

# The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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Jesus of Nazareth is the resurrected Redeemer, and I testify of all that follows from the fact of His Resurrection.

A crushing sense of defeat and despair enveloped His disciples as Jesus suffered and died on the cross and His body was placed lifeless in the tomb. Despite what the Savior had repeatedly said of His death and subsequent rising again, they had not understood. The dark afternoon of His Crucifixion, however, was soon followed by the joyous morning of His Resurrection. But that joy came only as the disciples became eyewitnesses of the Resurrection, for even the declaration of angels that He had risen was at first incomprehensible—it was something so totally unprecedented.

Mary Magdalene and a few other faithful women came early to the Savior’s tomb that Sunday morning, bringing spices and ointments to complete the anointing begun when the Lord’s body was hastily laid in the sepulchre before the approaching Sabbath. On this morning of mornings, they were greeted by an open sepulchre, the covering stone having been rolled away, and two angels who declared:

“Why seek ye the living among the dead?

“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.”<sup>1</sup>

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

“And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.”<sup>2</sup>

As bidden by the angels, Mary Magdalene looked into the tomb, but it seems that all that registered in her mind was that the body of the Lord was gone. She hurried to report to the Apostles and, finding Peter and John, said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.”<sup>3</sup> Peter and John ran to the place and verified that indeed the tomb was empty, seeing “the linen clothes lying ... and the napkin, that was about his head, ... wrapped together in a place by itself.”<sup>4</sup> John apparently was the first to comprehend the magnificent message of resurrection. He writes that “he saw, and believed,” whereas the others to that point “knew not the scripture, that [Jesus] must rise again from the dead.”<sup>5</sup>

Peter and John left, but Mary remained behind, still in mourning. In the meantime the angels had returned and tenderly asked her, “Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord,

and I know not where they have laid him.”<sup>6</sup> At that moment the resurrected Savior, now standing behind her, spoke, “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”<sup>7</sup>

Elder James E. Talmage wrote: “It was Jesus to whom she spake, her beloved Lord, though she knew it not. One word from His living lips changed her agonized grief into ecstatic joy. ‘Jesus saith unto her, Mary.’ The voice, the tone, the tender accent she had heard and loved in the earlier days lifted her from the despairing depths into which she had sunk. She turned, and saw the Lord. In a transport of joy she reached out her arms to embrace Him, uttering only the endearing and worshipful word, ‘Rabboni,’ meaning My beloved Master.”<sup>8</sup>

And so this blessed woman became the first mortal to see and speak to the resurrected Christ. Later that same day He appeared to Peter in or near Jerusalem;<sup>9</sup> to two disciples on the road to Emmaus;<sup>10</sup> and in the evening to 10 of the Apostles and others, appearing suddenly in their midst, saying, “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.”<sup>11</sup> Then to further convince them “while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered,”<sup>12</sup> He ate broiled fish and honeycomb before them.<sup>13</sup> Later He instructed them, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”<sup>14</sup>

Beyond these confirmed witnesses in Jerusalem, we have the incomparable ministry of the risen Lord to ancient inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere. In the land Bountiful, He descended from heaven and invited the assembled throng, some 2,500, to come forward one by one until they had all gone forth, thrusting their hands into His side and feeling the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet.<sup>15</sup>

“And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

“Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.”<sup>16</sup>

Christ’s Resurrection shows that His existence is independent and everlasting. “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.”<sup>17</sup> Jesus said:

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”<sup>18</sup>

The Savior is not dependent on food or water or oxygen or any other substance or power or person for life. Both as Jehovah and Messiah, He is the great I Am, the self-existing God.<sup>19</sup> He simply is and ever will be.

By His Atonement and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has overcome all aspects of the Fall. Physical death will be temporary, and even spiritual death has an end, in that all come back into the presence of God, at least temporarily, to be judged. We can have ultimate trust and confidence in His power to overcome all else and grant us everlasting life.

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>20</sup>

In the words of Elder Neal A. Maxwell: “Christ’s victory over death ended the human predicament. Now there are only personal predicaments, and from these too we may be rescued by following the teachings of him who rescued us from general extinction.”<sup>21</sup>

Having satisfied the demands of justice, Christ now steps into the place of justice; or we might say He is justice, just as He is love.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, besides being a “perfect, just God,” He is a perfect, merciful God.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the Savior makes all things right. No injustice in mortality is permanent, even death, for He restores life again. No injury, disability, betrayal, or abuse goes uncompensated in the end because of His ultimate justice and mercy.

By the same token, we are all accountable to Him for our lives, our choices, and our actions, even our thoughts. Because He redeemed us from the Fall, our lives are in reality His. He declared:

“Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

“And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works.”<sup>24</sup>

Consider for a moment the significance of the Resurrection in resolving once and for all the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth and the great philosophical contests and questions of life. If Jesus was in fact literally resurrected, it necessarily follows that He is a divine being. No mere mortal has the power in himself to come to life again after dying. Because He was resurrected, Jesus cannot have been only a carpenter, a teacher, a rabbi, or a prophet. Because He was resurrected, Jesus had to have been a God, even the Only Begotten Son of the Father.

Therefore, what He taught is true; God cannot lie.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, He was the Creator of the earth, as He said.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, heaven and hell are real, as He taught.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, there is a world of spirits, which He visited after His death.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, He will come again, as the angels said,<sup>29</sup> and “reign personally upon the earth.”<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, there is a resurrection and a final judgment for all.<sup>31</sup>

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. Doubts about the meaning and purpose of life are unfounded. Jesus Christ is in fact the only name or way by which salvation can come to mankind. The grace of Christ is real, affording both forgiveness and cleansing to the repentant sinner. Faith truly is more than imagination or psychological invention. There is ultimate and universal truth, and there are objective and unchanging moral standards, as taught by Him.

Given the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, repentance of any violation of His law and commandments is both possible and urgent. The Savior’s miracles were real, as is His promise to His disciples that they might do the same and even greater works.<sup>32</sup> His priesthood is necessarily a real power that “administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the

ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.”<sup>33</sup> Given the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, death is not our end, and though “skin worms destroy [our bodies], yet in [our] flesh shall [we] see God.”<sup>34</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson tells of a Robert Blatchford who, 100 years ago “in his book *God and My Neighbor*, attacked with vigor accepted Christian beliefs, such as God, Christ, prayer, and immortality. He boldly asserted, ‘I claim to have proved everything I set out to prove so fully and decisively that no Christian, however great or able he may be, can answer my arguments or shake my case.’ He surrounded himself with a wall of skepticism. Then a surprising thing happened. His wall suddenly crumbled to dust. ... Slowly he began to feel his way back to the faith he had scorned and ridiculed. What had caused this profound change in his outlook? *His wife [had] died*. With a broken heart, he went into the room where lay all that was mortal of her. He looked again at the face he loved so well. Coming out, he said to a friend: ‘It is she, and yet it is not she. Everything is changed. Something that was there before is taken away. She is not the same. What can be gone if it be not the soul?’”<sup>35</sup>

Did the Lord in reality die and rise again? Yes. “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.”<sup>36</sup>

As the prophesied birth of Jesus drew near, there were those among the ancient Nephite and Lamanite peoples who believed, though most doubted. In due course, the sign of His birth arrived—a day and a night and a day without darkness—and all knew.<sup>37</sup> Even so today, some believe in the literal Resurrection of Christ, and many doubt or disbelieve. But some know. In due course, all will see and all will know; indeed, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him.”<sup>38</sup>

Until then, I believe the many witnesses of the Savior’s Resurrection whose experiences and testimonies are found in the New Testament—Peter and his companions of the Twelve and dear, pure Mary of Magdala, among others. I believe the testimonies found in the Book of Mormon—of Nephi the Apostle with the unnamed multitude in the land Bountiful, among others. And I believe the testimony of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon who, after many other testimonies, proclaimed the great witness of this last dispensation “that he lives! For we saw him.”<sup>39</sup> Under the glance of His all-seeing eye, I stand myself as a witness that Jesus of Nazareth is the resurrected Redeemer, and I testify of all that follows from the *fact* of His Resurrection. May you receive the conviction and comfort of that same witness, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Luke 24:5–7.

2. Matthew 28:6–7.

3. John 20:2.

4. John 20:5, 7.

5. John 20:8, 9.

6. John 20:13.

7. John 20:15.

8. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 681.

9. See Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5.

10. See Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13–35.

11. Luke 24:39.

12. Luke 24:41.

13. See Luke 24:42–43.

14. Acts 1:8.

15. See 3 Nephi 11:14–15.

16. 3 Nephi 11:16–17.

17. John 5:26.

18. John 10:17–18.

19. See Exodus 3:14.

20. 1 Corinthians 15:21–22.

21. *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell (1997), 287.

22. See 1 John 4:8.

23. Alma 42:15; see also Mosiah 15:8–9.

24. 3 Nephi 27:13–14.

25. See Enos 1:6.

26. See, for example, 3 Nephi 9:15.

27. See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 76.

28. See Doctrine and Covenants 138.

29. See Acts 1:10–11.

30. Articles of Faith 1:10; see also Topical Guide, “Jesus Christ, Millennial Reign.”

31. See, for example, 2 Nephi 9:15.

32. See John 14:12.

33. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–20.

34. Job 19:26.

35. Thomas S. Monson, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 23.

36. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.

37. See 3 Nephi 1:15–20.

38. Mosiah 27:31.

39. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–23.