

Chapter 28: Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

1. Resurrection of Christ: New Testament Evidence:

Gospel Narratives: Matthew 18: 1 – 20; Mark 16: 1 – 8; Luke 24: 1 – 53; John 20: 1 - 21:25

Further NT Evidence: Acts, Epistles, Revelation

→ The whole New Testament bears witness to the resurrection of Christ

2. The Nature of Christ's Resurrection

While Christ's death was the culmination of all the harmful results of sin in the world, his resurrection is a triumphant reversal of all the harmful results of sin.

(1) Unlike other instances of people rising from the dead: Not like Lazarus, John 11:1-44).

"First fruits" of resurrection: His body was made perfect, no longer subject to weakness, aging, or death

1 Cor. 15:20, 23: But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits [Greek *aparchē*] of those who have fallen asleep . . . But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

(2) Was Jesus recognizable? Not always immediately: a. Two disciples on road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32)

b. Mary Magdalene at the tomb: John 20:1, 14-16:

At other times, Jesus was immediately recognized: Matt. 28:9; John 20:19-20

(3) Jesus had a physical body after the resurrection: Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:15-18, 28-30, 41-43; John 20:15, 20 John 20:27; 21:12-13; Luke 24:39; Acts 10:41

Summary:

a. There was a considerable degree of continuity between the physical appearance of Jesus before his death and after his resurrection.

b. There was probably sufficient difference in his physical appearance for Jesus not to be recognized.

c. Jesus' body was still a physical body – yet transformed, never able again to suffer, be weak or ill, or die. It had "put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53).

Application: 1 Cor. 15: 42-44: Paul says the resurrection body is raised

imperishable

in glory

in power

a spiritual body

→ Can you think of some characteristics of the resurrection body that you especially look forward to?

→ What things would you like to do now but find yourself unable to do because of the weakness or limitations of your own physical body? Do you think these activities would be appropriate to your life in heaven?

(4) How should we understand that Jesus was able to appear and disappear out of sight quite suddenly?

Luke 24:31 And he vanished from their sight. Also Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 26

(5) A recent alternative explanation: Murray Harris (formerly: NT professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School): a different view: After his resurrection, Jesus' customary existence was in a nonphysical (or non-fleshly) form of his "spiritual body." Sometimes Jesus would materialize into a physical body.

But when Jesus ascended into heaven after 40 days, Jesus permanently gave up any more materializing into a physical body. Note: Harris affirms the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus. Yet his resurrected body was transformed into a "spiritual body" with new properties.

(6) Response to Harris' View: Luke 24:31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished (*disappeared*, NIV) from their sight. The Greek expression for "vanished" or "disappeared" occurs only once in the NT. The words can mean "disappeared from sight" as found in Diodorus Siculus (a historian who wrote from 60-30 B.C.), who wrote of:

- a man named Amphiaraus who, with his chariot, fell into a chasm and "*disappeared*"

- a man named Atlas who was blown off a mountaintop by high winds and "*disappeared*"

Conclusion: In Luke 24:31, all we can conclude is that the disciples no longer saw Jesus

(7) Jesus wanted to teach that his body was physical:

a. If Jesus was essentially spiritual, it would be misleading for Jesus to say, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). He did not write, ". . . Flesh and bones, as you see that I temporarily have."

- b. If Jesus wanted to teach that his body was “essentially spiritual,” he could have dematerialized before their eyes.
- c. The disciples wrote that Jesus ascended into heaven from a physical body (Acts 1:9; see v. 11).

Application: → The physical resurrection of Jesus, and his eternal possession of a physical resurrection body, give clear affirmation of the goodness of the material creation that God originally made.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

→ We must not fall into the error of thinking that nonmaterial existence is somehow a better form of existence for creatures!

→ In a very material, physical, renewed universe, it seems that we will need to live as human beings with physical bodies.

Rom. 8:21: We will live in a renewed earth that will be “set free from its bondage to corruption”

2 Peter 3:13: We expect to see a “new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Rev. 21:26: We will dwell in a new Jerusalem, and people “shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.”

Rev. 22: 1-2: There will be a “river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.”

3. Both the Father and the Son Participated in the Resurrection.

Some texts affirm the Father raised Christ from the dead: Acts 2:24; Rom 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal 1:1

Some texts speak of Jesus participating in his own resurrection: John 2:19-21; 10:17-18; 11:25

4. Doctrinal Significance of the Resurrection:

a. Christ’s Resurrection Ensures Our Regeneration. 1 Pet 1:3; Eph 2:5-6; Phil 3:10

Application: → Think of what kind of life you now have (in your spirit)

→ do you feel like it is the resurrection power of Christ working in you?

→ This resurrection life within us implies power for the Christian life and power for ministry:

Acts 1:8; Eph 1:19-20; Rom. 6:4, 11

b. Christ’s Resurrection Ensures our Justification.

Rom. 4:25: Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”; also Phil 2:8-9

→ God the Father approved of Christ’s work of suffering and dying for our sins:

c. Christ’s Resurrection Ensures that We Will Receive Perfect Resurrection Bodies as Well:

1 Cor. 6:14; 15:20; 2 Cor. 4:14. Question: scars? John 20:27

d. Ethical Significance of the Resurrection:

a. Continue in the Lord’s work: 1 Cor. 15:58

b. Focus on our heavenly reward – when the struggles of this life will be repaid: 1 Cor 15:17-19

c. Set our minds on things of heaven: Col 3:1-4

d. Stop yielding to sin: Rom. 6:11-13

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B. Ascension into Heaven

1. Christ Ascended to a Place: Acts 1:9-11; John 14:2-3; Acts 7:55-56; also Gen. 28:12; 2 Kings 2:11
Just because we cannot see where Jesus went, it does not mean that a physical place does not exist.
Note: 2 Kings 6:17; Acts 7:55-56
2. Christ received glory and honor that had not been his before as the God-man. John 17:5; Acts 2:33; Phil 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 5:12

C. Christ Was Seated at God's Right Hand (Christ's "Session")

Psalm 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Eph. 1:20-21 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

1 Peter 3:22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Jesus has the authority to pour the Holy Spirit on the church:

Acts 2:33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Jesus is not perpetually "fixed" at the right hand of God, nor is he inactive.

Acts 7:56: And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Rev. 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

4. Christ's Ascension Has Doctrinal Significance for Our Lives.

We are united with Christ in every aspect of his work:

1 Thess. 4:17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Heb 12: 1-2: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which dings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus' ascension gives us assurance that our final home will be in heaven with him.

John 14:2-3: In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Our union with Christ in his ascension allows us to share now (in part) in Christ's authority over the universe, and later share in fully:

Eph. 2:6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

We share in some measure of authority that Christ has, authority to contend:

- against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12),
- and do battle with weapons that have divine power to destroy strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4)

1 Cor. 6:3: Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

Heb. 2:5-8: Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶ It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷ You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

Rev. 2:26-27 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

Rev. 3:21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

C. States of Jesus Christ.

Meaning: The different relationships Jesus had to God's law for mankind, to the possession of authority, and to receiving honor for himself. Generally two states are distinguished: humiliation and exaltation.

Humiliation of Christ: Incarnation, suffering, death, and burial. Sometimes "descent into hell" is included.

Exaltation of Christ: resurrection, ascension into heaven, session at the right hand of God, and return in glory and power.