



What do Jesus' appearances after his resurrection tell us?

There is no doubt that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. **“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:17 NAB)**. But how was he resurrected? In a physical body, or in a spiritual body? Were his appearances physical or spiritual, as a spirit?

Luke 23:53 - “Placed in a tomb . . . in which no one had yet been laid” (NIV). There could be no mixup about Jesus' body, because there were no other bodies in this brand new tomb.

RESURRECTED AS A SPIRIT

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”.

1 Corinthians 15:45 - “The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (ESV). Since the Bible tells us that Jesus was resurrected as a “spirit”, in this article we will examine the scriptures to see if his resurrection appearances match this description of being resurrected as a “spirit”.

JESUS' BODY

First of all, his fleshly body was gone from the tomb.

Luke 24:3 - “When they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus”

(NIV). Why did they not find Jesus' body? Because God had consumed his "body", as a whole 'burnt offering' ([Hebrews 10:5-10](#)). Jesus' physical body was now forever gone. Why?

John 6:51 - "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world"

(NAB). Jesus couldn't "give his flesh for the life of the world," and still keep it. When someone gives something, they no longer have it.

Hebrews 9:11-12 - "Christ . . . entered once for all into the sanctuary . . . with his own blood" (NAB).

Christ's physical body was sacrificed to God, as represented by his blood. His body no longer existed.

RECORDED RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

Acts 1:3 - "He had also, after He suffered, shown Himself alive to them with many sure proofs, appearing to them at intervals during forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God" (NAB).

There are a number of appearances by Jesus recorded after his resurrection. Notice, however, that Jesus 'appeared to them *at intervals*'. This is a key point, indicating that he *appeared*, that is, became visible at various select times. Jesus was no longer constantly with his disciples, because he was no longer in the flesh.

What do these appearances tell us about his resurrection? For one thing, Jesus' resurrection appearances fulfilled the prophecy of [Isaiah 53:11](#), "after he has suffered, he will see the light of life" (NIV). But, 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, starting with his first recorded resurrected appearance by Matthew.

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 very sudden appearance to the women who were running from his tomb.

John 20:14-16 - “**She turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him . . . Thinking it was the gardener . . . Jesus said, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him, ‘Rabbuni,’ which is Hebrew for teacher” (REB). Mary Magdalene knew Jesus very well, having traveled extensively with his entourage (Luke 8:1). Obviously, Jesus’ materialized a fleshly body for this resurrection appearance. “*Mary mistook Jesus for the gardener, which suggests that Jesus was indistinguishable from an ordinary person*” (CSB footnote on John 20:15). However, she instantly recognized Jesus by his voice once he spoke, and also by the way he spoke.**

Luke 24:13-15 - “**That same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, talking about all that had happened. As they talked and argued, Jesus himself came up and walked with them; but something prevented them from recognizing him.” (REB) Jesus appears here as a traveler on this road to Emmaus, in a physical body that is different from the one he had prior to his resurrection, and apparently even different from the one Mary saw him in.**

Luke 24:29-31 - “**So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said a blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.” (REB) Fleshly people can’t just “vanish” from sight instantaneously the way Jesus did. 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, that this was their Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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). This same occasion is also described by gospel writer Luke, as follows:

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 among ten of his faithful apostles in a locked room back in the city of 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 he was unrecognizable, even among his most intimate earthly associates. Jesus’ sudden and unrecognizable appearances out of nowhere provide strong evidence he was now alive as a spirit.

John 20:26 - “Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said” (NLT). One week after the six appearances of the resurrected Jesus on his resurrection day, John records another appearance of Jesus, this time with the apostle Thomas present. Very much like the last recorded appearance of Jesus on the previous Sunday evening, out of the invisible, Jesus once again appears suddenly in a locked room. Fleshly human bodies can’t go through solid walls and locked doors, which, once again, gives powerful evidence Jesus was a spirit.

John 21:4 - “Morning came, and Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus” (REB). “Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.” (NIV). Why ‘did they not realized that it was Jesus’? Apparently because “Jesus appeared in a different form” (Mark 16:12), and looked different, with, yet again, a another materialized fleshly body. This gives even more evidence that Jesus was a resurrected spirit, as 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 1 Peter 3:18 tell us he was.

Acts 1:9-11 - “While they were looking at Him, He was carried up, and a cloud closing beneath Him hid Him from their sight” (Weymouth New Testament). Jesus

was lifted up and then vanished into the spirit world, that is, heaven, from Mount of Olives. How do we know this? "Our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50 NLT), meaning that 'fleshly bodies can't go into heaven', and that includes Jesus. How can we be sure that includes Jesus? "The sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ" was a 'burnt offering' and "burnt offerings" were "consumed", that is, vanquished (Hebrews 8:8-10; Leviticus 9:24). So there was no physical body left for Jesus to take into heaven.

AFTERMATH AND CONCLUSION

Acts 10:40-41 - "This man God raised on the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (NAB). Why was Jesus not visible to all the people? Because God carefully chose some of the select few of his faithful disciples to grant the privilege of seeing the resurrected Jesus. That way, Jesus could appear and disappear at will to those chosen few, while the rest never saw him in his resurrected state.

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

Revelation 1:12-16 - Jesus is seen in vision to John. Jesus is obviously in heaven as a spirit, since "physical bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50).

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.