



“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain”—1 Corinthians 15:17 NAB

There is no doubt that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. But how? In a physical body, or in a spiritual body?

What do Jesus' appearances after his resurrection tell us?

There are a number of appearances by Jesus recorded after his resurrection. What do these appearances tell us about his resurrection? Are there clues as to whether his resurrection was in a physical body or a spiritual body? Let's examine the Bible to find out.

“The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit”—1 Corinthians 15:45 HCSB

“He was brought to life in the spirit”—1 Peter 3:18 NAB

Since the Bible tells us that Jesus was resurrected as a spirit, let's see if his resurrection appearances match this description.

Matthew 28:8-9 - “They hurried away from the tomb . . . and ran . . . suddenly Jesus was there in their path, greeting them.” (REB). The resurrected spirit, Jesus, materialized a fleshly body temporarily for this sudden appearance to the women who were running from his tomb..

John 20:14-17 - “She turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him.” (REB) ... “Thinking he was the gardener.” (NIV). Mary Magdalene knew Jesus very well. Obviously, his materialized body looked different outwardly. Mary recognized him by his voice, and by the way he spoke.

Luke 24:15-16 - “As they talked and argued, Jesus himself came up and walked with them; but something prevented them from recognizing him.” (REB) Jesus also appears in a physical

body that is different from the one he had prior to his execution, and apparently even different from the one Mary saw him in.

[Luke 24:30-31](#) - "Broke it into pieces... suddenly they saw! And they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight." Fleshly people can't do this. Jesus was obviously a spirit who materialized various bodies temporarily, and then disappeared back into the spirit world.

[Luke 24:35](#) - "**Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread**" (NIV). Notice, they did not recognize him by his physical appearance, but by his mannerisms. Jesus obviously did not have the same fleshly body in these resurrection appearances, since he was not recognized physically. His mannerisms in the breaking of the bread in [Luke 24](#) gave him away.

[John 21:4](#) - "Morning came, and Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus" (REB), because Jesus looked different, with yet again a different fleshly body. "Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus." (NIV). This gives evidence Jesus was a spirit.

[John 20:19](#) - "**On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst**" (NAB). [Luke 24:36-37](#) - "And just as they were telling about it; Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened." (NLT) Suddenly, Jesus appears in Jerusalem. "In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost" (NJB). Why? Because of Jesus' sudden appearance in the locked room, out of thin air, and because he looked so different, Jesus' sudden appearances out of nowhere give strong evidence he was a spirit.

[John 20:26](#) - "**Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst**" (NAB). He appears suddenly in a locked room, a week after his resurrection. Fleshly bodies

can't go through solid walls and locked doors, which gives good evidence Jesus was a spirit.

[Acts 1:9-11](#) - Lifted up and vanishes into heaven from Mt. of Olives. 'Fleshly bodies can't go into heaven' ([1 Corinthians 15:50](#)).

[Acts 7:55-56](#) - Stephen sees vision of Jesus in heaven standing at God's right hand, in heaven, indicating Jesus is a spirit in heaven.

[Revelation 1:12-16](#) - Seen in vision to John. Jesus is obviously in heaven as a spirit.

[Revelation 1:17-18](#) - Was dead, living forever now, in heaven, since he returned there.

[1 Peter 3:18](#) - **“Put to death in the flesh, he was made alive in the spirit”**

(NAB). “Was physically put to death, but he was made alive in the spirit.” (AAT) “Put to death in the body, but made alive in the spirit.” (NIV) This scripture directly says that Jesus was resurrected as a spirit.

[Luke 23:53](#) (NIV) - “Placed in a tomb . . . in which no one had yet been laid”. So there could be no mixup.

[Luke 24:3](#) - When they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. (NIV). Why? God had consumed his “body”, as a whole burnt offering ([Hebrews 10:5-10](#)). Jesus' physical body was now forever gone.

[John 20:14-15](#) - “She turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus . . . Thinking he was the gardener . . .” (NIV) See *ftn. 20:15 in CSB*. Jesus had materialized in a different physical body for this appearance.

As we can see from the abundant scriptural proof available, Jesus' appearances after his resurrection prove he was a spirit, who was able to temporarily materialize fleshly bodies.