

Resurrection Appearances

What form, exactly, did Jesus's resurrection take?

For those of us who take a literal, orthodox/authentic-Christian view of Jesus' resurrection, there are, I would suggest, valuable implications in the curious facts of his resurrection. C. S. Lewis (predictably) noticed this, and writes: "If anything is clear from the records of Our Lord's appearances after His resurrection, it is that the risen body was very different from the body that died and that it lives under conditions quite unlike those of natural life." (*Miracles* – 1942 sermon-version; *Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces*, Harper Collins, 2000, p. 115).

The contrast is with the resurrected Lazarus (John 11), who was returned from natural death and decay (verses 17 and 39) to natural life – and subsequently died again, permanently so (or we would surely have heard about it).

No, Jesus's resurrected form allows him to appear without anticipation (Emmaus road (Luke 24:14), and again in John 19:26), and yet, while not spatially restricted, is not like the usual idea of a ghost. For one thing, he has normal bodily functions, needing to eat (John 21:13, Luke 24:42), though curiously, at the Last Supper, he appears to abjure alcohol (Mark 14: 25) until assumed into heaven (I've always wondered about this); but also, it seems, he cannot be touched (John 20:17).

The resurrected Jesus is a different kind of being from either the natural man that he has been – he is not like the resurrected Lazarus - or the disembodied spirit or ghost that many people have thought of as a post-life mode of human existence (and still do).

Our conclusion must be that the resurrected Jesus points to a different mode of reality, suggesting that, as Lewis says, "There may be natures piled upon natures, each supernatural to the one beneath it, before we come to the abyss of pure spirit; and to be in that abyss, at the right hand of the Father, may not mean being absent from any of these natures ..." (*ibid.*)

This kind of understanding, of a literal/real resurrection of Jesus (surely similar to the imaginings of many science fiction/fantasy writers) shows us the complete inadequacy of theories that "explain away", or "spiritualise" the resurrection, and opens great vistas of possibility as to the nature of reality; the matter of Eternity/eternal life must be enriched, informed, by such considerations and speculations.