Jesus avoided this trap by showing that we have dual citizenship (1 Peter 2:17). Our citizenship in the nation requires that we pay money for the services and benefits we receive. Our citizenship in the kingdom of heaven requires that we pledge to God our primary obedience and commitment.

Nothing could keep Jesus from the resurrection

Matthew 27:66

So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

The Pharisees were so afraid of Jesus' predictions about his resurrection that they made sure the tomb was thoroughly sealed and guarded.

Because the tomb was hewn out of rock in the side of a hill, there was only one entrance. The tomb was sealed by stringing a cord across the stone that was rolled over the entrance. The cord was sealed at each end with clay. But the religious leaders took a further precaution, asking that guards be placed at the tomb's entrance.

With such precautions, the only way the tomb could be empty would be for Jesus to rise from the dead. The Pharisees failed to understand that no rock, seal, guard, or army could prevent the Son of God from rising again.

Jesus' resurrection key to Christian faith.

Matthew 28:6

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come; see the place where the Lord lay.

Jesus' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. Why?

- (1) Just as he promised, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that he will accomplish all he has promised.
- (2) Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ is ruler of God's eternal kingdom, not a false prophet or imposter.
- (3) We can be certain of our resurrection because he was resurrected. Death is not the end—there is future life.
- (4) The power that brought Jesus back to life is available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life.
- (5) The resurrection is the basis for the church's witness to the world. Jesus is more than just a human leader; he is the Son of God.

Mark 16:6

And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

The resurrection is vitally important for many reasons:

Luke 24:6-7

He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

The angels reminded the women that Jesus had accurately predicted all that had happened to him (Luke 9:22, 44; Luke 18:31-33).

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the central fact of Christian history. On it, the church is built; without it, there would be no Christian church today.

Jesus' resurrection is unique. Other religions have strong ethical systems, concepts about paradise and afterlife, and various Holy Scriptures.

Only Christianity has a God who became human, literally died for his people, and was raised again in power and glory to rule his church forever.

Why is the resurrection so important?

(1) Because Christ was raised from the dead, we know that the kingdom of heaven has broken into earth's history. Our world is now headed for redemption, not disaster. God's mighty power is at work destroying sin, creating new lives, and preparing us for Jesus' second coming.

(2) Because of the resurrection, we know that death has been conquered, and we too will be raised from the dead to live forever with Christ.

(3) The resurrection gives authority to the church's witness in the world. Look at the early evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts: the apostles' most important message was the proclamation that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead!

(4) The resurrection gives meaning to the church's regular feast, the Lord's Supper. Like the disciples on the Emmaus Road, we break bread with our risen Lord, who comes in power to save us.

(5) The resurrection helps us find meaning even in great tragedy. No matter what happens to us as we walk with the Lord, the resurrection gives us hope for the future.

(6) The resurrection assures us that Christ is alive and ruling his kingdom. He is not legend; he is alive and real.

(7) God's power that brought Jesus back from the dead is available to us so that we can live for him in an evil world.

Christians can look very different from one another, and they can hold widely varying beliefs about politics, life-style, and even theology. But one central belief unites and inspires all true Christians—Jesus Christ rose from the dead

John 20:9

For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

As further proof that the disciples did not fabricate this story, we find that Peter and John were surprised that Jesus was not in the tomb. When John saw the grave clothes looking like an empty cocoon from which Jesus had emerged, he believed that Jesus had risen. It wasn't until after they had seen the empty tomb that they remembered what the Scriptures and Jesus had said—he would die, but he would also rise again!

1 Cor. 15:13-18

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.

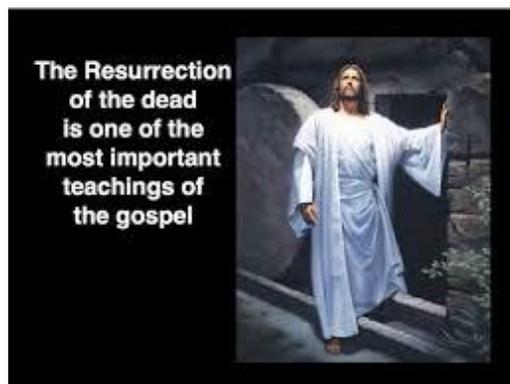
For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

The resurrection of Christ is the center of the Christian faith. Because Christ rose from the dead as he promised, we know that what he said is true—he is God.

Because he rose, we have certainty that our sins are forgiven.

Because he rose, he lives and represents us to God. Because he rose and defeated death, we know we will also be raised.

Chapter 3



Stir caused by Jesus' resurrection.

Matthew 28:11-15

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Jesus' resurrection was already causing a great stir in Jerusalem. A group of women was moving quickly through the streets, looking for the disciples to tell them the amazing news that Jesus was alive. At the same time, a group of religious leaders was plotting how to cover up the resurrection.

Today there is still a great stir over the resurrection, and there are still only two choices—to believe that Jesus rose from the dead, or to be closed to the truth—denying it, ignoring it, or trying to explain it away.

The reason for sharing our faith

Mark 16:15

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world, telling everyone that he had paid the penalty for sin and that those who believe in him can be forgiven and live eternally with God.

Christian disciples today in all parts of the world are preaching this gospel to people who haven't heard about Christ. The driving power that carries missionaries around the world and sets Christ's church in motion is the faith that comes from the resurrection.

Do you ever feel as though you don't have the skill or determination to be a witness for Christ? You must personally realize that Jesus rose from the dead and lives for you today.

As you grow in your relationship with Christ, he will give you both the opportunities and the inner strength to tell his message.

Jesus' resurrection body

Luke 24:36-43

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

And he said unto them, why are ye troubled and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.

Jesus' body wasn't just a figment of the imagination or the appearance of a ghost—the disciples touched him, and he ate food.

On the other hand, his body wasn't merely a restored human body like Lazarus's (John 11)—he was able to appear and disappear. Jesus' resurrected body was immortal. This is the kind of body we will be given at the resurrection of the dead (see 1 Cor. 15:42-50).

Of unbelievers to judgment

John 5:29

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Those who have rebelled against Christ will be resurrected too, but to hear God's judgment against them and to be sentenced to eternity apart from him. There are those who wish to live well on earth, ignore God, and then see death as final rest. Jesus does not allow unbelieving people to see death as the end of it all. There is a judgment to face.

Rev. 2:11

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Persecution comes from Satan, not from God. Satan, the devil, will cause believers to be thrown into prison and even killed. But believers need not fear death, because it will only result in their receiving the crown of life. Satan may harm their earthly bodies, but he can do them no spiritual harm.

The “synagogue of Satan” means that these Jews were serving Satan’s purposes, not God’s, when they gathered to worship.

“Ten days” means that although persecution would be intense, it would be relatively short. It would have a definite beginning and end, and God would remain in complete control.

Pain is part of life, but it is never easy to suffer, no matter what the cause. Jesus commended the church at Smyrna for its faith in suffering.

He then encouraged the believers that they need not fear the future if they remained faithful.

If you are experiencing difficult times, don’t let them turn you away from God. Instead let them draw you toward greater faithfulness. Trust God and remember your heavenly reward (see also Rev. 22:12-14).

Proves Jesus has eternal life

John 12:23-25

And Jesus answered them, saying, the hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit.

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

This is a beautiful picture of the necessary sacrifice of Jesus. Unless a kernel of wheat is buried in the ground, it will not become a blade of wheat producing many more seeds.

Jesus had to die to pay the penalty for our sin, but also to show his power over death. His resurrection proves he has eternal life. Because Jesus is God, Jesus can give this same eternal life to all who believe in him.

We must be so committed to living for Christ that we “hate” our lives by comparison. This does not mean that we long to die or that we are careless or destructive with the life God has given, but that we are willing to die if doing so will glorify Christ.

We must disown the tyrannical rule of our own self-centeredness. By laying aside our striving for advantage, security, and pleasure, we can serve God lovingly and freely.

Releasing control of our lives and transferring control to Christ bring eternal life and genuine joy.

Effect the resurrection had on the disciples

Acts 1:1-3

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Luke says that the disciples were eyewitnesses to all that had happened to Jesus Christ—his life before his crucifixion (“suffering”), and the 40 days after his resurrection as he taught them more about the kingdom of God.

Today there are still people who doubt Jesus’ resurrection. But Jesus appeared to the disciples on many occasions after his resurrection, proving that he was alive.

Look at the change the resurrection made in the disciples’ lives. At Jesus’ death, they scattered—they were disillusioned, and they feared for their lives.

After seeing the resurrected Christ, they were fearless and risked everything to spread the Good News about him around the world. They faced imprisonment, beatings, rejection, and martyrdom, yet they never compromised their mission.

These men would not have risked their lives for something they knew was a fraud. They knew Jesus was raised from the dead, and the early church was fired with their enthusiasm to tell others.

It is important to know this so we can have confidence in their testimony. Twenty centuries later we can still be confident that our faith is based on fact.

Jesus explained that with his coming, the kingdom of God was inaugurated. When he returned to heaven, God's kingdom would remain in the hearts of all believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

But the kingdom of God will not be fully realized until Jesus Christ comes again to judge all people and remove all evil from the world. Before that time, believers are to work to spread God's kingdom across the world.

The book of Acts records how this work was begun. What the early church started, we must continue.

Many will doubt it.

1 Cor. 15:5-8

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

There will always be people who say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead.

Paul assures us that many people saw Jesus after his resurrection:

Peter saw him.

The twelve disciples saw him.

More than 500 Christian believers (most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote this, although some had died);

James (Jesus' brother); all the apostles; and finally Paul himself saw Jesus after the resurrection.

The resurrection is an historical fact. Don't be discouraged by doubters who deny the resurrection. Be filled with hope because of the knowledge that one day you, and they, will see the living proof when Christ returns.

This James is Jesus' brother, who at first did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (John 7:5). After seeing the resurrected Christ, he became a believer and ultimately a leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13). James wrote the New Testament book of James.

Paul's most important credential to be an apostle was that he was an eyewitness of the risen Christ (see Acts 9:3-6).

Abnormally born" means that his was a special case. The other apostles saw Christ in the flesh. Paul was in the next generation of believers—yet Christ appeared to him.

Chapter 4



Our bodies will be resurrected with our spirits

1 Cor. 15:12

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Most Greeks did not believe that people's bodies would be resurrected after death. They saw the afterlife as something that happened only to the soul. According to Greek philosophers, the soul was the real person, imprisoned in a physical body, and at death the soul was released.

There was no immortality for the body, but the soul entered an eternal state. Christianity, by contrast, affirms that the body and soul will be united after resurrection.

The church at Corinth was in the heart of Greek culture. Thus many believers had a difficult time believing in a bodily resurrection. Paul wrote this part of his letter to clear up this confusion about the resurrection.

What our resurrected bodies will be like.

1 Cor. 15:3

But some man will say, how are the dead raised up and with what body do they come?

Satan seemed to be victorious in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) and at the cross of Jesus. But God turned Satan's apparent victory into defeat when Jesus Christ rose from the dead (Col. 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15). Thus death is no longer a source of dread or fear. Christ overcame it, and one day we will also. The law will no longer make sinners out of us who cannot keep it. Death has been defeated, and we have hope beyond the grave.

How Jesus' resurrection should affect your life

1 Cor. 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Paul says that because of the resurrection, nothing we do is in vain. Sometimes we hesitate to do good because we don't see any results. But if we can maintain a heavenly perspective, we will understand that we often will not see the good that results from our efforts.

If we truly believe that Christ has won the ultimate victory, that fact must affect the way we live right now.

Don't allow discouragement over an apparent lack of results keep you from working. Do the good that you have opportunity to do, knowing that your work will have eternal results.

Proves Christ's lordship over material world

Col. 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Christ is the “firstborn from among the dead.” Jesus was raised from death, and his resurrection proves his lordship over the material world.

All who trust in Christ will also defeat death and rise again to live eternally with him (1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Thes. 4:14).

Because of Christ's death on the cross, he has been exalted and elevated to the status that was rightfully his (see Phil. 2:5-11).

Because Christ is spiritually supreme in the universe, surely we should give him first place in all our thoughts and activities.

Of believers at Jesus' second coming

1 Thes. 4:13

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.

The Thessalonians were wondering why many of their fellow believers had fallen asleep (died) and what would happen to them when Christ returned.

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand that death is not the end of the story. When Christ returns, all believers—dead and alive—will be reunited, never to suffer or die again.

False teachers' view about the resurrection

2 Tim. 2:18

Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

The false teachers were denying the resurrection of the body. They believed that when a person became a Christian, he or she was spiritually reborn, and that was the only resurrection there would ever be.

To them, resurrection was symbolic and spiritual, not physical. Paul clearly taught, however, that believers will be resurrected after they die, and that their bodies as well as their souls will live eternally with Christ (1 Cor. 15:35ff; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Thes. 4:15-18).

We cannot shape the doctrines of Scripture to match our opinions. If we do, we are putting ourselves above God. Instead, our beliefs should be consistent with God's Word.

Views about the first resurrection

Rev. 20:5-6

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

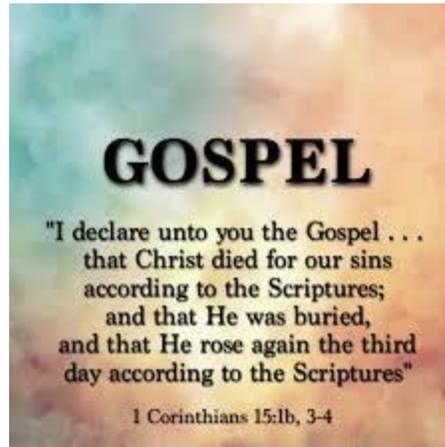
During this time, we are priests of God because Christ reigns in our hearts. In this view, the second resurrection is the bodily resurrection of all people for judgment.

Many Bible scholars believe the first resurrection occurs after Satan has been set aside. It is a physical resurrection of believers who then reign with Christ on the earth for a literal 1,000 years.

The second resurrection occurs at the end of this Millennium in order to judge unbelievers who have died.

They see the second death is an everlasting separation from God (see Rev. 21:8).

Chapter 5



JESUS ACTUALLY DIED AND AROSE

This evidence demonstrates Jesus' uniqueness in history and proves that he is God's Son. No one else was able to predict his own resurrection and then accomplish it.

Proposed Explanations for Empty Tomb

Mark 15:44-45

And Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died so quickly, so he asked an official to verify the report.

Today, in an effort to deny the resurrection, there are those who say that Jesus didn't really die. His death, however, was confirmed by the centurion, Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea, the religious leaders, and the women who witnessed his burial.

Jesus suffered actual physical death on the cross.

John 19:32-34

Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs:

But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

It was against God's law to leave the body of a dead person exposed overnight (Deut. 21:23), and it was also against the law to work after sundown on Friday, when the Sabbath began.

This is why the religious leaders urgently wanted to get Jesus' body off the cross and buried by sundown.

These Romans were experienced soldiers. They knew from many previous crucifixions whether a man was dead or alive. There was no question that Jesus was dead when they checked him, so they decided not to break his legs as they had done to the other victims.

Piercing his side and seeing the sudden flow of blood and water (indicating that the sac surrounding the heart and the heart itself had been pierced) was further proof of his death.

Some people say Jesus didn't really die, that he only passed out—and that's how he came back to life. But we have the witness of an impartial

party, the Roman soldiers, that Jesus died on the cross (see Mark 15:44-45).

The Roman soldiers would break victims' legs to hasten the death process. When a person hung on a cross, death came by suffocation, but the victim could push against the cross with his legs to hold up his body and keep breathing. With broken legs, he would suffocate almost immediately.

The graphic details of Jesus' death are especially important in John's record because he was an eyewitness.

John 19:38-40

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight.

Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Four people were changed in the process of Jesus' death.

The criminal, dying on the cross beside Jesus, asked Jesus to include him in his kingdom (Luke 23:39-43).

The Roman centurion proclaimed that surely Jesus was the Son of God (Mark 15:39).

Joseph and Nicodemus, members of the Jewish council and secret followers of Jesus (John 7:50-52), came out of hiding. These men were changed more by Jesus' death than by his life.

They realized who Jesus was, and that realization brought out their belief, proclamation, and action. When confronted with Jesus and his death, we should be changed—to believe, proclaim, and act.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were secret followers of Jesus. They were afraid to make this allegiance known because of their positions in the Jewish community.

Joseph was a leader and honored member of the Jewish council. Nicodemus, also a member of the council, had come to Jesus by night (John 3:1) and later tried to defend him before the other religious leaders (John 7:50-52).

Yet they risked their reputations to provide for Jesus' burial. Are you a secret believer? Do you hide your faith from your friends and fellow workers? This is an appropriate time to step out of hiding and let others know whom you follow.

This tomb was probably a cave carved out of the stone hillside. It was large enough for a person to walk into, so Joseph and Nicodemus carried Jesus' body into it. A large stone was rolled in front of the entrance.

As they buried Jesus, Nicodemus and Joseph had to hurry to avoid working on the Sabbath, which began Friday evening at sundown.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw Jesus placed in the tomb.

On Sunday morning Peter and John also went to the same tomb.

Matthew 27:59-61

And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

The tomb where Jesus was laid was probably a man-made cave cut out of one of the many limestone hills in the area. These caves were often large enough to walk into.

Mark 15:47

And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

These women could do very little. They couldn't speak before the Sanhedrin in Jesus' defense; they couldn't appeal to Pilate; they couldn't stand against the crowds; they couldn't overpower the Roman guards.

But they did what they could. They stayed at the cross when the disciples had fled; they followed Jesus' body to its tomb; and they prepared spices for his body. Because these women used the opportunities they had, they were the first to witness the resurrection.

God blessed their devotion and diligence. As believers, we should take advantage of the opportunities we have and do what we *can* for Christ, instead of worrying about what we *cannot* do.

Luke 23:55

And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid.

The Galilean women followed Joseph to the tomb, so they knew exactly where to find Jesus' body when they returned after the Sabbath with their spices and perfumes

As believers, we may feel we can't do much for Jesus. But we are called to take advantage of the opportunities given us, doing what we *can* do and not worrying about what we cannot do.

John 20:3-9

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, which he must rise again from the dead.

The tomb was sealed and guarded by Roman soldiers.

Matthew 27:65-66

Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

The Pharisees were so afraid of Jesus' predictions about his resurrection that they made sure the tomb was thoroughly sealed and guarded. Because the tomb was hewn out of rock in the side of a hill, there was only one entrance.

With such precautions, the only way the tomb could be empty would be for Jesus to rise from the dead. The Pharisees failed to understand that no rock, seal, guard, or army could prevent the Son of God from rising again.

The disciples were ready to die for their faith.

Acts 12:2

And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

James and John were two of the original 12 disciples who followed Jesus. They had asked Jesus for special recognition in his kingdom (Mark 10:35-40).

Jesus said that to be a part of his kingdom would mean suffering with Jesus (drink from the same cup—Mark 10:38-39). James and John did indeed suffer—Herod executed James, and later John was exiled (see Rev. 1:9).

Why did God allow James to die and yet miraculously save Peter? Life is full of difficult questions like this.

Why is one child physically disabled and another child athletically gifted? Why do people die seemingly before realizing their potential? These are questions we cannot possibly answer in this life because we do not see all that God sees.

He has chosen to allow evil in this world for a time. But we can trust God's leading because he has promised to destroy all evil eventually. In the meantime, we know that God will help us use our suffering to strengthen us and glorify him.

Peter was arrested during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the week-long festival directly following Passover. This was a strategic move, since more Jews were in the city than usual, and Herod could impress the most people.

Herod's plan undoubtedly was to execute Peter, but the believers were praying for Peter's safety. The earnest prayer of the church significantly affected the outcome of these events. Prayer changes things, so pray often and with confidence.

God sent an angel to rescue Peter. Angels are God's messengers. They are divinely created beings with supernatural powers, and they sometimes take on human appearance in order to talk to people. Angels should not be worshiped, because they are not divine. They are God's servants, just as we are.

Chapter 6



JESUS' APPEARANCES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

Mark 16:7

But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

The angel made special mention of Peter to show that, in spite of Peter's denials, Jesus had not disowned and deserted him. Jesus had great responsibilities for Peter to fulfill in the church that was not yet born.

The angel told the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee "as he told you" (see Mark 14:28).

This is where Jesus had called most of them and had said they would become "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19), and it would be where this mission would be restated (John 21).

But the disciples, filled with fear, remained behind locked doors in Jerusalem (John 20:19).

Jesus met them first in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36) and later in Galilee (John 21).

Then he returned to Jerusalem where he ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12).

Jesus gives the great commission:

Jesus told his disciples to go into the entire world, telling everyone that he had paid the penalty for sin and that those who believe in him can be forgiven and live eternally with God.

Christian disciples today in all parts of the world are preaching this gospel to people who haven't heard about Christ.

The driving power that carries missionaries around the world and sets Christ's church in motion is the faith that comes from the resurrection.

Perhaps you may as though you don't have the skill or determination to be a witness for Christ?

You must personally realize that Jesus rose from the dead and lives for you today. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, he will give you both the opportunities and the inner strength to tell his message.

Jesus appeared to ten disciples behind closed doors

Luke 24:36-43

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

And he said unto them, why are ye troubled and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.

And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb.

Jesus' body wasn't just a figment of the imagination or the appearance of a ghost—the disciples touched him, and he ate food. On the other hand, his body wasn't merely a restored human body like Lazarus's (John 11)—he was able to appear and disappear.

Jesus' resurrected body was immortal. This is the kind of body we will be given at the resurrection of the dead (see 1 Cor. 15:42-50).

Jesus was seen of a crowd of 500

1 Cor. 15:6

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

Jesus' brother James

1 Cor. 15:7-10

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

There will always be people who say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Paul assures us that many people saw Jesus after his resurrection: Peter; the disciples (the Twelve); more than 500 Christian believers (most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote this, although some had died); James (Jesus' brother); all the apostles; and finally Paul himself.

The resurrection is an historical fact. Don't be discouraged by doubters who deny the resurrection. Be filled with hope because of the knowledge

that one day you, and they, will see the living proof when Christ returns. (For more evidence on the resurrection, see the chart in Mark 15:47.)

This James is Jesus' brother, who at first did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (John 7:5). After seeing the resurrected Christ, he became a believer and ultimately a leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13). James wrote the New Testament book of James.

Paul's most important credential to be an apostle was that he was an eyewitness of the risen Christ (see Acts 9:3-6).

“Abnormally born” means that his was a special case. The other apostles saw Christ in the flesh. Paul was in the next generation of believers—yet Christ appeared to him.

As a zealous Pharisee, Paul had been an enemy of the Christian church—even to the point of capturing and persecuting believers (see Acts 9:1-3).

Thus he felt unworthy to be called an apostle of Christ.

Though undoubtedly the most influential of the apostles, Paul was deeply humble.

He knew that he had worked hard and accomplished much, but only because God had poured kindness and grace upon him.

True humility is not convincing yourself that you are worthless, but recognizing God's work in you. It is having God's perspective on who you are and acknowledging his grace in developing your abilities.

Paul wrote of working harder than the other apostles. This was not an arrogant boast because he knew that his power came from God and that it really didn't matter who worked hardest. Because of his prominent position as a Pharisee,

Paul's conversion made him the object of even greater persecution than the other apostles; thus he had to work harder to preach the same message.

Those who watched Jesus ascend into heaven

Luke 24:44-49

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Many days may have elapsed between verses 43 and 44 because Jesus and his followers traveled to Galilee and back before he returned to heaven (Matthew 28:16; John 21).

In his second book, Acts, Luke makes it clear that Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples between his resurrection and ascension.

The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms is a way to describe the entire Old Testament. In other words, the entire Old Testament points to the Messiah. For example, his role as prophet was foretold in Deut. 18:15-20; his sufferings were prophesied in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53; his resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16:9-11 and Isaiah 53:10-11.

Jesus opened these people's minds to understand the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit does this in our lives today when we study the Bible. Have you ever wondered how to understand a difficult Bible passage? Besides reading surrounding passages, asking other people, and consulting reference works, pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind to understand, giving you the needed insight to put God's Word into action in your life.

Chapter 7



PHYSICAL AND RESURRECTED BODIES

All believers are promised life after death and bodies like Christ's resurrected body.

1 Cor. 15:49

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Our present bodies are perishable and prone to decay. Our resurrection bodies will be transformed.

These spiritual bodies will not be limited by the laws of nature. This does not necessarily mean we'll be super people, but our bodies will be different from and more capable than our present earthly bodies. Our spiritual bodies will not be weak, will never get sick, and will never die.

Our physical bodies are perishable. Our resurrected bodies will be imperishable.

Our physical bodies are sown in dishonor. Our resurrected bodies will be raised in glory.

Our earthly bodies are sown in weakness, but shall be raised in power.

Our earthly bodies are natural, but become spiritual.

Our present bodies are from the dust, but our resurrected bodies are from heaven.

We all have bodies—each looks different, each has different strengths and weaknesses. But as physical, earthly bodies, they are all alike. All believers are promised life after death and bodies like Christ's (1 Cor. 15:49), resurrection bodies.

Life is only for a short time, but in our new resurrected body, we will live for all eternity. Preparation for eternity is now.



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