

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be looking at the resurrection.

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John 5

26 For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself,
27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also because he is the Son of Man.
28 Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice,
29 And shall come forth--they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust--
30 And shall all be judged of the Son of Man. For as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just;

Acts 24

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets,
15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.
16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

Paul attested strongly that he believed in the resurrection. Jesus began early in his ministry to speak about the resurrection of the just and the unjust, which Paul likewise affirmed in his defense to Felix. Indeed, Paul amplified his defense with this:

Acts 24

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.
18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult,
19 Who ought to have been here before thee and object if they had aught against me.
20 Or else let these same here say if they have found any evil doing in me while I stood before the council,
21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question by you this day.

Much of Paul's ministry centered around the topic of the resurrection. He could speak with certainty because the only time he had met Jesus was after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. It was a center-point of his conversion experience to speak with a being that he "knew" from all reports to have been crucified and slain. Yet there he was talking with Jesus while he was on his way to Damascus.

Both Jesus and Paul spoke of two resurrections, though: the Just and the Unjust. For the sake of this article I'll focus on the former, as it is the one we should strive for.

In modern movies the idea of “the dead coming out of their graves” would surely be the definition of a horror movie, but what Jesus described was the opposite of it. Paul described it as a “hope towards God” which was admitted by the Pharisees at the time.

What intrigues me is that except for the Inspired Version, there are no other bibles that use the word “resurrection” in the Old Testament. It must have been a well-enough known term because there was an entire sect of the Jews – the Sadducees - that explicitly denied the resurrection, while the Pharisees accepted it. Why doesn’t the Christian world think it odd that such an important doctrinal subject is not identified by name in their Old Testaments, but the people in the New Testament books are very familiar with the idea?

This “hope towards God” was a central part of the apostles’ ministry. After all, without Jesus’ resurrection, it would have made him an interesting character, but nothing more. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the key ingredient to history that proves his words and the words of the prophets were inspired by a true and living God. The apostolic ministry was dependent to a very great degree upon the testimony of being a witness of the resurrected Christ. When selecting a new apostle to replace Judas Iscariot, they discussed this matter and decided on this course of action:

Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us--must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

They did not choose just anyone – this person had to have an unshakeable foundation in this testimony: they had to have knowledge. Jesus had told the apostles early on that more blessed are those that would believe on their (the apostles’) words. That word had to be secure within them because they would all face some of the greatest trials of any preachers in the history of scripture up to that time.

Paul could give this same testimony, as I’m sure Barnabas did – they were both ordained as apostles at the same time after some of the other apostles had been martyred.

There are some who might use the term “resurrection” interchangeably with “raised from the dead,” but it should be understood that these are not equivalent terms. There are records of numerous people in the scriptures that have been raised from the dead, but none of them are identified as resurrected beings. There is a good reason for that. Let’s examine a few examples to see what the difference is.

1 Kings 17

17 And it came to pass after these things, that **the son of the woman**, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that **there was no breath left in him**.

18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, **by slaying her son**?

21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, **let this child's soul come into him again**.

22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; **and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived**.

23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

Though there may be some who would debate whether the son of the woman actually died, Elijah knew that he had died when he called upon the Lord asking why the Lord had slain the son. It further goes on to show that his soul returned into him and was revived. This is not some advanced form of CPR – the child was dead, but his life was returned to him.

Is that a resurrection? In the literal sense it was impossible that this could be a resurrection like those mentioned in the New Testament. More on that in a minute.

To shorten the passage I'll quote the most specific verses in the new testament about a relative of Jesus named Lazarus.

John 11

11 These things said he; and after that, he saith unto them, **Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.**

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, **Lazarus is dead.**

17 And when Jesus came to Bethany, to Martha's house, **Lazarus had already been in the grave four days.**

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, **I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.**

25 Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection and the life;** he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for **he hath been dead four days.**

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, **Lazarus, come forth!**

44 And **he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes;** and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Then many of the Jews, which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

John 12:1 Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, **where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.**

9 Much people of the Jews, therefore, knew that he was there; and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but **that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.**

10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death,

17 **The people, therefore, that were with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave and raised him from the dead, bare record.**

You'll notice here that Jesus never said that he had resurrected Lazarus, but in all cases it testifies that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. They must not be the same thing.

For another example, Jesus raised a young girl from the dead:

Mark 5

31 And when he was come in, he said unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

32 But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying;

33 And he took the damsel by the hand and said unto her, **Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.**

34 And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was twelve years old. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

35 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

We understand from these passages that Lazarus was properly dead and buried for four days before Jesus raised him from the dead, while this “Damsel” had just taken her “last” breath. It was pretty clear to everyone else that the “Damsel” was dead, but Jesus quietly persisted, telling them to believe.

Mark 5

27 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, a man who said, **Thy daughter is dead.** Why troublest thou the Master any further?

28 As soon as he spake, Jesus heard the word that was spoken and said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid; only believe.

To add further, Jesus must have raised others from the dead. We know this from Luke’s testimony, in which John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to confirm that he was the one who was supposed to come to redeem his people.

Luke 7:22 Then Jesus, answering, said unto them, Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, **the dead are raised**, and to the poor the gospel is preached.

When exactly this took place during Jesus’ ministry we don’t particularly know (the four gospel testimonies are not synchronous in the telling of events). It was important for John to be told that Jesus was raising the dead during his ministry. This was a big deal as it was one of the things signifying who Jesus was.

I have mentioned more than once that these instances absolutely could **not** have been resurrections, but why do I say that?

2 Nephi 1

71 Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

72 Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

73 Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the holy Messiah,

74 **Who layeth down his life according to the flesh and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit,**

75 **That he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.**

76 Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men;

77 And they that believe in him shall be saved.

1 Corinthians 15:20 But **now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits** of them that slept.

Jesus was the first to be resurrected because he is the firstfruits of them that slept – the first to rise by the power of the Spirit. His resurrection from the dead made it possible for all others to be resurrected. There could simply be no possibility of any others who preceded him in the resurrection.

So that leads to the conclusion that there is a difference between being raised from the dead – as has happened in a number of cases through the old and new testaments – and being resurrected.

This leads to a natural set of conclusions for me: those that were raised from the dead, such as the widow's son, Lazarus, the Damsel, and others, indeed had their spirit brought back into their body. But it was brought back into the same body, which was healed of whatever causes led to their deaths. We don't have a follow-up history of these individuals, but there is no reason they couldn't have led long lives until they faced a final, mortal death. There is no indication that the body their spirit was returned to had characteristics like those described by Jacob, Abinidi, Amulek, or Alma, Jr. in the Book of Mormon, namely,

2 Nephi 6:32 And the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men **become incorruptible and immortal**; and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh,

Mosiah 8

83 **Even this mortal shall put on immortality; and this corruption shall put on incorruption** and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil--

84 If they be good, to the resurrection of endless life and happiness, and if they be evil, to the resurrection of endless damnation,

Alma 8

98 For behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead, and stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

99 Now there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death;

100 **The spirit and the body shall be reunited again, in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time;**

...

103 **And even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but all things shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body,**

..

105 Now behold, I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body and also concerning the resurrection of the mortal body.

106 **I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body--that is, from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more--their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided;**

107 **Thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption.**

Alma 19

57 Yea, this bringeth about the restoration of those things of which have been spoken by the mouths of the prophets.

58 **The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.**

59 And now, my son, **this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets.** And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God.

60 But behold, an awful death cometh upon the wicked; for they die as to things pertaining to things of righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God;

The resurrection spoken of by these prophets shows us that this is not as “simple” as raising someone from the dead. It is a complete transformation of the body into an immortal and incorruptible state. It is this form of body that is the only kind of body that is able to stand before God without being consumed by his glory.

Since as long ago as the prophet Job, we know that we must stand before God in the flesh.

Job 19

25 For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth;

26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,

27 Whom I shall see for myself; and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.

Job knew that there would have to be a complete restoration of the body to its perfect form. Ezekiel saw this also:

Ezekiel 37

4 Again, he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, **O ye dry bones**, hear the word of the Lord.

5 Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, **I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live;**

6 And **I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you; and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.**

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise and, behold, a shaking; and **the bones came together, bone to his bone.**

8 And when I beheld, lo, **the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above;** but there was no breath in them.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind; prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, **Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.**

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them; and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

11 Then he said unto me, **Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel;** behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts.

12 Therefore, prophesy and say unto them, **Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.**

13 And ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

14 And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord.

This shows to a prophet living in Babylon, who had lived in captivity there for his entire life, that the House of Israel would be restored limb upon limb and flesh upon flesh and that it would breathe again with the breath of life from the Spirit of the Lord.

This is not only a “raising of the dead” but an altogether new thing that would come about by the action of Jesus. It is the restoration of all things.

Jesus was the firstfruits, but not the only fruits. We know that **after** Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, there were many others who were brought out of their graves and showed themselves to many, both in the old world and the new world:

Matthew 27

56 And the graves were opened; and the bodies of the saints which slept, arose, who were many,

57 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Helaman 5:80 And many highways shall be broken up; and many cities shall become desolate; **and many graves shall be opened and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many.**

3 Nephi 10

35 And when Nephi had brought forth the records and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said,

36 Verily, I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me, that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them.

37 And he said unto them, Were it not so?

38 And his disciples answered him and said, Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.

39 And Jesus said unto them, How be it that ye have not written this thing--that many saints did arise, and appear unto many, and did minister unto them?

40 And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written.

This was no mere localized occurrence. It happened world-wide. Can you imagine the experience of meeting people whom you knew had passed some time before and were now restored to their perfect bodies, and to have them share some of their experience with you?

This is the power of the resurrection. This is why Jesus was the first: there could simply be no other.

Each year we celebrate Easter as a way of remembering the day that Jesus arose from the dead, but I am not so sure we appreciate what that truly means. For any other religion they have figures that did what are claimed to be wonderful things, but they did them for themselves. Jesus did all of this for us so that we might join him in the eternal kingdom of God.

When we read about how the bodies we will receive in the resurrection are incorruptible, that means there is no more hunger, thirst, fatigue, illness, weakness, aging, or struggle for survival in any way. There is no more death or sorrow for the righteous. It says in Revelation the following:

Revelation 21

4 And God **shall wipe away all tears from their eyes**; and there shall be **no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.**

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.

Do you make the connection between the resurrection of Jesus and the final chapters of the book of Revelation? If you don't, you really should. It is a straight and unwavering line. That is the hope Jesus offers to us, but we must look forward with that hope so that it can work a change within us, that we may receive the assurance of that eternal life with him. This is what the love of Jesus can do for you and me.