



FIRST STEPS

STUDIES TO BEGIN YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST
By Marlon Furtado

“Resurrection of Christ”

The Meaning of Resurrection

Jesus was tortured, killed, and laid in a tomb on a Friday. On Sunday morning He came back to life. We refer to this as His **resurrection**, which was completely different than anyone else who was raised back to life.

Elijah and Elisha were Old Testament prophets who each raised someone from the dead (1 Kings 17 and 1 Kings 4).

Jesus raised a young girl (Luke 8) and a widow's son (Luke 7). After Lazarus had been dead for four days, Jesus brought him back to life (John 11).

These were indeed miracles. But we do not refer to them as **resurrections** because all these people died again at a later time. Jesus was resurrected, never to die again. His resurrected body was no longer subject to weakness or disease or death. It was a body designed to live forever.

The Fact of Jesus' Resurrection

All the gospel writers as well as the Apostle Paul witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Yet a handful of theories have been advanced in an attempt to explain it away, saying that it never really happened.

Theories commonly advanced in an attempt to disprove the Resurrection

- **Swoon** - Says that Jesus never actually died. He only passed out. Then, inside the coolness of His tomb, He revived, and was able to escape.
Rebuff: Actual witnesses attested to Jesus' death, especially after driving a spear into His heart!
- **Wrong Tomb** - Jesus died and was placed in a tomb. However, in their haste the disciples did not pay close attention to where it was located. The women went to the wrong tomb, and because it was empty they assumed Jesus was resurrected.
Rebuff: All the Jewish or Roman authorities had to do, then, was take them to the correct tomb and show them that Jesus was still there!
- **Disciples Stole the Body** - Jesus had predicted His resurrection. Because the disciples wanted Jesus' popularity to remain high, they sneaked into the tomb and stole the body. Later, they agreed to lie that Jesus had come back to life.
Rebuff: These frightened disciples would have had to quietly move the stone from the tomb's entrance without attracting the attention of the posted soldiers. Then they would have taken the time to unwrap Jesus' body and rewrap the grave cloths to make it look like Jesus rose.

The Significance of Jesus' Resurrection

Christianity hinges on whether Jesus was actually resurrected or not. No other religion makes the claim that its founder was resurrected. Every single one of them is still in the grave. Only Jesus conquered death and is alive today.

1 Corinthians 15:14-19 informs us of the very serious implications if Jesus did not rise from the dead.

"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."

The Anecdotal Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus

One of the greatest testimonies that Jesus was resurrected was the transformation seen in the disciples. Walk with me through the following timeline.

1. When Jesus was arrested, the apostles fled.

Matthew 26:56

"Then all the disciples deserted Him and fled."

2. When identified as a follower of Jesus, Peter lied.

Matthew 26:70, 72, 74

70 - *"But he denied it before them all. 'I don't know what you're talking about,' he said."*

72 - *"He denied it again, with an oath: 'I don't know the man!'"*

74 - *"Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, 'I don't know the man!'"*

3. After the crucifixion, the apostles hid.

John 20:19

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'"

4. When Mary informed them of the resurrection, the apostles doubted.

Mark 16:11

"When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it."

5. After they were convinced of Jesus' Resurrection, they were bold in public.

Acts 2:14

"Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.'"

6. Meeting the risen Christ changed the Christian-Persecuting Saul into the dynamic Christian-Preaching Paul.

Acts 9:1-6

"Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'"

KEY: From this point on, the apostles were changed from sorrowful, defeated, scared men into bold lions who stood in the face of danger and threatening to proclaim that the Lord Jesus Christ is RISEN!

Tradition indicates that nearly all of the Apostles were martyred. Now, if the resurrection of Jesus had been a hoax or a story the disciples concocted to spread the fame of Jesus, surely at least one of them would have confessed to that truth when faced with torture and death. But each of them went to their graves with conviction that Jesus had conquered death and that they had seen Him alive!

The Resurrection of Christians

The following verses remind us that Christians who have died are already in the Lord's presence.

2 Corinthians 5:8 *"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."*

Luke 23:43 *"Jesus answered him, 'I tell you [criminal on cross] the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'"*

Their bodies, however, are still in the grave. But one day we are promised that our bodies will also be resurrected to be a glorious body that is designed to live forever and not wear out!

When will this happen? **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** tells us it's at the *"last trumpet"* and that it will be instantaneous, *"in the twinkling of an eye"*.

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

This instantaneous transformation will happen first to those who died, followed by the same transformation of those still living. **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17** describe the same event when Jesus returns from heaven.

"According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

Jesus is referred to as the "firstfruits" of those who will be raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20), meaning our resurrection bodies will be similar to His. Record your observations about Jesus' resurrection body from the following.

Matthew 28:9	
Luke 24:31, 36	
Luke 24:39	
Luke 24:42-43	
John 20:19, 26	
John 20:20, 27	

Questions

These are some of the common questions that Christians have about our resurrected bodies.

1. Will everyone look the same age in the resurrection? Or, will people who died as children forever remain a child. Will old people look young again? Will there be a *perfect* age that everyone is?

My Answer: I'm assuming we will all look like young adults, but I don't know.

2. Jesus still had His scars in his hands, feet and side. Will we still have scars? Will amputees have all their limbs restored? Will burn victims have healthy skin?

My Answer: Jesus did not have all the scars from His scourging and crown of thorns. I'm assuming His scars are there to remind us of the high cost He paid to secure our salvation. I don't think the rest of us will have scars carried over from this life.

3. Why do we need *physical bodies* if people are able to have shape, voices and memories before the resurrection?

My Answer: I think it has to do with living on the new earth. It also shows that the material body is not inherently evil, as some have mistakenly taught through the centuries.

4. Jesus is called the "firstfruits" of the resurrection. When does the resurrection for the rest of us take place?

My Answer: The verses we looked at on the previous page tell us it will take place when Jesus returns and has the last trumpet blown.

5. Will people we knew in this life still recognize us?

My Answer: The man in hell (Luke 16) recognized Abraham and Lazarus. The three disciples on the Mt. of Transfiguration recognized Moses and Elijah. I'm assuming we will recognize our friends and loved ones in Heaven.

Many of the particular details about our resurrected bodies and life in Heaven are not clearly spelled out in Scripture. We'll just have to wait and see.

One thing I know for sure --- we will be happy with our new bodies because we will be in Heaven in the Lord's presence!