



THE Resurrection OF Jesus Christ AND TRUTHS ABOUT THE BODY

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“**H**e said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30). At that moment, the spirit of Jesus Christ departed His body—a body that had endured suffering so that He could atone for the sins of all people and succor them in their infirmities (see Alma 7:12–13). That body, now an empty vessel, was removed from the cross, wrapped in linens, and eventually placed in a tomb. On the third day, the women approaching the tomb were there to complete burial preparations for that body.

But the body was gone.

The discovery of the empty tomb was just the beginning. Mary Magdalene, the Apostles, and many others later witnessed something miraculous: the resurrected, perfected Jesus Christ, in tangible and human form.

The Savior made sure that those who witnessed Him after His Resurrection fully grasped what kind of body He had. He invited the Apostles, for instance, to handle His body so that they could assure themselves that He was physical and not an

apparition (see Luke 24:36–40).¹ He even ate with them (see Luke 24:42–43).

As the Apostles then fulfilled their commission to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, they faced opposition and persecution, some of which came because they taught that Jesus Christ was resurrected and that all mankind would be resurrected as a result (see Acts 4:1–3).

Today, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is just as central to the message proclaimed to the world by His Church as it was then. As the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”²

The Resurrection helps answer fundamental questions about the nature of God, our nature and our relationship to God, the purpose of this life, and the hope we have in Jesus Christ. Here are a few of the truths underscored by Jesus Christ’s Resurrection.

Through His Resurrection, Jesus Christ taught us significant truths about the body.



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—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Heavenly Father Has a Glorified Body

The idea that God has a human shape is certainly rooted in the Bible,³ as well as in the popular imagination, but many theological and religious philosophical traditions have rejected it in favor of a God “without body, parts, or passions,”⁴ since, in this view, the body (and matter generally) is evil or unreal, whereas spirit, mind, or ideas are the true substance of ultimate being or reality.

How gloriously simple and revolutionary, then, was the revelation of God’s nature through His Son, Jesus Christ.

During His ministry, the Savior said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). This was even more true after His Resurrection with a perfected, immortal body, which showed that “the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also” (D&C 130:22).

The physical nature of Heavenly Father was thus revealed. As Joseph Smith later explained, “That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones.”⁵

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has put it this way: “If having a body is not only not needed but not desirable by Deity, why did the Redeemer of mankind redeem *His* body, redeeming it from the grasp of death and the grave, guaranteeing it would never again be separated from His spirit in time or eternity? *Any who dismiss the concept of an embodied God dismiss both the mortal and the resurrected Christ.*”⁶

Heavenly Father Is All-Powerful, All-Knowing, and All-Loving

The superlative attributes of Heavenly Father’s character are also revealed in the very fact of Jesus Christ’s Resurrection. As Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “Given the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, doubts about the omnipotence, omniscience, and benevolence of God the Father—who gave His Only Begotten Son for the redemption of the world—are groundless.”⁷

The power, knowledge, and goodness of God are proven by Jesus Christ’s Resurrection, which gives evidence of the wisdom and love in Heavenly Father’s plan and His (and His Son’s) ability to carry it out.

We Are God’s Children

As the Bible teaches us, we were formed “in the image of God . . . male and female” (Genesis 1:27). Jesus Christ’s Resurrection reinforced this truth. In fact, in the very hour of His Resurrection, Jesus Christ emphasized our relationship to Heavenly Father, saying, “I ascend unto my Father, *and your Father*; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17; emphasis added).

The Savior revealed that God and human-kind are not utterly unlike one another in their essential being. The basic form of our bodies is similar to that of our spirits,⁸ and our spirits were created in the image of God because that's the nature of the parent-child relationship.

A Body Is an Enabling and Ennobling Gift

Through His Resurrection, the Savior showed us that a physical, embodied existence is an integral part of the eternal being of God and His children. As the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, “The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33). This inseparable connection fuses spirit and physical matter together so that they are one immortal, incorruptible, glorious, and perfect body—the only kind of body capable of receiving the fulness of joy that God possesses.

By contrast, after having a physical body and then being separated from it to enter the spirit world, “the dead [look] upon the . . . absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50; see also D&C 45:17).

Even our mortal bodies are an essential part of Heavenly Father's plan and are a divine gift. When our premortal spirits come to this earth, they are “added upon” (Abraham 3:26) with a body. As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment.”⁹

As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: “Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our pre-mortal existence. Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In the school of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, ‘according to the flesh’ (1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).”¹⁰

In addition, as Joseph Smith taught, “All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”¹¹ Satan can tempt us,

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but he cannot compel. “The devil has no power over us only as we permit him.”¹²

Ultimately, the gift of a perfected, resurrected body helps put us beyond Satan’s power forever. If there were no Resurrection, “our spirits must become subject to . . . the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself” (2 Nephi 9:8–9).

The Spirit and the Body Are Not Enemies

Though they are different, the spirit and the body do not belong to two essentially different and irreconcilable realities. As Joseph Smith learned, “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter” (D&C 131:7–8).

In His glorified, resurrected state, Jesus Christ represents the perfect union of spirit and body, illustrating for us that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). In this life we strive to be “spiritually-minded” rather than “carnally-minded” (2 Nephi 9:39), to “[put] off the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19), and to “bridle all [our] passions” (Alma 38:12). But that doesn’t mean that the spirit and the body are enemies. As Jesus Christ showed us, the body is not to be despised and transcended but mastered and transformed.



Life in a Mortal Body Has a Meaningful Purpose

The notion that this life is a test makes more sense when we consider what we know about our lives before and after it. We lived as spirits before we came to earth, and Heavenly Father intends for us to become like Him and live forever with immortal physical bodies. These truths mean that our time of testing in these mortal bodies is not arbitrary but has real meaning and purpose.

As Elder Christofferson has explained: “By our choices we would demonstrate to God (and to ourselves) our commitment and capacity to live His celestial law while outside His presence and in a physical body with all its powers, appetites, and passions. Could we bridle the flesh so that it became the instrument rather than the master of the spirit? Could we be trusted both in time and eternity with godly powers, including power to create life? Would we individually overcome evil? Those who did would ‘have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever’ [Abraham 3:26]—a very significant aspect of that glory being a resurrected, immortal, and glorified physical body.”¹³

Our experiences in our present bodies, including our relationships with one another, are meaningful because they are a likeness of that which is to come. As Joseph Smith learned, “That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (D&C:130:2).

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We Have Hope in Jesus Christ

Ever since the sight of the empty tomb, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ has brought hope because we recognize in His Resurrection the prospect of our own, in which “all [our] losses will be made up to [us] . . . , provided [we] continue faithful.”¹⁴

The Savior’s early Apostles were able to bear a bold witness of His Resurrection because they had seen and felt His body. But there was much more to it than that. Just as Jesus Christ had healed bodily infirmities in order to show that He had power to forgive sins (see Luke 5:23–25), His Resurrection—the tangible evidence of His power to overcome physical death—became His followers’ assurance of His power to overcome spiritual death. The promises He gave in His teachings—forgiveness of sins, peace in this life, eternal life in the Father’s kingdom—became real and their faith unshaken.

“If Christ be not raised, [our] faith is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:17). But because He *did* rise from the dead, we can “have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of [our] faith in him according to the promise” (Moroni 7:41).

During His mortal life, Jesus Christ invited people to follow Him. After His death and Resurrection, the destination became even clearer. If we, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, cultivate a “celestial spirit” within us, we can “receive the same body which was a natural body” and be “quickened by a portion of the celestial glory [and] then receive of the same, even a fulness” (D&C 88:28–29). He has shown the way. He is the way. It is by His power—through His Atonement and Resurrection—that this celestial fulness is possible, which includes a fulness of joy in a resurrected body. ■

NOTES

1. When Jesus Christ appeared to the people in the New World, He asked them—thousands of them—to come, “one by one,” and touch His hands, feet, and side so that they could witness that they had both felt and seen the resurrected Lord (see 3 Nephi 11:14–15; 18:25).
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.
3. See Genesis 1:27; Exodus 33:11; Acts 7:56.
4. Though similar ideas were contained in

- earlier Christian creeds, this particular formulation comes from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church (1563).
5. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 42.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 42.
7. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 113.
8. Even the revelation of the premortal Jesus Christ was a testimony of this fact, since it showed that the body of His spirit

- was human in form (see Ether 3:16).
9. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 211.
10. David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 41.
11. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 211.
12. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 214.
13. D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Marriage, Why Family,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 51.
14. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 51.