

In Praise of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Culmination of His Saving Work

Andrew C. Skinner

The New Testament, in concert with Restoration scripture, clarifies, solidifies, and expands our understanding of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the culmination of his salvific mission and ministry. The apostle Paul pointedly noted to the Corinthian saints that “if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:17–19). Here and in his powerful discourse that followed, he taught important truths about the resurrection that connect it not only with overcoming physical death but with the wider fruits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Our English word *resurrection* derives ultimately from the Latin *resurgere* and means to “rise back up,” reflecting the meaning of the Greek noun for resurrection (*anastasis*). This Latin root is closely related to another English word, *resurge*, meaning to “surge back again,” and connotes

movement and power—apt images associated with resurrection. To be resurrected is, in some sense, to rise again with power. In 1986, Howard W. Hunter (1907–1995), an apostle of Jesus Christ and later the fourteenth president of the Church, declared that “the doctrine of the Resurrection is the single most fundamental and crucial doctrine in the Christian religion. It cannot be overemphasized, nor can it be disregarded.”¹

The profundity of this statement is affirmed when we understand that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ultimate triumph over the effects of the fall resulting from Adam and Eve’s transgression (1 Corinthians 15:25–26; 2 Nephi 2:18–26). Because the fall affects all of Adam and Eve’s posterity, the resurrection of Jesus Christ does the same. Because he was the first to overcome the grave, all humankind will be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:22). Furthermore, the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands at the core of our Heavenly Father’s eternal plan in additional, vital ways: first, the resurrection constitutes redemption, in and of itself without any conditions attached; second, it is a literal, bodily resurrection, providing us the means to obtain a true fullness of joy; third, it imposes a permanent judgment on all individuals—realities which are, perhaps, not always immediately associated with the doctrine of resurrection. So important is the resurrection that without it “the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a litany of wise sayings and seemingly unexplainable miracles.”² Understanding that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the fulfillment of the Father’s plan yields valuable insights into the entire New Testament and provides a vital interpretive lens through which we may see how the other contributions in this volume explore and explain what it truly means to say that Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus Christ, “the firstfruits of them that slept”

The apostle Paul articulated a foundational doctrine when he testified, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Jesus of Nazareth was the

“firstfruits” of the resurrection because he was the first of all human beings to rise with power from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20), it being impossible for death to keep its hold on him (Acts 2:24). He had testified during his mortal ministry that just as his Father had life in himself so he had given his Son the power of life within himself (John 5:26). It is in this sense that we understand the apostle Peter’s declaration that “Him [Jesus Christ] God [the Father] raised up the third day” (Acts 10:40). The Father passed on to his Son his divine attribute of “life in himself,” life independent of external forces (John 5:26). Jesus himself said, “No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:18).

Not only was Jesus the firstfruits of the resurrection, but his resurrection made it possible for all others to be resurrected. The apostle Paul explained that “since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive . . . Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:21–23). The name Adam is a Hebrew word, *’adam*, and simply means “man.” Therefore, Christ is referred to as the second Adam, as Paul further explained: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [Christ] was made a quickening spirit. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy [man], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [being]” (1 Corinthians 15:45–59). Thus, just as the actions of the first Adam gave life and provided a physical body for all members of the human family, so the actions of the second Adam gave life again and provided a second physical body for all members of the human family.

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), tenth president of the Church, taught that Jesus’s “atonement for sin and death is the force by which we are raised to immortality.”³ Whether an individual has been righteous or not makes no difference; all will be resurrected. Such is the power of the resurrection. When Jesus was resurrected, foreordained laws were put into operation whereby the spirit bodies

of all individuals who have lived or will yet live on earth are reunited with tangible physical bodies, never to be separated again (Alma 11:42–45). President Smith continued, “Jesus Christ did for us something that we could not do for ourselves, through his infinite atonement. On the third day after the crucifixion he took up his body and gained the keys of the resurrection, and thus has power to open the graves for all men, but this he could not do until he had first passed through death himself and conquered.”⁴

This is important doctrine, for it means that priesthood keys are associated with the resurrection. No mortal, not even the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, yet possesses these keys, as Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), twelfth president of the Church, noted. The keys of resurrection are conferred after one has been resurrected. Those keys are then used to resurrect others. Jesus was the prototype. Having obtained the keys of resurrection himself (after his own experience with resurrection), he then possessed power to resurrect all others.⁵ Before Jesus was resurrected, only his Father, our Father in Heaven, possessed the keys of resurrection. But as the lyrics of the hymn “Rejoice the Lord Is King,” by Charles Wesley (1707–1788), declare, after he had purged our stains and risen triumphantly from the tomb, “The keys of death and hell, to Christ the Lord are giv’n.”⁶ After he was resurrected, Jesus acquired the keys of resurrection which could then be given to others.

Redemption from Sin and Death

Paul concluded his discourse to the Corinthians on resurrection with the exclamation, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54–57). The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob had earlier described Christ’s twin victory over the grave (physical and spiritual) as an escape “from the grasp of [an] awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which

I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit,” an escape that came “by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 9:10, 12). Similarly, Alma the Younger, in a sermon to the church at Zarahemla asked, “Were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? . . . And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?” (Alma 5:9–10). The answer is resurrection!

In this sense, salvation from sin and death are indeed redemption: redemption in the sense of rescuing—literally “buying back” or freeing—captives from the grave and eternal hell. Resurrection, the reuniting of spirit and physical body, reconstitutes or forms again the soul of every individual, for “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). The reuniting of the spirit and physical body is declared by the Lord to be “the redemption of the soul” (D&C 88:16). Therefore, redemption that comes from or is provided through resurrection is far more significant than we sometimes give credit to. For what the scriptures are saying is that resurrection by itself is redemption. Even without repentance, every person who is resurrected is the recipient of redemption. Though some are occasionally prone to regard redemption as only being saved from our sins (because of a misreading of Alma 11:40–41), resurrection is nevertheless actual redemption. Note the language of verses 40–41: “And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and 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” (emphasis added).

Though this text tells us that eternal life comes only to those who have their transgressions remitted by Jesus Christ, the “loosing of the bands of death,” or resurrection, is still a powerful type

of redemption. In fact, the next three verses of Alma 11 emphasize the magnificence of the “loosing of the bands of death” by pointing out that “all shall be raised from this temporal death” (Alma 11:42); that the reuniting of the spirit and body of individuals will be “in its perfect form” and “to its proper frame” (Alma 11:43); and that this perfect reuniting of limb and joint is part of the law of restoration that operates for “both the wicked and the righteous” (Alma 11:44). Both categories of people will never die again; their spirits and physical bodies will never be divided or separated again (Alma 11:45). So complete and detailed is this restoration that not even “a hair of the head” shall be lost, “but *all things* shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23; emphasis added). Such is the power of the resurrection and such is reason for praising its effects on us because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But there is even greater reason for praise of the resurrection. It saves, rescues, reclaims, and redeems every individual from the eternal grasp or influence of Lucifer (except, of course, those who rebel against the Father’s plan and the Son’s mercy, and become sons of perdition). Again, this redemption from Satan’s clutches is not dependent on an individual’s repentance. The prophet Jacob is clear that resurrection alone is redemption, without any action on the part of mortals, and that the resurrection promised to all persons is part of the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ. In language that resonates with praise and exultation, the profound power of the resurrection is again laid out:

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, it 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; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.
(2 Nephi 9:6–9)

If there had been no resurrection provided for the human family, the spirits of every individual would have succumbed to a path of inevitable spiritual entropy and dissolution, spiraling downward to become just like the father of destruction and ruin for eternity and, just like his followers in our premortal existence, become sons of perdition. (The word *perdition* derives from Latin, *perdere*, meaning “destruction.”) Without the redeeming rescue of the resurrection, every spirit child of our heavenly parents would have become devils—no matter how they had lived in mortality, even if they had tried to be moral and upright. But because of the resurrection, “All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. . . . The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment.”⁷

Resurrection is universal—it redeems all people (except sons of perdition) and all creation from the degeneration that the physical universe displays. It redeems the earth from decay and wickedness and is part of the process by which this planet becomes sanctified and the designated abode of those souls who inherit the celestial glory (D&C 88:17–20).

Much later, the prophet Moroni described the other towering result of the resurrection's redemptive effect: "And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death" (Mormon 9:13; emphasis added).

Because of the resurrection, brought about by Jesus Christ, every single member of the human family is redeemed from physical death as well as from the first spiritual death inaugurated by the fall. The first spiritual death is overturned. Every person is restored to the presence of God to be judged. Thus, resurrection is both redemption and restoration. Samuel the Lamanite is a second witness to the stunning verity that both physical death and the first spiritual death are swallowed up in the resurrection:

For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord.

Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.

But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord. (Helaman 14:15–17)⁸

A Tangible, Physical Resurrection and a Fullness of Joy

The Gospels, particularly Luke and John, end with clear demonstrations that Jesus rose from the tomb with a tangible, physical body. Mary Magdalene, the first to see the Risen Lord, appears to have touched him, for when he told her, “Touch me not” (Greek, *mē mou haptou*), he actually meant “Do not keep touching me,” or, as Joseph Smith’s New Translation renders it, “Hold me not.” While the first witnesses in Luke received proof from the empty tomb and the angels, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus not only saw and heard the Risen Lord, they ate with him and received bread from his tangible hands (Luke 24:13–32). Shortly thereafter, when the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to the eleven remaining apostles, he declared 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,” and after they had presumably touched him, he ate broiled fish and honeycomb in their presence (see Luke 24:36–43). The experience of the eleven in John’s account is even more explicit. First ten of them, and then the late-arriving Thomas, felt the wounds in his hands and his side and felt his breath as he bid them to receive the Holy Ghost (John 20:19–27). This experience led Thomas to declare, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28), and experiences like this no doubt constituted what Luke called the “many infallible proofs” (Greek, *pollois tekmeriois*, or “sure signs or tokens”) by which Christ showed himself alive after his passion.

The corporality of Jesus’s raised body demonstrates that the resurrection was literal and physical and not just a spiritual raising of some kind. As mentioned before, Alma the Younger taught, “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body” (Alma 40:23). This permanent reuniting of spirit and physical body inseparably connected is, according to modern revelation, the only way that we can receive a fullness of joy (D&C 93:33; 138:17). As the LDS Church’s

“Proclamation on the Family” states, the plan of God the Father was one “by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny,”⁹ which is to be exalted, inherit all that God possesses, and indeed be like God himself (D&C 76:58).

This is true for women as well as for men, as indicated in Abraham’s creation account:

We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; . . . And the *Gods* [plural] organized the earth. . . . And the *Gods* took counsel among *themselves* and said: Let *us* go down and form man [humankind] in *our* image, after *our* likeness; and we will give them dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So the *Gods* went down to organize man [humankind] in *their* own image, in the image of the *Gods*, . . . male and female. (Abraham 3:24–25; 4:25–27; emphasis added)

Central to God’s plan for each individual is the possession of a physical body in mortality and in eternity. A body is necessary to become like Deity precisely because God possesses a physical body (D&C 130:22). Thus, no one can be tested and proven and ultimately become like God without a body. A physical body is essential to spiritual development and eternal progression. Individuals are tested with and by their physical body. There are lessons that must be learned and experiences that must be had “according to the flesh” (1 Nephi 19:6). This was true for Jesus as well as for all other individuals: “And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that

he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12; emphasis added).

To learn to obey physical laws, individuals must possess a physical body. To comply with gospel ordinances and performances, a physical body is required—a requirement so important in fact that ordinances performed by proxy are obligatory for those who have died without them. But a physical body is also necessary to learn to listen to and act on the voice of the Spirit, or Holy Ghost. President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), a member of the Twelve from 1970 and then acting president and president of that body, said, “Our physical body is the instrument of our spirit.”¹⁰ A physical body is necessary in the world to come. Becoming like God means becoming creators in eternity, since God is a Creator. In this mortal sphere, “The Father and the Son have entrusted [everyone] with a portion of Their creative power” through the gift of a physical body. How individuals use that power “will determine in large measure whether additional creative power will be [theirs] in the life to come.”¹¹ Only those “who obtain a glorious resurrection from the dead,” said Joseph Smith, “are exalted far above principalities, powers, thrones, dominions and angels, and are expressly declared to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, all having eternal power”¹²—part of which is the power of eternal creation which comes only by having a physical, resurrected body.

Freedom and Empowerment

Perhaps we can now more fully appreciate Joseph Smith’s statement that “the great principle of happiness consists in having a body.”¹³ Evidence of the truth of this assertion is quite striking and grounded in doctrine presented in the New Testament.

During the waning days of World War I, while pondering two key passages from the New Testament that concern life after death (1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6), President Joseph F. Smith experienced a detailed vision of the spirits of the dead residing in the spirit

world. We emphasize that the vision came by his pondering of New Testament passages. He saw the yearning of the righteous to receive back their physical bodies. “For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:50). These righteous spirits were in that part of the spirit world called paradise, a place and condition of happiness, “a state of rest, a state of peace,” a place where they rested “from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:12). They were not residing in that realm called spirit prison, where the spirits of the wicked were confined (Alma 40:13). And yet the righteous spirits still regarded their existence without their bodies as a prison. They knew they could only experience a fullness of joy when “their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 138:17).

In this regard, Melvin J. Ballard commented on the condition of departed spirits: “I grant you that the righteous dead will be at peace, but I tell you that when we go out of this life, leave this body, we will desire to do many things that we cannot do at all without the body. We will be seriously handicapped, and we will long for the body; we will pray for that early reunion with our bodies. We will know then what advantage it is to have a body.”¹⁴

President Smith went on to describe the righteous spirits assembled together, “awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their *redemption* from the bands of death, . . . declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful” (D&C 138:16, 18; emphasis added). They knew true freedom could only come from the Son of God.

Jesus Christ’s appearance in the world of spirits was an important part of his work of salvation. It was the partial fulfillment of Isaiah’s messianic prophecy quoted by Jesus himself in the Nazareth synagogue at the beginning of his public ministry: “And when he had opened the book [scroll], he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach

the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:17–19; see Isaiah 61:1–2).

Indeed, Jesus did proclaim liberty to the captives in the spirit world as he taught the righteous spirits there. And by his resurrection he completely fulfilled his promise of providing liberty and deliverance and the opening of the prison to all those in the spirit world, including the wicked. He bridged the great gulf that separated the righteous from the wicked and made it possible for the wicked to hear the gospel, repent, and be resurrected as soon as their sins were removed. Through his teachings and subsequent resurrection, Jesus empowered the righteous to enter the Father’s presence. In the words of President Smith’s revelation, “the Lord taught [them], and *gave them power* to come forth, after his resurrection from the dead, to enter into his Father’s kingdom, there to be crowned with immortality and eternal life” (D&C 138:51; emphasis added). This too is cause for praise.

Resurrection and Judgment

After Jesus healed the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, he delivered a powerful discourse about the relationship between the Father and the Son. Among the things that he taught was, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). This role as judge, however, is closely connected to the resurrection that he brings about. Jesus continued, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:25–27). Much of this judgment manifests itself in the very nature of the resurrection, as Jesus indicated: “And [they] shall come forth; they that have done good, unto

the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

Practically speaking, this means that there is a partial judgment at the time a person is resurrected. Each individual will be resurrected with the type of body they will possess in eternity—a celestial, terrestrial, or telectual body, or a body not fit for any kingdom of glory, but only for outer darkness. The apostle Paul illustrated this doctrine by using an analogy. Just as "all flesh is not the same," there being different kinds of bodies in nature such as men, beasts, fish, birds, and so on (1 Corinthians 15:39), so there are different types of flesh or bodies in the resurrection of humankind, bodies with different capabilities and potentials. "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Corinthians 15:40–41).

Individuals receive the kind of resurrected body they are entitled to receive based on obedience to God's laws. "And the degree of glory gained by each person shall be that which his [or her] resurrected and immortal body can abide."¹⁵ Thus, "in the resurrection, some are raised to be angels, others are raised to become Gods," as Joseph Smith said. Therefore, the doctrines of the resurrection and the degrees of glory are inextricably linked. In fact, our expanded understanding of the degrees of glory came about as a direct result of Joseph Smith's and Sidney Rigdon's contemplation of the very passages in John in which Jesus had connected resurrection and judgment. As they worked on the inspired revision of the Bible known as the New Translation, or Joseph Smith Translation, and read and thought specifically about John 5:29, they received the vision now known as Doctrine and Covenants 76. In it they testified:

We, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two—

By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God— . . .

For while we were doing the work of translation, which the Lord had appointed unto us, we came to the twenty-ninth verse of the fifth chapter of John, which was given unto us as follows—

Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, concerning those who shall hear the voice of the Son of Man:

And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust.

Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit.

And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about. (D&C 76:11–12, 15–19)

Hence, “knowledge of degrees of glory and kinds of salvation is in fact an amplification and explanation of the doctrine of resurrection.”¹⁶ Resurrection precedes our inheritance of a kingdom of glory, and the degree of glory resurrected beings inherit depends on the kind of body they are resurrected with. Celestial glory is reserved for those “whose bodies are celestial” (D&C 76:70), resulting from their obedience to divine will. Those resurrected with terrestrial bodies receive a terrestrial inheritance. They differ from inheritors of the celestial kingdom as the moon differs from the sun (1 Corinthians 15:41). “In effect they bask, as does the moon, in reflected glory, for there are restrictions and limitations placed on them. They ‘receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father’ (D&C 76:77), and to all eternity they remain unmarried and without exaltation. (D&C 132:17.)”¹⁷

Those who inherit a telestial glory differ from those in the celestial and terrestrial kingdoms just as stars differ from the sun and moon in luminosity. But they also differ from each other as “one star differeth from another star in glory,” meaning that those who inherit the telestial kingdom will not all be alike in glory. They will differ from one another. But more significantly, “they shall be servants of the Most High; but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end” (D&C 76:112). There is no upward movement between kingdoms of glory because of the type of resurrected body the inhabitants of each kingdom receive. They can only enjoy that glory their resurrected body is made for. Doctrine and Covenants 88:28–32 attests to this principle:

They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.

Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

And they who remain shall also be quickened; nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received.

Closely related to the partial judgment that occurs when a person is resurrected and that determines the kind of body they receive is an established order of resurrection—dictating who is resurrected when. This, too, is predicated upon an individual’s obedience to our Heavenly Father’s will and laws. The most righteous of all, Jesus Christ, was resurrected first (1 Corinthians 15:20). The most wicked of all (of those who have before lived on the earth) will be resurrected

last, which means the sons of perdition (D&C 88:102). The following rough chart may help to illustrate the order of the resurrection (including supporting scriptures).

Time	Characteristic	Scriptural support
First to be resurrected after Christ—righteous who lived from Adam to Christ	CELESTIAL prophets, believers, “all those who have kept commandments”	Mosiah 15:21–26 Matthew 27:52–53 Alma 40:16–20 D&C 133:54–55
“Morning of the first resurrection,” at the Second Coming—those living from Christ to Millennium	CELESTIAL “just men made perfect”	D&C 88:95–98 D&C 76:50–70
“Afternoon of the first resurrection,” second trump at Christ’s coming	TERRESTRIAL “received not the testimony of Jesus in flesh”	D&C 88:99 D&C 76:71–80
Last resurrection—after “the thousand years are ended,” third trump	TELESTIAL “found under condemnation”	D&C 88:100–101 D&C 76:81–85
Last of the last, fourth trump	PERDITION “filthy still”	D&C 88:102 D&C 76:43–44 D&C 43:18

The resurrection occurs at different times depending on the kind of body people will inherit. It is a grave error to suppose an individual can treat lightly the commandments of God or opportunities to

repent and expect to be resurrected with a celestial body. The prophet Alma's caution applies specifically to this situation:

And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good.

And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil. Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, every thing to its natural frame—mortality raised to immortality, corruption to incorruption—raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on one hand, the other on the other. (Alma 41:3–4)

Alma emphasizes that the law of restoration can only mean “to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just” (Alma 41:13). The profoundest demonstration of that principle is the resurrection and the order in which it unfolds.

Witnesses of the Resurrection

The veracity of the doctrines we have discussed depends on the historicity of the resurrection. The book of Acts indicates that the single most important qualification needed for one to fill the office of apostle in the early church was that of being an eyewitness of Jesus's resurrection (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:20, 33; 5:32; 10:39; 13:31; 26:16). The evidence for the existence of a multiplicity of ancient witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is overwhelming. This is all the more impressive when we realize that these early witnesses stepped forward to testify of the resurrection in a cultural and social

environment that was, at best, not accepting of their assertions and, at worst, hostile—the environment of Greco-Roman culture.

Among the Jews, one of the most prominent of the several sects in Jesus's day, the Sadducees, denied there was a bodily resurrection. Even more than that, according to Jewish historian Josephus of the first century AD, the Sadducees maintained that at death "the soul perishes along with the body."¹⁸ Yet one of the clearest statements of belief in the resurrection of the physical body, outside the New Testament in the era known as the intertestamental period, comes from the Jewish apocryphal text, 2 Maccabees, where a martyr about to die puts out his tongue, stretches forth his hands and says, "I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again" (2 Maccabees 7:1 Revised Standard Version). Another martyr is brought forward, maltreated, and tortured. When he is near death he says, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him." But then he says to his executioner, "But for you there will be no resurrection to life" (2 Maccabees 7:14 RSV), meaning, it is assumed, that the wicked will have no resurrection to eternal life, only damnation (see Revelation 20:13–15).

Indeed, the Pharisees and their historical precursors believed in a bodily resurrection. The Mishnah—which is the codification of Jewish oral tradition in the Pharisaic mold, developed from 200 BC to AD 200—states: "All Israelites have a share in the world to come . . . and these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says that there is no resurrection of the dead" (Sanhedrin 10:1). But what many of the Pharisees could not believe, or refused to believe, is that God had come to earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and that he alone was the source of the universal resurrection. Some non-Jews believed that death was the end of everything. Others thought of an afterlife as a "shadowy existence in Hades."¹⁹ Still others, like Platonists, believed that death was a release of the spirit from its mortal prison, which was the physical body, or some variation of that outlook. However, all except the Pharisees and the

Christians agreed that there was no resurrection of the physical form. The death of the body was final. Thus, Christianity was born into an environment where its central tenet, bodily resurrection, was recognized almost universally in Greek and Roman thought as false—even odd.²⁰

Hence, Paul described the challenging environment the apostles faced in their teaching and witnessing: “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified [and resurrected], unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:22–23). And yet nothing could shake the certitude of apostolic witnesses. They went forward—driven by what they had seen, and heard, and handled (Luke 24:39) as illustrated by John’s witness: “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; . . . declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:1–4).

The result was the spread of the central message of the faith, the good news that Jesus Christ was resurrected, and the subsequent organization of the Church based on priesthood leadership who fully embraced that message. Writing near the end of the first century AD, Clement of Rome (died AD 99) gives us a sense of the powerful, unrelenting, apostolic witness going forth:

The apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed in the word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come. So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their firstfruits, when they had proved

them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe.²¹

Modern New Testament scholar, Bruce M. Metzger, offered this assessment of the witness of the early apostles concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is overwhelming. Nothing in history is more certain than that the disciples believed that, after being crucified, dead, and buried, Christ rose again from the tomb on the third day, and that at intervals thereafter he met and conversed with them. The most obvious proof that they believed this is the existence of the Christian church. It is simply inconceivable that the scattered and disheartened remnant could have found a rallying point and a gospel in the memory of him who had been put to death as a criminal, had they not been convinced that God owned him and accredited his mission by raising him from the dead. . . .

Fifty-some days after the crucifixion the apostolic preaching of Christ's resurrection began in Jerusalem with such power and persuasion that the evidence convinced thousands.²²

Those who were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth knew that the worst that could happen to them, or any disciple, because of their testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was physical death. But such a happening mattered little, for just as Jesus was raised after his death, so would all others be raised by the power of the resurrection. As Paul testified: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you" (Romans 8:11 RSV). This is the essence of the early Church's message, affirmed by many special witnesses.

These many witnesses testified that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a literal physical event. Yet, to them it was more than just another aspect of Jesus's ministry. It was the apex and *sine qua non* of the atonement because it brought to all the human family redemption, judgment, empowerment, and eternal freedom. It was the singular event demonstrating that Jesus was God's anointed and Chosen Son. These truths, presented in the New Testament and clarified and expanded by Restoration scripture, are *why* God sent his Only Begotten Son into the world—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of humankind, the ultimate work and glory of the Father and the Son (Moses 1:39). This is the doctrinal lens through which Latter-day Saints may understand all the teachings about Jesus and his work in the New Testament. As the crowning fruit of the atonement, the resurrection is the Savior's great gift to the human family. It is a singular reason to praise him.

ANDREW C. SKINNER *is a professor of ancient scripture and former dean of religious education at Brigham Young University.*

Notes

1. Howard W. Hunter, "An Apostle's Witness of the Resurrection," *Ensign*, May 1986, 16.
2. Hunter, "An Apostle's Witness," 15.
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 1:128.
4. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:128.
5. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, April 1977, 69. According to President Brigham Young, those keys of resurrection first acquired by the Savior are then further given, extended, or delegated to others who have died and been resurrected. "They will be ordained, by those who hold

- the keys of the resurrection, to go forth and resurrect the Saints, just as we receive the ordinance of baptism, then the keys of authority to baptize others." *Discourses of Brigham Young*, selected and arranged by John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 398.
6. "Rejoice the Lord Is King," *Hymns*, no. 66.
 7. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 211.
 8. There is, of course, a second spiritual death that awaits those who do not repent when given the opportunity. Again, Samuel declared that if individuals have not repented, "there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness" (Helaman 14:18).
 9. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.
 10. Boyd K. Packer, *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 211.
 11. David A. Bednar, "Ye Are the Temple of God," *Ensign*, September 2001, 16.
 12. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 222.
 13. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 221.
 14. Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 240–42.
 15. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 2:398.
 16. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:397.
 17. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:400.
 18. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.16.
 19. N. T. Wright, "The Resurrection of Resurrection," in *Easter: Exploring the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. Sarah Murphy (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2010), 17, PDF.
 20. See also the summary of Richard D. Draper, "The Reality of the Resurrection," *Ensign*, April 1994, 32–34, and the sources he cites on page 40.
 21. 1 Clement 42:1–4.
 22. Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 126–27.