

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS



Christ to the World Ministries

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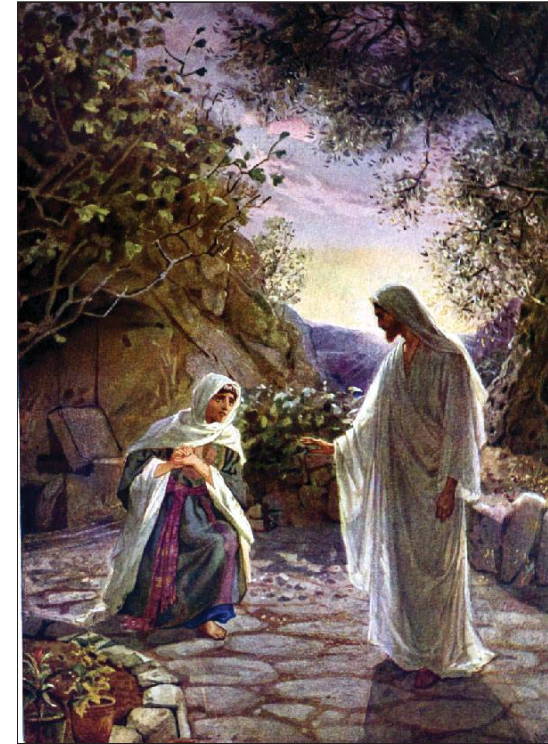
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CHRIST TO THE WORLD MINISTRIES

The Resurrection of Jesus

Read John 20:1-31 and John 21:1-25 in your Bible.

Suppose you had a friend who had gone through a very bad experience. Instead of supporting him or her during this bad time, you had run away in fear; you had even denied that you knew this person. What is worse, your friend had warned you of the trials that would be coming. Instead of believing, you had declared such an event impossible. You were looking for a happy, triumphant outcome.

Then suppose, after the horrors your friend had endured, he or she had come back to see you. How would you expect him to react?

This is the situation faced by the disciples a couple of days after Jesus' death. But he acted very differently from what they had feared.

Raised by God's Power

The resurrection of Jesus is a mystery. The "how" of it will never be discovered. One minute Jesus was a cold corpse, lying on a limestone slab in a dark cave. The next, he was alive. But not just alive again. He was alive in a different way. His body had been lifted out of time and space. There were no limitations on him. This was a *new creation*. In fact, Paul spoke of the power by which God gave Jesus a new and eternal body: "*His mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead*" (Ephesians 1:19-20).

John's Gospel gives us a good word picture of what may have happened. When Peter and John, alerted by Mary Magdalene, ran to the tomb of Jesus early in the morning, they found it empty, as she had said. But they saw something more. In Jesus' time corpses were wrapped in strips of linen filled with spices. The head was wrapped in a separate piece of cloth. On the slab where Jesus' body had lain, "*the strips of linen [were] lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen*" (John 20:6-7). The implication is that Jesus, in his new body, had been lifted out of the burial cloths.

Why did God give Jesus this new body? It was to show that Jesus did not deserve to die, that he truly was God's Son and the bringer of God's kingdom. Hebrews 5:8-9 says: "*He learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*" This is a great mystery, and it can only be laid hold of by faith.

The Same Jesus

In spite of these miraculous changes, Jesus was the same person. His disciples gradually came to understand this as they met with him after the resurrection.

Jesus told the disciples, after the Last Supper, "*In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me. . . . Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy*" (John 16:16, 22). Jesus made his promise good in the days after his resurrection.

His first appearance was to a disciple who had not deserted him at the end: Mary Magdalene. She was one of the women who had watched him die on the cross. Early on that Sunday morning she came to the tomb. Jesus met her there. She did not recognize him until he spoke to her. Her name, in those familiar accents, thrilled her to the core.

But Jesus did not desert those who had deserted him. He came to them many times. Some of these appearances are recorded in the Bible to show how Jesus comforted and strengthened his disciples in the days after his resurrection.

Dealing with fear. The disciples were almost petrified with fear after Jesus' death. They stayed together, behind locked doors. Jesus came to them, greeting them as usual. He showed them the wounds in his hands and his side so that they could be sure this was the same Jesus.

Dealing with doubt. One disciple, Thomas, was absent when Jesus first appeared to the disciples. He could not take their assurances that Jesus was alive. He had to see for himself! He even wanted to put his hand into the marks of crucifixion. Jesus came and offered his hands and side to Thomas. Thomas, in awe and adoration, cried out, "*My Lord and my God!*" (John 20:28).

Dealing with betrayal. All the disciples were likely burdened with bad consciences over the way they had deserted Jesus when he was arrested. But surely one of the guiltiest must have been Peter. He had denied to the servants of the high priest that he even knew Jesus because he was so afraid for his life. How he must have cringed when he thought of that betrayal!

Jesus did not leave him wallowing in his guilt. Jesus appeared to Peter and several other disciples on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. He approached Peter and asked him directly, "*Do you truly love me?*" (John 20:15). Peter hastened to say that he did. Jesus' response was to give him a chance to prove his love: "*Feed my lambs,*" he said (John 21:15). Three times Jesus asked Peter the same question and got the same answer. And each time Jesus gave him a job to do.

This is the way we make restitution when we have hurt someone. We do what is meaningful to that person. Peter took a role of leadership in the new church. He gave the new disciples Jesus' words so that they could follow him with understanding. He truly "fed Christ's lambs."

Conclusion

This same Jesus that we meet in the Gospels after he was resurrected is still alive. He longs to have relationship with human beings just as he did with his disciples. He comes to us in spirit as we turn to him. He loves us deeply and wants to live in our hearts. We can open our hearts to him by turning away from sin and selfishness in our lives. He will be just as real to us now as he was to his disciples in the days after his death and resurrection.

Pray this prayer: "*Dear God, I know that I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*"

Welcome Into God's family! Share with others that you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.