

Resurrection

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The Lord's triumph over death was vital to any hope we might have for happiness here and hereafter.

Anyone who has attended the funeral of a loved one, or visited the cemetery where a parent, child, husband, wife, or close friend is buried, feels the heavy hand of death that is laid on all mankind because of the fall of Adam. At such times we sense the importance of the doctrine that every person who dies shall rise from the dead with an immortal body and continue with that body forever, never to grow old, suffer physical pain and sickness, or die again.

The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead is at the heart of the message of Jesus Christ. It is essential to our faith that we understand what the scriptures and the Brethren have said about it.

We are a highly favored people to have not only all that the Bible tells us about the resurrection but also the more detailed, specific testimony from the Book of Mormon. In conjunction with teachings in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible, and the teachings of latter-day prophets and Apostles, the Book of Mormon provides a wealth of information that we would not otherwise have.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The Doctrines of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Eternal Judgment are necessary to preach among the first principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 149.) He emphasized that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to our hope for future happiness and that Jesus, having been himself resurrected, has the power to bring all mankind out of their graves to stand before him to be judged. (*Ibid.*, p. 62.)

Resurrection Taught in the Old Testament

The idea of a resurrection from the dead is not prominent in the Old Testament, but we may be assured that ancient prophets knew the doctrine and taught it plainly.

Job, for example, found hope and comfort in the assurance that his wasted body would be renewed and that in his body he would see God. Because the Redeemer lived, Job knew he would live after death. (See [Job 19:25–27](#).)

In Ezekiel 37 we read of Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones, in which the bones came together “bone to his bone” ([Ezek. 37:7](#)) and the people, once dead, lived again and stood upon their feet. The Lord then directed Ezekiel to say to the house of Israel: “Oh my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, ... and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live.” ([Ezek. 37:12, 14](#).) To those of us who believe there will be a resurrection of the physical bodies of all mankind, these Old Testament scriptures seem clear in their reference to the doctrine of resurrection. But perhaps that is because we have the blessing of latter-day revelation and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Our friends of other faiths, who do not have access to these sources of knowledge, often do not get the same message from these Old Testament verses. Many see these teachings as merely figurative language or allegory rather than as accurate information about a physical resurrection of mankind. Members of some present-day churches are uncertain that Jesus was resurrected with his physical body, and some doubt that he still has a physical body today.

Resurrection Taught in the New Testament

Even the Savior’s disciples had difficulty believing in the resurrection of Jesus when they first learned of it, although he had told them it would occur and had spoken of himself as “the resurrection, and the life.” ([John 11:25](#).) Luke tells us that when the women found that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb and the body of Jesus was gone, “They were much perplexed.” ([Luke 24:14](#).) They were told by two angels that Jesus had risen from the dead. The women hurried and told these things to the eleven Apostles and to others, but “their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” ([Luke 24:4–11](#).)

Later that same day, Jesus appeared to the Apostles. They thought he was a spirit until he said to them: “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.” ([Luke 24:39](#).) They saw him, touched him, and heard him. “And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?” ([Luke 24:41](#).) After they had given him fish and honey, they watched him eat. But because resurrection from the dead is miraculous and unnatural to our mortal world, it was difficult for them to believe what they had experienced.

There can be no doubt, however, that they came to know that Jesus Christ was a resurrected being, with actual flesh and bones.

Peter vigorously proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus in the book of Acts and in his epistles. (See [Acts 1:22](#); [Acts 2:32](#); [Acts 3:15](#); [Acts 4:33](#); [Acts 5:30–32](#); [1 Pet. 1:3](#); [Acts 3:21](#)). So bold were Peter and John in teaching this doctrine that the priests and the Sadducees “came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” ([Acts 4:1–2](#).)

Paul was second to none in preaching the Resurrection, declaring it in many of his epistles, and giving a remarkable explanation in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 [[1 Cor. 15](#)], the longest and most detailed statement on the Resurrection in the Bible. We can learn much about resurrection by reading and studying this scriptural text in its entirety.

Resurrection Taught in the Book of Mormon

We can read of Jesus’ death and resurrection in the New Testament. But if we want to know why the death and resurrection of Jesus are so important, and how those things pertain to you and to me individually, we must go to the Book of Mormon.

The purpose and mission of the Book of Mormon is to testify of Jesus Christ. In order to be a witness of Christ, the book must teach the doctrine of the resurrection. Five thousand years ago the Lord revealed to Enoch the coming forth and the purpose of the Book of Mormon: “And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men.” ([Moses 7:62](#).)

The doctrine of the resurrection is taught by every major prophet in the Book of Mormon. The word *resurrection* occurs eighty-three times in the Book of Mormon, and the phrase “rise from the grave” or “rise from the dead” occurs at least twenty-six times.

Lehi, Jacob, and Benjamin

The Prophet Lehi said: “Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.” ([2 Ne. 2:8](#).)

From this scripture and others, we learn that Jesus was the first to be resurrected. Although there are accounts in the scriptures of people being brought back to life

before Jesus' resurrection, these were only restored to mortality. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead with an immortal body. This is confirmed in the New Testament. (See [Matt. 27:52–53](#); [Acts 26:23](#); [1 Cor. 15:22–23](#); [Col. 1:18](#); [Rev. 1:5](#).)

In 2 Nephi 9, Jacob, a great doctrinal teacher, explains in detail the need for a resurrection: “Our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God. ...

“For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.

“Wherefore, [there] must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

“O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became 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 Ne. 9:4, 6–9](#).)

We note the doctrine taught here—in the plainest terms, that the fall of Adam brought upon all mankind a physical death and also a spiritual death—that is, separation from God; and man by his own power could not return to God's presence. The atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ redeem all mankind from both of these deaths and bring us back into the presence of God for judgment.

Jacob continues: “And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

“O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls.” (2 Ne. 9:12–13.)

These words clearly establish the reality of the physical resurrection of all mankind.

Abinadi

The prophet Abinadi points out that the Messiah who will come to atone for man’s sins is none other than God himself, the creator of the world. He says that the Redeemer will bring to pass the resurrection of the dead. “Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not ... said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, ... and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted?” (Mosiah 13:33–35.)

Abinadi teaches further: “And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.

“And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection.

“But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ. ...

“Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil.” (Mosiah 16:6–8, 10.)

Amulek on the Resurrection

Amulek adds some important points to our understanding of the resurrection. Of the Son of God, Amulek says: “He shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.

“Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

“Now, there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised. ...

“The spirit and the body shall be reunited again ... and we shall be brought to stand before God, ... and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.

“Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous ... [and they shall] be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit ... to be judged according to their works. ... I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, *that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided*; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption.” (Alma 11:40–45; italics added.)

We note particularly that Amulek says the spirit and body will never be separated again. Resurrected beings cannot die again. They cannot be reincarnated. The question sometimes arises, Is Jesus the Savior of other worlds? The answer is yes. Did he suffer and die and become resurrected on those other worlds? The answer has to be no. If that had occurred anywhere else, it could not have occurred here. A resurrected being cannot be separated in his spirit and body, as this scripture teaches us, so if Jesus had been resurrected on an earlier world, he could not have been born on this world, nor could he have been crucified and resurrected again. Will the sons of perdition be resurrected? Yes. Will they die a physical death again? Not according to this passage of scripture we have just read. They will be separated from the presence of God, which is to say they will suffer *spiritual death*, but as far as we know, they cannot die a physical death again.

Alma’s Testimony

Alma taught the doctrine of the resurrection to his son, saying: “Behold, there is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead. ... Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things.” (Alma 40:4–5.)

Alma said his understanding of the word *resurrection* was that “the soul [spirit] shall be restored to the body, ... every limb and joint ... yea, even a hair of the head shall not

be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.” (Alma 40:23.)

Alma explained the relationship between the Fall and the Atonement and the resurrection as follows: “All mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of ... the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.

“And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also. ...

“And mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God ... to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.” (Alma 42:14-15, 23.)

The Account of Eyewitnesses

We find great evidence that Jesus literally received his body from the grave when we read 3 Nephi 11, the record of the resurrected Savior’s visit to the land of Bountiful, where he showed his body to the multitude and let them feel with their hands that it was a tangible, real body. Nephi reports: “They saw a Man descending out of heaven; ... and he came down and stood in the midst of them; ...

“And ... he stretched forth his hand and spake ... saying:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. ...

“And ... they remembered that it had been prophesied ... that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

“And ... the Lord spake unto them saying:

“Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; ... and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

“And ... 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.” (3 Ne. 11:8-10, 12-17.)

This grand declaration that Jesus Christ is the God of Israel, and has redeemed mankind from the fall of Adam, and has risen from the tomb and brought about a physical resurrection of all mankind, restoring everyone to God’s presence for judgment, is clearly taught in the Book of Mormon. It is the great message of the book.

Modern Revelation

The same doctrine, with refinements and clarifications, is found in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and other prophets of this dispensation.

In a stirring address on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul presents the questions: “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (1 Cor. 15:35.) He deals with these questions in an explanation of the three degrees of glory. (1 Cor. 15:37-44.)

The first question was specifically answered by both President Brigham Young (in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:275; 15:136-39) and Elder Erastus Snow (ibid., 25:34), when they explained that the resurrection will be conducted much as other things are done in the kingdom: by those in authority and by delegation. As one cannot baptize himself, nor can he baptize others until he himself is baptized and ordained and given the authority, even so one cannot resurrect himself, but will be called forth by someone in authority. Men will be given the authority to perform this ordinance after they are resurrected, and then they can resurrect others.

In other latter-day revelation, we read that a resurrected body is essential for a fulness of joy (see D&C 93:33-34); and we learn from D&C 45:17 and 138:50 [D&C 138:50] that spirits in the postmortal spirit world look upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a type of bondage. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “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.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 181.)
On another occasion, the Prophet said, “No person can have this salvation except through a tabernacle.” (*Ibid.*, p. 297.)

We learn from latter-day revelation that the resurrection pertains not only to the human family, but to all forms of life. (See [D&C 29:23-25](#).)

These are just a few of the insights about resurrection that we may learn from modern revelation and from teachings of the prophets and Apostles of this dispensation. Together with the teachings of ancient scripture and past dispensations, these teachings give us hope and courage as we come to understand them.

Whenever the gospel of Jesus Christ was taught, from the days of Adam until the present time, the doctrine of the resurrection was also taught. The resurrection of the dead is a glorious and miraculous reality.

[illustration] *Christ at Emmaus*, by Carl Heinrich Bloch

[illustration] *Behold, Your Little Ones*, by David Lindsay

[illustration] *The First Vision*, by Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert

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