

The Seven Declarations of Jesus and Evidence of His Resurrection

From time to time we must check our priorities and be sure we have them in order, or we can't be considered true followers of Christ. If we choose to love our own lives more than our Master, we will end up losing the very life we seek to maintain.

As true disciples we must be willing to suffer and experience rejection, even unto death if need be. To serve and follow Jesus means making radical lifestyle changes. To follow Jesus means going the way He went, not the way of earthly power and honor, but the way of humility and death. "This is not so pleasant to think about, nevertheless it is true." Everything Jesus did was for God's glory. When we choose to follow Him, we must live for God's glory alone. This does not mean we can't experience fun, joy and a certain amount of security. Rather it simply means we live to honor God and then the Father will honor us.

In Philippians 2:14–15, Paul explains how we must honor God. "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe."

Like it or not, admit it or not, like the Philippians we live in a crooked and depraved nation and the works and lifestyle of its people reveals these facts to be true. All nations, including our own, enjoy and promote sin, rebellion and outright blasphemy against Jesus Christ, exposing its own moral corruption in many various shapes and forms.

The apostle Paul fought the righteous battle of faith and testified: "But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you" (Philippians 2:17—all scriptures are from the New International Version). He was ready and he was obedient unto death.

According to Paul, our attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ: "Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:6–11).

These are powerful prophetic words that open our eyes to future events—namely, that the sovereignty of Jesus Christ is not limited to Israel alone but includes the entire earth. The apostle Paul quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah: "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has

uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear” (Isaiah 45:22–23).

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke seven declarations during the time He hung on the tree. We will carefully consider these seven declarations and see in them the miracle He accomplished for us.

Declaration One

Not all the seven declarations of Christ from the cross are recorded in one Gospel; therefore we do not have an automatic recognition of the order in which they were uttered. However, there is in them a progression of the will and purpose of God for the redemption of mankind. They seem to sum up in themselves the whole of the gospel.

“When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:33–34, NIV, emphasis supplied).

These first words spoken by Jesus were uttered as the Roman soldiers were piercing His hands with nails, nailing Him to the tree. They did not have to force Jesus’ hands as they nailed them to the tree, Jesus stretched out His hands willingly.

The Father loved the Son for His willingness to die in order to secure the salvation of the believers. Jesus laid down His life of His own volition, and yet of His own accord He would also take up His life again in resurrection. When Jesus said, “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (John 10:17–18). When Jesus said, “I lay down my life voluntarily” and that He had “the power to take it again,” He was claiming authority to control His death and beyond. Jesus gave up His life it was not taken from Him. This authority that Jesus the Son of God had to lay His life down and take it up again did not originate with Himself, it came from the Father.

In Isaiah we read, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders” (Isaiah 9:6). True to the prophecy a child was born (first of all to the remnant of Israel who passed through darkness, who will be redeemed). Also, “A Son being given” refers back to Isaiah 7:14, Immanuel. Kingship was symbolized by a scepter on the king’s shoulder. The government being on His shoulder means He will be king. Not only is Jesus our King, He is also the Messiah, and our “Savior.” “For God so loved the world that He “gave” His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, italics mine).

Adam and Eve stretched out their hands to the “*tree of the knowledge of good and evil*” and ate of its fruit bringing sin and its consequences into the world (Genesis 3:6). “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Spiritual and physical deaths were the direct results of Adam and Eve's sin. In a manner of speaking, man died the moment he stretched out his hand and took hold of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He lost his fellowship with God and was banished from the Garden of Eden. But God's Word says that one day a Redeemer, a second or last Adam (man) would come: So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45). Jesus Christ is the second and last Adam. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Jesus voluntarily stretched out His arms on the tree and pleaded with the Father to forgive man, while these same men stood around laughing and scoffing at Him. They assumed that if He truly had God's divine favor as He had claimed, then He would be able to save Himself from death by crucifixion. Unfortunately for them, they missed the fact that this entire episode had been planned and prophesied. "But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him" (Psalm 22:6–8). Jesus feels Himself crushed and as incapable of resistance as a worm bruised in all its soft length by an armed heel. The very semblance of manhood has faded. One can scarcely fail to recall, "His visage was so marred more than any man" (Isaiah 52:14) and the designation of Yahweh's servant Israel as "thou worm" (Isaiah 41:14). The taunts that wounded the psalmist so sorely have long since fallen dumb. Rejection of the Savior is engraved forever on the heart of a crooked and perverse world.

Declaration Two

Sin entered the world in a garden, the Garden of Eden, where man decided for himself, against the will of God. The Son of God began to overcome sin in a garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, in that He decided for the will of God, "yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). When Adam and Eve reached out and took sustenance from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Paradise was lost. When Jesus took hold of the tree of the cross (Greek: *stauros*), Paradise was regained. Adam and Eve had lost their fellowship with God and died spiritually. We can be raised in a resurrection and be born again spiritually and live through Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to the thief crucified next to Him, "I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This thief exhibited an awe-inspiring faith, looking beyond the present shame to the time ahead when the Kingdom of God would be established, and Jesus would be King over all the earth. Jesus assured this common thief that he would be with Him in paradise when the time comes.

In the Book of Colossians the apostle Paul makes this statement, "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). Paul tells us that when Christ died, we also died! It happened at a point in history. In Christ's death, all believers died. Apparently this includes the thief who was crucified with Christ. "Since you died with

Christ you are also dead to the principles of the world. “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4).

Paul went on to explain to the Corinthians, that those who accept Christ as their personal Savior are sure to be raised in a resurrection. “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” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

When this trumpet sounds the suffering servants of God will be resurrected, rewarded and avenged. Those rewarded include the prophets, the Saints, and those that fear your name, small and great (Revelation 11:18).

Declaration Three

Contrary to the paintings depicting the Crucifixion, Jesus died naked, another horrible part of His humiliation. The Roman soldiers who performed the Crucifixion divided the victim’s clothes among themselves. Clothing was an expensive commodity in those days. Therefore, Jesus clothing became a part of the “pay” the executioners received for performing their gruesome duties. But His robe was not divided because it was seamless. So they threw dice to see who would get it. By doing so they fulfilled the Scripture: “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing” (Psalm 22:18).

“Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother” (John 19: 26). Seeing His mother and the disciple He loved (John the Gospel writer), Jesus directed His disciple John to care for His mother Mary. “From that time on, this disciple took her into his home” (John 19:27). Apparently, Mary being widowed was being cared for by Jesus Himself her first-born Son. Even while suffering in agony, Jesus demonstrated His care for His mother. Jesus did not leave His mother with His unbelieving brothers because He considered John to be closer to her in his spiritual relationship than His own physical half-brothers. John was given this privilege because of his availability at the crucifixion while other prominent disciples were not there. We miss opportunities for special privileges by not making ourselves available at the time of trouble.

“Near the cross [*stauros*] of Jesus stood His mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary of Magdala” (John 19:25). These four women in contrast to the four soldiers are the faithful. They remained faithful to Jesus to the final end. Their faithfulness is in even greater contrast to the disciples who had fled after Jesus was arrested. These women followed Jesus to His death and became eyewitnesses of His crucifixion.

Imagine the incredible grief Mary felt, helplessly watching her son suffer and die unjustly. Indeed the prophet Simeon, who had spoken to her in the Temple just after Jesus’ birth, had been correct when he had told her, “A sword will pierce your very soul” (Luke 2:35). Surely Mary was feeling that “sword” at that very moment.

The sequence of the words Jesus spoke from the *stauros* was deliberately arranged. The people of this world have lost fellowship with God when sin entered the world and as a

result we lost fellowship with one another. Families are constantly breaking up. The first murder took place shortly after Adam and Eve sinned, when Cain slew his brother Abel. Fellowship in the world is limited. There are even dissensions and disagreements within the body of Christ. However, the effect of the words of Jesus during His crucifixion is significant: First comes forgiveness, then fellowship with God is restored, and a new family relationship is formed by this fellowship.

The *ecclesia* (“called out ones”), or church, was created through the coming of Jesus. We should be there for and take care of one another. In John 15:17, Jesus said, “This is my command: Love each other.” The more desperate and loveless these end-times become, the more necessary the command of Jesus becomes.

Declaration Four

Jesus had been put on the stauros about nine o’clock in the morning. Death by crucifixion was slow and excruciating. Some three hours passed while Jesus put up with abuse from bystanders. “From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama saabachthani?*”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:45–46). Jesus did not ask this question, “Why have you forsaken me?” in surprise or despair. He was quoting the first line of Psalm 22, a prophecy expressing the deep agony of the Messiah’s death for the world’s sin. Jesus knew that He would be temporarily separated from God the moment He took upon Himself the sins of the world because God cannot look on sin (Habakkuk 1:13). This separation was the “cup” Jesus had dreaded as He prayed in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39).

While Jesus suffered the physical agony that was horrible, He also suffered from the spiritual alienation from God that was a far greater torture. This was like a double death, and Jesus suffered this way willingly, so that we would never have to experience eternal death.

The darkening of the sun that lasted for three hours must have been an exceptional intervention by God into the natural order of events and not a normal eclipse. Darkness was termed a sign of God’s wrath when it occurred in the daytime. “In that day,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight” (Amos 8:9) as a foretoken of the Day of the Lord. “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31). This three-hour period of darkness was a visible sign of the judgment that Jesus had taken upon Himself.

The light of day became dark and God’s wrath came upon the Son as He accomplished atonement for the world as the sacrificial lamb. Jesus bore for us the wrath of God we deserved.

The world of today is becoming darker in every sense of the word. People despise the Gospel of Jesus in the so-called “righteous” Christian West and reject His Word. The

message of the Good News tells us how we, sinners as we are, can be made right in God's sight. It tells how God, who is righteous, can vindicate sinful people. Righteousness is an aspect of God's character, His standard of behavior, and a description of all that He wishes to give to us. Faith, unconditional trust, is the appointed way of receiving God's righteousness. Faith in what? Faith in the fact that Jesus took our sins upon Himself, taking the punishment we deserved and, in exchange, making us righteous before God. By trusting in Christ, our relationship with God is made right both for now and for eternity.

However, as God's righteousness was revealed so was His wrath. It is the response of His holiness to all wickedness and rebellion. Why is God angry at sin? Because *sinful, wicked people have pushed the truth away from themselves*, substituting the truth about Him with a fantasy of their own imagination. "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). When people refuse to recognize God as Creator, they will also fail to glorify or thank Him for His gifts, food, clothing, shelter, and even life itself. By neglecting God, they open the door to evil.

Declaration Five

"Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28). Many believe this fulfilled Scripture is Psalm 69:21, "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." Thus Jesus said, "I thirst." This emphasizes Jesus' humiliation. Others point to Psalm 42:2, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" This affirms Jesus' submission to the Father. In either case, Scripture was fulfilled.

This sour wine was not the same as the drugged wine offered to Jesus earlier. "Then they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh" (Mark 15:23).

Jesus' great desire was to give people the water of life, but a world that continues to reject the Son of God will experience God's wrath instead of life-giving water. Mankind will experience thirst! Mankind claims to be thirsty, but instead of going to the only one who can give them living water, they go to the cesspools of the world to satiate their thirst. They dive into the excitement of the world to satisfy the lust and cravings of the flesh, with drugs, addictions of all sorts, and sexual immorality, and think they can find fulfillment in this their chosen freedom. "On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37-38)". Jesus was speaking of the Spirit that would be given to everyone believing in Him. At that time, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to all believers. That happened after Jesus entered into His glory through the resurrection and ascension.

Without Jesus' death and resurrection we could not be saved. His death made it possible for Him to remove our sins. Before Jesus could defeat death by His resurrection, He had to submit to death. And if He would not go back to the Father, the Counselor, the Holy Spirit would not come. "By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him

were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had *not yet been glorified*” (John 7:39).

Declaration Six

The conflict is over and the victory won. Jesus then makes this Sixth Declaration. “It is finished” (John 19:30). In these words of victory Jesus carried out God’s entire counsel for Israel, the Church, and the nations. Jesus in His crucifixion finished everything, and He will also finish that which lies in the future.

Up to this point, sin could be atoned through a complicated system of sacrifices. Sin separates people from God, and only through the sacrifice of an animal, a substitute, and faith in God’s promise could people be forgiven and become clean before God. But people continue to sin, so frequent sacrifices were required. However, Jesus now is the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin. With His death, there was no more need for the complex sacrificial system, because Jesus took all sin upon Himself. Now we can freely approach God. Those who believe in Jesus sacrificial death and resurrection can live eternally with God and escape the penalty that comes from sin.

In John 17:4, Jesus prays for Himself. “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” By His statement, Jesus has affirmed that He had brought glory to the Father on earth by doing everything God wanted Him to do. Jesus spoke of his work as an accomplished task. Looking beyond His crucifixion to His resurrection and ascension, Jesus asked the Father to restore the glory He had shared with the Father before the world began.

“No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side has made Him known” (John 1:18). This statement, no one has ever seen God, simply means that no human being has seen the essential being of God. Only the Son, who is Himself God, can communicate His glory to us. The Son is God’s “explainer,” He came to earth and lived among people to explain God to us, with His words and by His person.

“Finished” was the work that His Father had given Him to do. He looked back on His life from the time when He said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will” (Hebrews 10:9), and is able to say with regard to every job and title of His life’s work, “It is finished.”

He made a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He bridged the gap that separated man from God!

Declaration Seven

Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

After Jesus committed His spirit to the Father, He died, fulfilling the words of Psalm 31:5, “Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.”

After Jesus committed His spirit to the Father, Jesus died, He did not just faint, He did not become unconscious only to be revived later, He breathed His last. Jesus died voluntarily and sacrificially, in the place of sinners. He died like any other man.

The Roman soldier, the captain, who apparently was in charge of carrying out the execution, was astonished at what he was seeing and experiencing. His conclusion was that Jesus was no ordinary criminal and a grave error had taken place. He said, "Surely this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). Miracles had occurred, darkness, an earthquake, dead people raised out of their graves, and the torn veil in the Temple that from the captain's vantage point he could see. The captain now understood that Jesus had not deserved to be crucified for any wrong doing on His part. He was an innocent man.

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew Him, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things" (Luke 23:48–49).

These women no doubt were among the most faithful followers of Jesus, and had heard Jesus' predictions of His death, for Luke says they remembered that Jesus had said those things, and like a quick flash of inspiration they remembered and suddenly everything came together. Everything had occurred just as Jesus had said. Hurriedly, these women left the tomb and rushed back to tell His eleven disciples.

In the book of Luke two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning tell the women to go and tell the apostles what had happened. The women obey, running with the great news to the sorrowing and bewildered disciples.

"In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee: The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' Then they remembered His words" (Luke 24:5–8).

Summary

In these Declarations we see a progression of the will and purpose of God for the redemption of mankind. They seem to sum up in themselves the whole of the gospel.

The first three were uttered between the third and sixth hours (9:00 a.m. till 12:00 noon).

1. "Father, forgive them." Jesus came to forgive sinners. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Through His forgiveness, sinners make God their Father. "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). "This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9).

2. "I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise." In Christ's death, all believers died with Him. The repentant thief also died with Him. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).
3. "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." Though Jesus put His Father's work and purpose first, He did not neglect His mother. Jesus reveals His work as the great High priest through, interceding for the transgressors, proclaiming pardon to the penitent, and bestowing blessing on His own.
4. "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" The Word of utter loneliness. It is doubtful Jesus was asking the question "Why." Jesus knew from the beginning that when He took on the world's sin He would be separated from His Father and the wrath of God would fall upon Him. As it is now, after Christ's crucifixion, anyone who rejects the Son will not see life, for God's "wrath" remains on Him. (John 3:36).
5. "I am thirsty." Now darkness reigned at the place of Jesus' crucifixion, three hours of silence and darkness. It is the climax of the sufferings of our Lord, *the hour and power of darkness*. This was the fulfillment of Isaiah 63:3 that says, "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me."
6. "It is finished." The conflict is over and the victory won. Christ announces to the world that all is finished. In one word He sums up the whole of man's redemption. In the word "finished" was all that prophecy had foretold and type foreshadowed. Finished was the work that His Father had given Him to do.
7. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Death was robbed of its sting. Because of this word a believer can say with the Apostle Paul, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Back From the Dead

The Daughter of Jairus:

One day while Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house a leader of a synagogue came to Him with a request. The synagogue leaders had many responsibilities which included supervising worship services, caring for the scrolls, running the daily school, keeping the congregation faithful to the law, distributing alms, administering the care of the building, and finding rabbis to teach on the Sabbath. Synagogue leaders exerted great influence in the community; however, this leader whose name was Jairus knelt down before Jesus. Kneeling down before Jesus indicated he had great reverence, respect and regard for Him. He explained saying, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live" (Matthew 9:18). As Jesus and His disciples were leaving another desperate woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years touched the edge of His cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch His cloak, I will be healed" (Matthew 9:20–21). When Jesus saw her He said, "Take heart, daughter," He said, "Your faith has healed you" (Matthew 9:22). Jesus explained it was not His clothing that brought her healing. It was rather her faith in reaching out to Him, the one person that could heal her.

When Jesus arrived at the home of Jairus the customary ritual of mourning, funeral music, and noisy crowds were all gathered. “When Jesus entered the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, He said, go away. The girl is not dead but asleep. But they laughed at Him” (Matthew 9:23, 24). Once they had gotten rid of the crowds, “He went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region” (Matthew 9:25–26).

The Widows Son:

Nain is a small village in the plain of Jezreel, about 25 miles south of Capernaum where the Lord healed the Centurion’s servant. Upon approaching the gate, they came upon a funeral procession. One group, consisting of Jesus and His disciples was coming toward the city from Capernaum, probably via Nazareth. The other group consisted of the widow, whose boy had died, and a great multitude. The whole town must have felt sorry for this mother having lost her only boy that was wrapped and carried on a kind of stretcher. As the procession passed, bystanders would be expected to join and hired mourners would cry aloud and draw attention to the procession.

This woman had already lost her husband, and here her only son was dead, her last means of support. The crowd of mourners would go home, and she would be left alone and penniless. The widow was probably past the age of childbearing and would not marry again. Unless a relative would come to her aid, her future was bleak. In the first century, it was very difficult for a woman to earn her own living. She might soon be reduced to begging.

“When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her and He said, “Don’t cry” (Luke 7:13). Coming from any one else but Jesus, these would be empty words indeed. However, Jesus being Lord over death itself had already determined to change the circumstances. Jesus was going to eliminate the weeping by giving life to the dead body of the widow’s child. “Then He went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” (Luke 7:14).

What Jesus did was arresting because it was considered unclean to have contact with a dead body. “Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days” (Numbers 19:7).

With just one simple “touch” by Jesus and the boy who had been dead sat up and began to carry on a conversation. “The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother” (Luke 7:15).

The Raising of Lazarus:

Those whom Jesus gave back human life to including Lazarus, eventually died again. Lazarus’s story stands out because John used it as a sign of Jesus’ ultimate life-giving power and a picture of His own coming resurrection. It also caused the Jewish leaders to take decisive action against Jesus.

Jesus often visited the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Jesus enjoyed their close friendship and hospitality on His visits to Jerusalem. Lazarus became sick, so the sisters contacted Jesus, their friend who had healed so many. “When He heard this, Jesus said, this sickness will not end in death. No it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it” (John 11:4). Even though Jesus loved this family He remained where He was for two more days. By the time Jesus and His disciples arrived at Bethany Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. In the warm climate of Palestine, a dead body was often buried the same day of death.

Although Jesus expressed great compassion for many, His tender conversations with Mary and Martha are the most moving. Jesus affirmed our need for comfort by providing it to the sisters without hesitation. Many Jews from Jerusalem had gathered to console Lazarus’s family, and some of those who had arrived were religious leaders. Mourning for the dead was considered by Jewish society to be an essential part of every funeral.

When Martha saw Jesus, she said to Him, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” (John 11:21, 22). Mary made the same comment later (11:32). Despite their obvious pain and sorrow, their faith in Jesus did not waver. The Lesson for us is that we should not quickly assume that God has let us down when we are in the midst of difficulties.

Mary and Martha give us the impression that they believed Jesus could have healed Lazarus if Jesus had arrived before he died. But now, it was too late. They just could not dare to believe or hope that Jesus would ask God to give Lazarus back his physical life. So when Jesus said to Martha, “Your brother will rise again,” she thought Jesus meant in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus then said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25–26). “Yes, Lord, she told Him, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (John 11:27).

When Jesus saw Mary and Martha, and the Jews who had come along with them weeping, He was very disturbed, most likely because of the limited faith of the sisters. Among all the commotion of the mourners, death, lack of belief and faith, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

Arriving at the tomb, Jesus asked that the stone be rolled away from the entrance. “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God” (John 11:40). Martha protested, but apparently believed enough, changed her mind and allowed the stone to be removed. Jesus then prayed for the benefit of the people standing there. “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me” (John 11:42).

Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out” (John 11:43). Lazarus came out wrapped in strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus then ordered them to take off his grave clothes and turn him loose. Many put their faith in Jesus; however, some of them

immediately ran to the Pharisees and told of Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus. Therefore, the die was cast for the eventual arrest and crucifixion of Jesus.

Evidence of Jesus' Resurrection

The bodily resurrection of Christ is the greatest proof that Jesus was whom He claimed to be, God manifested in human flesh. This is of such paramount importance to the Christians faith that the New Testament insists that no one can be saved without it. "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). The gospel message in a nutshell is confess and believe and you will be saved. It is not enough to merely utter the words. They must be declared, professed, proclaimed from the heart, expressing a full conviction. "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born" (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

The New Testament is emphatic that Jesus rose in the same physical body of flesh and bones in which He died. The evidence for this consists in the New Testament testimony of numerous appearances of Christ to His disciples for a period of forty days, in the same physical, nail-scarred body in which He died, now immortal.

Christians are often shocked by the world's denial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Christians share their faith, many find the gospel an irritating and upsetting challenge to the commonly held views of life and death. True believers are convinced that Jesus Resurrection did occur, and that it changed everything. The conviction of the Resurrection gives believers hope for the future.

The evidence that Jesus appeared in the same physical body He was crucified in will be found in His twelve appearances, the first eleven of which cover the immediate forty days after His crucifixion.

Jesus' Appearance to Mary Magdalene

If you wanted a witness to anything, you would never go to a woman in the first century Jewish male dominated culture of Jesus' day, yet, that is exactly what John reported. A writer attempting to invent a resurrection account would never take this approach. A woman's testimony was not even accepted in court. Certainly, if you were going to fake an account of Jesus resurrection you would have Him appear to a high profile disciple such as Peter. Instead, Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance was to Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene, refers to Mary who came from the Galilean village of Magdala (located north of Tiberias on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee). She appears in John for the first

time at the crucifixion (John 19:25). She is also mentioned in Luke 8:1–3 among a list of women in Galilee who followed Jesus devoutly.

According to John's report, Mary saw Jesus with her own naked eyes. The text says, "At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus" (John 20: 14).

Mary heard Jesus. "Woman," He said, "Why are you crying?" "Who is it you are looking for" (John 20: 15). Again, Jesus said to her, "Mary." Then, Mary recognized Jesus' voice. "She turned toward Him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni" (John 20: 16). Mary's recognition of Jesus' voice is evidence of the identity of the resurrected Christ. In verse 17, Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am returning to my Father and your Father, to My God and to your God" (John 20:17). The word "hold" (aptomai) is a normal word for physical touching of a material body. In a parallel account in Matthew 28:6–9), the women clasped his feet. While some may say Mary never touched Jesus, nevertheless, she did see Him with her own eyes, she heard Him with her own ears, and very possibly, she did cling to Him as it states in several biblical versions. Matthew's account also tells us that Mary was told by the angels to "Come and see the place where He lay." So Mary witnessed the empty tomb and Jesus' grave clothes. All the evidence for an unmistakable identity of the same visible, physical body that was raised immortal is present in this first appearance.

Jesus' Appearance to the Women

Mary Magdalene was not the only woman that Jesus appeared to. He also appeared to the other women with her (Matthew 28:1–10), including Mary the mother of James and Salome (Mark 16:1). During this appearance there were four evidences presented that proved Jesus rose in the same tangible, physical body in which He was "Crucified."

First of all, the women saw Jesus. They were instructed by the angel at the empty tomb, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you" (Mark 16:7). As they were hurrying away from the tomb, "suddenly Jesus met them. Greetings, He said" (Matthew 28:9). So they received visual confirmation of His physical resurrection.

Secondly, the women clasped His feet and worshipped Him. According to Matthews report they not only saw His physical body but they actually felt it as well. Since spiritual entities cannot be sensed with any of the five senses, the fact that the women actually handled Jesus' physical body is a convincing proof of the tangible, physical nature of the resurrection body.

Thirdly, the women heard Jesus greet them! After greeting them (verse 9) Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (verse 10). Therefore, without a doubt, the women saw, touched, and heard Jesus with their physical senses, a three-fold confirmation of the physical nature of His body.

Fourthly, the women saw the empty tomb where that body had lain. The angel said to them at the tomb, “He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay” (verse 6). Therefore, in both the case of Mary Magdalene and the other women, all their physical senses that identified the physical resurrection body of Jesus were present. They saw the empty tomb where His physical body once lay and they saw, heard and touched that same body after it came out of the tomb.

Jesus’ Appearance to Peter

While there is no narration of the event described in 1 Corinthians 15:5, Paul declares that Jesus “was seen of (Peter).” The text says He was seen (Greek:*ophthe*). Therefore, Peter must have heard Jesus also as the text implies. Jesus definitely spoke with Peter in a later appearance when He asked Peter to feed His sheep (John 21:15–17). Mark also confirms that Peter (and the disciples) would “see Him, just as he told you” (Mark 16:7). Additionally, Peter, of course saw the empty tomb and grave clothes (John 20:6–7). These are definite pieces of evidence that the body that rose is the same, visible, tangible, material body of Jesus before the crucifixion and resurrection took place.

On the Emmaus Road

The Emmaus road event took place on the same day that Peter saw the grave clothes in the tomb. “Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing Him (Luke 24:13–35). As in other events of Jesus appearance, three evidences of the physical resurrection were presented. Surprisingly, not only did these two men see and hear Jesus, but they also ate with Him. These facts combined provide clear proof of the genuine, material nature of the resurrection body.

Cleopas was the name of one of the two disciples (verse 18). As they journeyed toward Emmaus, “Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them” (verse 16). They did not recognize who He was at first. However, they clearly saw Him. When it finally dawned on them who it was, the text states, “He disappeared from their sight” (verse 31). Jesus resurrection body was as visible as any other material object.

They listened to Jesus with their physical ears (verses 17, 19, 25–26). Jesus in fact carried on a very lengthy conversation with them. And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself” (verse 27). These two Emmaus disciples were not the only ones that Jesus taught after the resurrection. Luke relates to us elsewhere that “He appeared to them [the apostles] over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). During these times He “gave many convincing proofs that He was alive” (verse 3).

When Jesus was at the table with them, Luke states, “He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them” (Luke 24:30).

Certainly, sitting at the table with these disciples and breaking and giving thanks for the bread would more than imply that Jesus ate with them also. Later on in this same chapter it is explicitly stated that He ate with the ten apostles (verse 43). In two other places Luke remarks that Jesus did eat with the disciples. “On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (Acts 1:4). “He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead” (Acts 10:41).

Therefore, it is clear, on these appearances of Christ the eyewitnesses saw Him, heard Him, and ate with Him over a considerable period of time one evening. How could Jesus have done anything more to demonstrate the physical nature of the resurrection body?

Appearance to the Ten

On this occasion when Jesus appeared to the ten disciples, Thomas was absent. Jesus was seen, heard, touched, and they saw Him eat fish. Thus four major evidences of the visible, physical nature of the resurrection body were present during this time.

“While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you” (Luke 24:36). The conversation Jesus had with the ten was quite a lengthy one. He explained about how “everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (Luke 24:44). These ten certainly did hear Jesus. They saw Jesus as well on this occasion, thinking Him to be a “spirit” (verse 37). Jesus then showed them His hands and His feet. “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (verse 39). So they clearly saw Him and heard Him. John’s parallel account records that “After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20:20).

The disciples did not seem to be convinced until they actually saw the wounds of Jesus, and most likely they even touched Him. Then they were convinced it was their Lord and His body was indeed the very same nail-scarred body of flesh and bones that was crucified.

On this occasion Jesus ate physical food to convince the disciples that he was resurrected in a literal, physical body. “They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence” (Luke 24:42–43). Jesus used every possible way to prove the material nature of His resurrection body.

Appearance to the Eleven

When Jesus appeared to His disciples Thomas was not present (John 20:24). Even after his fellow disciples reported they had seen Jesus, Thomas refused to believe unless he could see and touch Christ for himself. One week passed and his opportunity came. “A week later His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the

doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you” (John 20:26). When Jesus appeared to Thomas he saw, heard, and touched the resurrected Lord. Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

Thomas also heard the Lord say, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe” (vs. 27). The fact that Jesus still had these physical wounds from His crucifixion is an unmistakable proof that He was resurrected in the same body in which He was crucified. What greater proof could Jesus have offered than the same body of flesh that was crucified and now glorified.

Appearance to the Seven Disciples

When seven of the disciples went fishing in Galilee, Jesus appeared to them. It was during this appearance the disciples saw Jesus, heard Him, and ate breakfast with Him. The Bible says “Jesus appeared again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1). “Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus” (verse 4). After He talked and ate with them, the text says, “This is now the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead” (John 21:14).

The disciples also heard Jesus speak (verses 5, 6, 10, 12). Jesus carried on an extended conversation with Peter in which he was asked three times whether he loved Jesus (verses 15–17). It would seem Jesus also ate with the disciples because He asked them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish” (verse 5). After telling them where to catch some (verse 6), Jesus told them to “Bring some of the fish you have just caught” (verse 10). Then He said to the disciples, “Come and have breakfast” (verse 12). As they did, “Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish” (verse 14). While it does not say for certain Jesus ate with them, it is a safe assumption that He did. After all, He was the host of the meal.

Appearance to Commission Apostles

Jesus in His next appearance came to His disciples saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20). As Jesus commissioned them to disciple all nations, He was both seen and clearly heard by all the apostles.

Then the disciples went to Galilee where Jesus had told them to go (verse 16). And “when they saw Him, they worshiped Him” (verse 17).

It is worth noting that this small little band shortly became the world’s greatest missionary society, which is ample proof of how powerfully the words of Jesus impressed them.

Appearance to the Five Hundred

There is no narration to be found of this appearance. Paul simply notes it in 1 Corinthians 15:6 where he says, “After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.”

Paul’s words here are powerful because they tell us that the words of Jesus had such an effect on the five hundred people that they were willing to testify on behalf of the resurrection. Despite its brevity, this one verse is a powerful testimony to the bodily resurrection of Christ.

Paul is writing in A.D. 55 or 56, only twenty-two or twenty-three years after the resurrection, when most of the eye-witnesses were still alive. Paul challenges his reader to check out what he is saying with this multitude of witnesses who saw and probably heard Christ after His resurrection.

Appearance to James

To the amazement of many, Mary and Joseph had other children besides Jesus. Not so amazing is that His half brothers James and Jude were not believers until after the resurrection. “For even His own brothers did not believe in Him” (John 7:5). But after the resurrection at least James and Jude became believers. “Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? Aren’t His sisters here with us” (Mark 6:3).

The Scriptures however, make it plain that Jesus did “appear to James” (1 Corinthians 15:7). We can be sure that Jesus also spoke with James. Perhaps, as a result of this experience he became a pillar of the early church and played a prominent roll in the first church council (Acts 15:13).

James also wrote one of the books of the New Testament in which he spoke of “the crown of life” (James 1:12) and of the “Lord’s coming” (5:8) which was made possible only through the resurrection of Christ (2 Timothy 1:10). Whatever took place when Jesus appeared to James was enough not only to convert him, but also caused him to be so involved in the apostolic church that he became a prominent figure.

Appearance at the Ascension

Just prior to Jesus ascension He appeared again to all of His apostles. During this time Jesus again ate with the apostles, and obviously they must have seen Him and heard Him speak. “After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of God. On one occasion, while He was eating with them” (Acts 1:3–4). During the days after Christ rose from the dead, He appeared to the apostles from time to time. The word “proofs,” in the previous verses, refers to demonstrated, decisive evidence. Jesus’ resurrection had not been sleight of hand or illusion, with Jesus being

merely a ghostly presence. Instead, these were solid, visible, and undeniable proofs of the fact that Jesus was alive.

In the book of Acts, Peter gives this testimony of Christ. Peter states the fact that He and others had been witnesses to the ministry of Jesus, including His crucifixion and His resurrection. The fact that Peter and others had seen Christ, heard Him, and ate with Him, should squelch any rumor that Jesus had appeared in some phantom form (Acts 10:39–43). This was solid, decisive proof of Christ’s resurrection in bodily form. The same body that was crucified is the same body that was resurrected to life with all the capabilities present that were present before the crucifixion. Peter was there and he confirmed this truth of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Appearance to Paul

The last appearance Jesus made was to the apostle Paul. Paul’s encounter with Jesus was no vision. It was an objective, external event observable to all who were within visual distance.

Paul called this experience he had an “appearance” (Greek: *ophthe*), the identical word used of Christ’s literal appearances to the other apostles (1 Corinthians 15:5–7). Paul calls it the last appearance of Christ to the apostles.

To be an apostle you had to have seen the resurrected Christ. That was the condition. “Beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:22). Yet Paul claimed to be an apostle, saying, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord” (1 Corinthians 9:1).

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul said Jesus “appeared to me also” (verse 8). In the detailed account of it in Acts 26, Paul said, “I saw a light from heaven” (verse 13). It is clear that Paul is referring to a physical light because it is so bright it blinded the physical eyes (Acts 22:6, 8). Not only did Paul see the light, but he also saw Jesus. Paul also heard the voice of Jesus speaking distinctly to him “in Aramaic” (Acts 26:14). The physical voice Paul heard said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me” (Acts 9:4). Paul carried on a conversation with Jesus (verses 5–6) and was obedient to the command to go into the city of Damascus (9:6). Paul’s miraculous conversion, his tireless efforts for Christ, and his strong emphasis on the physical resurrection of Christ all show what an indelible impression the physical resurrection made upon him.

Conclusion

The witness evidence for the physical resurrection of Christ is massive to say the least. Compared to the evidence for other events from the ancient world, it is overwhelming.

On all twelve occasions of Jesus’ appearances He was seen and probably heard. Four times He allowed and offered Himself to be touched, and He was definitely touched

twice. Also, He showed the scars on His hands and feet that were a direct result of the crucifixion. Jesus ate food on at least four separate occasions. The sum total of all this evidence is proof positive that Jesus was resurrected in the same visible, tangible, physical body of flesh and bones He had possessed before His resurrection.

The resurrection from the dead is the only real hope of man, whether he believes it or even knows about it. Coming up out of the grave gives to man the final ultimate victory over death, (1 Corinthians 15:26). Paul referred to the “hope of eternal life which God who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time” (Titus 1:2).

When Paul was brought before Felix, he stated, “I admit that I worship the God of our fathers, as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” Acts 24:14–15). Jesus Himself also said, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28–29). Jesus did not say the just and the unjust would be raised up at the same time. Neither did Paul.

What guarantee do we have that we will be resurrected when Christ returns to this earth? What can we do to make sure we will be in the first resurrection to immortality?

Notice this very interesting verse that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. “But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits: then, when He comes, those who belong to Him” (1 Corinthians 15:23). From this verse we learn that it is those who belong to Him that will be in the First Resurrection. How then do we get to belong to Christ? Paul wrote, “You however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9). This answers our question. It is those who are filled and led by the Spirit of God who will be in the First Resurrection. “Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

Paul continues on with this theme: “And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you” (Romans 8:11). Therefore, if we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us when Christ returns and we are in our grave, we will be resurrected. If we are alive when Christ returns, we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

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