

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Jesus' Resurrection: Literal and Physical

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 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. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. (Luke 24:36–43, KJV 1900)

We could appeal to any number of New Testament passages that affirm the specific character of Jesus' resurrection, but they all speak to the same truth. His resurrection was literal and physical. It involved His physical body, that same body that was born of a virgin, lived as a man for around thirty-three years, suffered at the hands of the Romans and the religious leaders in Jerusalem, was crucified by the Romans, buried, and—yes indeed—arose three days later. Our study passage goes to great length to affirm the literal reality of Jesus' resurrection. No gnostic or mystical explanation of a "Spirit body" can withstand the vivid witness of Jesus' literal body that stood before the disciples. Based on John's writings, especially First John, one of the earliest heresies to invade first century Christianity was a gnostic fantasy that denied that Jesus had a human body at all or that, if He had a human body, that it arose from the dead, much less entered heaven at the ascension. According to John, this belief assaults one of the most fundamental and essential truths of Biblical truth. How strongly does John reject the gnostic heresy?

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is **come in the flesh** is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3; emphasis added)

This verse assaults the foundation of the gnostic error. John will not permit any tampering with the literal reality that he had experienced personally. The Jesus whom John knew was a real human, though obviously more than mere human. He lived in a real human body, a body that consisted of molecules just as real as your body or mine. That body grew tired, rested, ate, drank, and lived an active life. That same body suffered indescribable torture in scourging and crucifixion, was quickly prepared for burial by two disciples, buried, and just as literally arose three days later. John begins his first letter with this truth.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (1 John 1:1)

I suggest that most of John's New Testament writings address the gnostic error, not just First John. Think of this verse, and compare it to the opening verses of John's gospel.

And the Word was **made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14; emphasis added)

Early gnostic beliefs varied widely. We should expect nothing different, given that these ideas were based on mystical ideas that stood on the imagination of the movement's leaders, not on any physical evidence or verifiable facts.

Let's consider two scenarios.

1. Gnostic ideas of a spirit who appeared to be human lived among men for a time. Although people saw an image and thought it to be a real human, he never possessed a literal human body.
2. God literally entered into the world that He created as the real man, Jesus Christ. He lived, suffered, died, was buried, arose, witnessed his resurrection to many for forty days, and ascended in that body into Paradise.

Let's examine our study passage to see which view best matches the facts stated.

1. *Jesus himself stood in the midst of them.* Does a spirit "stand" in the midst of real people with the appearance of a literal body?
2. *But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.* This is the very point made by the various gnostic ideas. If the gnostic idea were true,

these men had very good reason to be "...terrified and affrighted." However, if they were mistaken, if Jesus stood in their midst in His real, resurrected human body, they had no reason to be so frightened.

3. *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.* Any idea of a non-material "spirit" fails this point miserably. Jesus lived in a body that had hands and feet, hands that healed, and feet that walked among His followers with living grace. "...it is I myself." The same body that lived with these men, the same one who ate that last celebratory meal with them and then surprised them by washing their feet, now reminds them that He, the same He whom they had come to know, love, and follow, now stood before them, living proof that He had risen from the dead, conquering death by His personal and quite literal resurrection. The same body that was buried arose, victor over death's sting.
4. *...handle me, and see.* We can't "handle" a spirit. Other than angels when their divine assignment requires that they physically appear to us, we can't see a "spirit." On this point, revisit First John 1:1. If Jesus intended to show the disciples that He was a spirit and that He had **not** arisen with the same literal body in which He lived among them, He chose a strange and deceitful way to do so. However, if He intended to show them that He had literally arisen and that the body that they saw before them was indeed the same body in which He had dwelt among them, He quite wisely demonstrates the same grace and wisdom that characterized His whole time in the flesh.
5. *...for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* He could not have more clearly or forcefully made the point. What the disciples saw before them was not a spirit, but was rather the same flesh and bones in which He had lived among them. If Jesus actually appeared before the disciples in a spirit form, these words become the greatest lie ever told, not to mention a cruel and intentional deception.
6. *And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.* If Jesus appeared only in spirit, He had no hands and feet to show the disciples. Again, if the gnostic idea of a spirit, void of a literal human body, had been the facts, Jesus spoke deceitful and misleading words that are inexcusable in leading the disciples to believe a hoax, not the facts.
7. *Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.* A bodiless spirit cannot pick

up a piece of fish and eat it. Jesus goes to the simplest and most convincing length possible to show the disciples that the image they saw was real, that they were looking upon the same body in which He lived while He taught them and prepared them for His final glory.

In every detail of this lesson, the facts stated in the passage speak to the obvious truth. Jesus arose from the dead in the same literal, physical body in which He lived, suffered, and died. Now in resurrection, His literal resurrected body, He proves to the disciples that He is God Incarnate, God temporarily living in human flesh among them.

Forty days later Jesus will take these disciples just outside the city limits of Jerusalem, where He will literally, physically disappear in a cloud of glory before their eyes. He—the real He—in that same body in which He lived, and in which He convinced the disciples that He had arisen, would then ascend into Paradise, but with this promise.

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:10-11)

The abiding hope of believers from that day till the Second Coming is clear. No less on that future day than during His past time in the flesh, He shall return, but not in humiliation or with the need to atone for sins by suffering and dying. He shall return in crowing, victorious glory to resurrect and to claim His "...purchased possession," including specifically the bodies of His beloved and chosen people from death's grip.

Our study passage documents at least seven vital points that affirm the fact of Jesus' literal, physical body, even after His death, burial, and resurrection. If He did not possess a literal physical body at the time of these events, His conduct was inexcusably deceitful. When Paul began his "Magnum Opus" on the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15), he started with a detailed proof of Jesus' literal bodily resurrection. He rightly reminded the Corinthians that, if Jesus did not arise in that literal physical body, their hope, their faith, the gospel, their baptism; everything that they associated with their faith in God was vain and empty of value or meaning. Our choice is simple. 1) Choose a myth that is void of Biblical support, one that actually contradicts the consistent New Testament record. Or 2) believe the simple and obvious Bible record of Jesus' life, death, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension in a literal physical body, a body that shall return when He comes to resurrect and to claim His own at the Second Coming. I choose the Bible account. Will you join me?

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor