RESURRECTION

The Power of God for Christians and Jews

Kevin J. Madigan and Jon D. Levenson

Yale University Press
New Haven & London

CONTENTS

Preface xi

Acknowledgments xv

Abbreviations xvii

ONE Christian Hope and Its Jewish Roots 1
"He is risen!" 1, Restoring Israel 5, Jesus of Nazareth, Apocalyptic Prophet 9, New Heaven, New Earth, and New Temple 17, An Eschatological Sign to the People 20, Resurrection Life and the Body 21

TWO The First Fruits of Those Who Have Died 24
Jesus as the First of Many 24, Imminence 27, The Church as Israel 29, Participation in Christ 36, What Kind of Resurrected Body? 39

THREE A Journey to Sheol (and Back) 42
Did Jesus and Paul Find Resurrection in the Bible? 42, The Land of No Return 42, Existing without Living 45, "When my life was ebbing away, I called the LORD to mind" 48, Communicating with the Dead 54, The Passages That Aren't There (and What They Tell Us) 62, Returning from the Land of No Return 66

FOUR Who Goes to Sheol—and Who Does Not 69
When and Why Sheol Is Mentioned 69, Sheol Is Not Hell 75, Death Defanged 80

FIVE Heaven on Earth 81
The Temple as the Garden of Eden 81, Immortality in the House of the LORD 89, Adam Foresees the Destruction of the Temple 96, "You will receive me with glory" 98, Confidence in the Face of Death 104

SIX How Birth Reverses Death 107
Individual and Family in Biblical Israel 107, The Functional Equivalent of Resurrection 111, The Name Survives Death 117, A Foretaste of Resurrection 119

SEVEN The Death and Resurrection of the Promised Son 121
"Pick up your son" 121, Four Little Stories with One Big Message 126, A Look Ahead, 130

EIGHT Revival in Two Modes 132
Zion's Children Return to Their Mother 132, The Widow Re-Wed (and to the Same Husband) 143, Israel's Exodus from the Grave 146, Mortal Israelites and Immortal Israel 152

NINE "I deal death and give life" 156
Inevitable Death and the Promise of Life 156, "He shall turn back from his ways and live" 165, From Death to Life 168

TEN The Great Awakening 171
The Reversal 171, Why Resurrection? A False Answer 180, "Oh, let Your dead revive!" 185, The Deeper Roots of Resurrection 188, The Victory of the Divine Warrior 192, Summary: Old and New in Resurrection 196

ELEVEN The Least Known Teaching in Judaism 201
"Powerful to save" 201, An Obligation, Not an Option 206,
Doubts and Reforms 213

TWELVE What Was Wrong with the Gnostic Gospel? 221
Skeptics and Heretics 221, Dualism 222, Dry Bones,
Restoration, and Resurrection 227, Resurrection
and the Power of God 229, The Flesh 231, Resurrection,
Truth, and Power 234

THIRTEEN The Redeemed Life—in the Here and Now 235
Christians and Jews 235, The New Life of the Christian 237,
The Eucharist 243, The Lord's Prayer 245, Torah and
Eternal Life 246, Resurrection at Sinai 254,
Christians and Jews—Again 256

Notes 259

Index of Primary Sources 269

General Index 280

1

Christian Hope and Its Jewish Roots

"HE IS RISEN!"

Darkness prevailed early that spring morning in Jerusalem. It was the middle of the Jewish month of Nisan, just at the start of the feast of Passover, perhaps around the year 30 C.E. Shortly after Jesus of Nazareth's grisly execution by crucifixion, his friends and followers gathered, in fidelity to long practice and the prescription of the Torah, or "the Law," to observe the Sabbath. We can only imagine their feelings; presumably they were crushed with shock and despair.

Within a day or so of Jesus' death, several of his female followers, including those who had witnessed his death and burial, walked to his tomb. Perhaps they went to anoint his body, perhaps merely to view his place of burial. Arriving at the sepulcher, they were startled at what they saw: a stone slab covering the entryway had somehow been moved from the tomb. They went in. To their astonishment, the dead prophet's body, the body of their lord and leader—their "king"—was gone and his tomb empty. They became convinced that he who had died had been restored to life. He had been "raised." The saga that had begun with Jesus' humiliating death and his languishing, lifeless, in a criminal's tomb concludes, amazingly—miraculously—with his victorious exodus from the grave.

"He is risen!" These three words are, needless to say, familiar to Christians. Hardly any sentence in their Bible, or any acclamation in the history of Christian worship, is better known or more precious to Christian believers. Proclaimed with jubilation annually at Easter, this affirmation ex-

presses (among other things) the Christian conviction that in raising Jesus, God had forever broken the power of death itself; in so doing, he had, Christians believe, consummated the drama of divine salvation. These words also form the bedrock of the faith that God will raise all humankind at the end of time. On that claim, the larger truth of all Christian belief—expressed in its creeds and confessions of faith, in its preaching, and in its education of adults and children alike—has historically rested. As the apostle Paul first observed to the Corinthians, "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain" (1 Cor 15:14). One of the oldest extant Christian statements of faith, the so-called Apostles' Creed, written around 200 C.E., unambiguously declares that Jesus "rose from the dead on the third day." Similarly, the fourth-century Nicene Creed states that Jesus rose, significantly, "in fulfillment of the Scriptures." Both creeds explicitly look forward to the general resurrection of the dead. Christians around the world, or those who are members of "creedal" churches, are at one with the apostles when they recite these words and reaffirm their resurrection faith weekly on Sunday. We know, then, that these creedal words, familiar from the New Testament and the classic Christian statements of faith, and the belief in the resurrection they have inspired and authenticated, are of cardinal significance to Christian faith. Even more, resurrection is (or so many Christians have been taught to believe) not only central to Christian faith but *unique* to it. It is an article of the church's faith, the anchor of *Christian* hope.

And it *is* that. Yet Christian understandings of resurrection, along with the church's appreciation of its religious depth, its historical richness, and its reverberations, would be much impoverished if Christians thought that the expectation of resurrection were merely theirs. In particular, and what is most crucial, they would lose sight of the extent to which resurrection is rooted in the belief and practice of Judaism. Indeed, it occurs already in the Old Testament, the only scriptures the church knew at the time of Jesus (when it wasn't yet called the "Old Testament"). In fact, not only the notion of the resurrection of the dead, but the expression of God's vindication of Jesus in the language of resurrection, owes its origins to its parent religion, Judaism—or, to be more precise, to Judaism as it stood late in the Second Temple period (about 515 B.C.E., when the Temple was rebuilt after its destruction in 586 B.C.E. by the Babylonians, to 70 C.E., when the Romans destroyed it). This was the world of thought and practice of which Je-

sus and his followers partook and by which their piety was essentially formed.

To be sure, not every Jew or Christian in the ancient world believed in bodily resurrection. According to multiple sources, the "Sadducees," the priestly elite of Judea in the late Second Temple period, denied it. The Pharisees, another group that emerged during the same period, affirmed it, and it is with the Pharisees that Jesus has the most in common. Nor does every Jew or Christian believe it today—think, for example, of those for whom Christianity is summed up by this-worldly political and social action. Still, the affirmation that God would raise all from the dead remains a key normative claim in both historic traditions. Though Judaism and Christianity do not share belief in the messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, nor in the reading of the Hebrew scriptures through the lens of the New Testament, many Jews and Christians have shared and do today affirm belief in the resurrection of the dead.

This may come as a surprise to Christian readers. But for Christians, not only is it important to realize that this shared belief links Christianity historically and theologically with the form of Judaism out of which it grew; understanding the Jewish matrix of Christian belief in the resurrection is imperative for at least two additional reasons. First, it enriches and deepens the Christian view of the significance of Jesus' resurrection and the general resurrection for which the church hopes and that it expects will happen at the end of history. More importantly, it helps to define the ancient and classical understanding of resurrection. Many ancient Jews and Christians held, unshakably, that resurrection was a bodily and communal event. They understood the classic scriptural sources and heritages of both traditions to maintain that God would raise the dead in their full humanity, or as we should say today, as a physico-psycho-social unity. The authoritative sources of the ongoing traditions in both Judaism and Christianity spoke of a resurrection of the whole person—body and soul, we might put it—and not simply the survival of some indestructible personal core or some divine dimension deep within ourselves. Many Christian writers throughout history—beginning with the author of the Apostles' Creed—have spoken of the resurrection simply as the *resurrectio carnis,* the resurrection of the flesh or body. Though they coexist with resurrection, categories like the "immortality of the soul" and the survival of the spirit or (much later) the posthumous endurance of individual consciousness do not express the rich-

ness or reality of classical Jewish and Christian views of resurrection, which are inevitably and self-consciously bodily and communal. When examined against the religious background out of which Christianity arose, the continuities between Christian views of resurrection and those of Judaism are quite striking—and for good reason!

In order to appreciate ancient Christian views of Jesus' resurrection in all their richness and historical complexity, we need to relate the Christian sources affirming resurrection specifically to the context of late Second Temple Judaism. From a political point of view, Judaism in Palestine was set and, in complex ways, shaped by eight or so centuries of almost continuous conquest, occupation, and domination by foreign powers. It is important neither to underestimate nor to exaggerate this fact, nor to simplify a picture that, not surprisingly, changed over time, even under conditions of nearly unbroken subjugation. It would also be a gross overstatement to suggest that Jewish religiousness during this period was molded *only*, or even primarily, by the grim realities of subjugation and submission. Jewish piety was, rather, primarily shaped by well-established internal norms and the long, deeply cherished memory of past communal experience, especially the conviction that God had chosen the people Israel, made a covenant with them, liberated them from bondage in Egypt, given them the Land of Israel, and bestowed upon them the Torah to instruct and guide them in right and God-pleasing worship and service. These caveats having been registered, however, the piety prevalent in the Judaism of Jesus' time and place was given a distinctive cast by the political matrix of foreign rule.

In the century before Jesus' birth and in the decades during and succeeding his career, Rome ruled Palestine (as the Romans were later to call it). In his campaign throughout the Near East, the brilliant tactician Pompey (106–48 B.C.E.), son-in-law and sometime ally of Julius Caesar, established Roman dominion in Jewish Palestine in 63 B.C.E. It is certainly possible to overstress the negative or oppressive effect of Roman overlordship. For one thing, precise geography means a great deal: living in Judea to the south and living in Galilee to the north, even at the same moment in history, were not quite the same experience. The degree of Roman presence was never so high in Galilee as in Judea. Precise chronology is also important. It would be wrong to suggest that Palestine was seething with

resentment, or ready for revolt, throughout the period of Roman rule from Pompey through the emperor Hadrian (63 B.C.E.–135 C.E.)—though insurrectionist movements were afoot, and major revolts would occur at least twice during those two centuries. Rome had little desire to "Romanize" Palestine culturally; mainly, it was interested in the financial benefits that would flow to the homeland if the province remained stable. Again, it is important not to speculate from the known particular to the unknown general, especially in a case like this, where our sources are few and fragmentary. That many longed for freedom from Roman (or all foreign) rule is likely; that some violent (and more nonviolent) protest occurred is sure; that some expected God to establish his final reign on earth and restore Israel is true; that Rome was wary of uprising is certain. That *all* Jews were ready for violent revolt, or expected a Davidic messiah to free them, vanquish the Romans, and establish the final kingdom of God, while colorful material for movies, does not fit the literary and archaeological evidence.

RESTORING ISRAEL

The general fact of long domination by foreign powers surely helped shape one kind of Jewish piety: what E. P. Sanders and others have called "restoration eschatology." *Eschatology* refers to the events that Jews (and later Christians) believed God had ordained to occur at the end of history. *Restoration eschatology* arose in large part out of prophetic reaction to the Jewish experience of exile in Babylonia in the sixth century B.C.E., as well as out of reflection during the postexilic period on the experience of domination by outsiders. The experience of exile and subjugation, fused with the abiding conviction that God would remain true to his covenant, gave rise to the hope, expressed classically by the prophets, that God would "restore" Israel, the Jewish people. Despite present circumstances of exile or subjugation, the prophets affirmed, God would eventually establish his reign or kingdom. The forces dominating, frustrating, often even polluting and provoking Israel would ultimately and definitively be overthrown. The God of Israel would reclaim his throne, his capital city Jerusalem would be restored, and his palace, the Temple, rebuilt. The lost tribes would also be "gathered back in." The dead would rise and all would be judged by God. Consider the following text from Isa 26:19:

> Oh, let Your dead revive!
> Let corpses arise!
> Awake and shout for joy,
> For Your dew is like the dew on fresh growth;
> You make the land of shades come to life.

Or this text from Dan 12:2–3:

> [2]Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence. [3]And the wise will be radiant like the bright expanse of sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever

For the visionaries who authored these two texts, sleep is, of course, a metaphor for death. Both passages (whose views on resurrection would become widespread during the late Second Temple period) suggest that the righteous will be rewarded. God would, in the end, vindicate those who had suffered for him and raise them to glory. According to the book of Daniel, the wicked, too, will be raised to a new kind of existence; they will be forever disgraced and dishonored—and forever overthrown or displaced as leaders in this world. In the eyes of both books, Isaiah and Daniel, the God of life and of creation has the power, finally, to overcome death and the forces of this world that deal in death. In short, the God who had chosen the people Israel and had bound himself to guide and protect them would, in the last days, honor his unbreakable covenant and deliver them from oppression at the hands of the pagans and even from the reach of death. This ancient conviction, based in early Israelite tradition, could grow in strength among the people even if, or rather because, circumstances seemed particularly bleak or rulers especially iniquitous at the moment. Prophecies of the end times were cherished throughout the post-exilic period. They may be said to have become "apocalyptic" when it was believed that the eschatological events they foretold were about to occur.

For our purposes, it is essential to remember that belief in resurrection was linked during this period to expectation of the dawning new age, to the belief that God was about to make a new creation and to vindicate his loyal people. The new creation is not to be identified with belief in an other-wordly "heaven," but with the regeneration of the present world, with the

rectification of wrongs and the vindication of the righteous. Varied as the texts regarding resurrection are during the late Second Temple period, they do agree that it takes place in the context of divine judgment. As such, faith in the resurrection to come depended theologically on the prior conviction of the goodness, sovereignty, and above all justice of the God of Israel. Such faith was also linked to belief in the goodness of the created world, a point on which Jewish writings of this period would emphatically insist. Finally, resurrection was, as many scholars have pointed out, a potentially revolutionary doctrine, precisely because it is inevitably linked with the conviction that the God of justice would soon intervene to bring an end to the present age and inaugurate the age to come, an event that seemed to demand the exaltation of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. Resurrection, in other words, was allied to the reversal both of death and of injustice. More specifically, it was linked with ending foreign oppression and the reversal of national misfortune. Jewish belief in resurrection was not, thus, only or even primarily about the ultimate destiny of mortal human beings. It was about God's righteousness, the vindication of those loyal to him, and the establishment of justice. The earth would give up its dead only in the context of the righting of Israel's wrongs, the punishment of the wicked, the restoration of the lost, the reconstruction of the holy city and the Temple, and the universal recognition of the LORD as the faithful God of justice.

Strong evidence suggests that restoration eschatology, involving many or most of these elements of expectant hope, was widespread during both the century before Jesus' death and the century in which he grew to maturity. Many (including Jesus) came to believe that the hopes of the prophetic tradition were about to be realized in God's last act in history.

We know from the writings of the historian Josephus (who lived about 37–100 C.E.), the principal source for knowledge of Palestinian Judaism in the first century, that some of the prophetic books that contained eschatological material, above all the book of Daniel, were particularly popular during this period. In addition, we have to account for much literature that has not been incorporated into the Bible, written in the later centuries of the Second Temple period, texts such as the *First Book of Enoch*, the *Testament of Moses*, the *Second Book of Baruch*, a number of the so-called Jewish Sibylline oracles (prophetic writings), and the aptly named *Apoca-*

lypse of Abraham. Many of these expressed the classical hopes of restoration eschatology: that God was about to establish a new order; that all of Israel, especially the dispersed tribes, would be restored; that Israel would finally be freed from foreign dominion; and that Jerusalem and the Temple would be rebuilt—indeed that nature itself would be restored and renewed.

This, too, was the age in which the sectarian scrolls discovered at Qumran, on the edge of the Dead Sea, mostly took shape. These documents, first discovered in 1947 and known at the Dead Sea Scrolls, attest to a vivid expectation of the imminent end. Many of them are, in fact, shot through with apocalyptic expectation. Though we cannot be certain about every element of their religious regimen, the sect reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls seems to have encouraged a rigorously separatist life. Dedicated to personal and communal purity, they followed a strict ascetical regime, and not only in matters of sexuality. Interestingly, John the Baptizer may have been one who eventually split off from the community to launch his own career as an apocalyptic preacher of repentance. In any case, a document found at Qumran that scholars often call the *War Rule* prophesies an apocalyptic battle that pits the "Sons of Darkness" against the "Sons of Light." One obscure fragment of this text, relying on Isa 11:4, reads:

> [The thickets of the forest] will be cut down with an ax, and Lebanon by a majestic one will fall. And there shall come a shoot from the Branch of David, and they will enter into judgment . . . and the Prince of the Congregation, the Branch [of David] will kill him by strokes and wounds.

The translation of this text is difficult, and some passages have provoked warm debate. What is clear is the expectation in the text of a Davidic messiah, judgment, and the punishment of the wicked—staples of the apocalyptic worldview of the late Second Temple period. In any event, the group that authored the Qumran findings was almost certainly devastated by the forces of the emperor Vespasian sometime during the Jewish-Roman war (66–73 C.E.). With the approach of the Roman army, the members of the group probably hid their scrolls in caves near the Dead Sea. Whatever the precise scenario, they left a vivid record of apocalyptic expectation in late Second Temple Judaism.

Another sign of widespread eschatological expectation was that a num-

ber of apocalyptic prophets also appeared in Roman Palestine in the first century, sometimes in direct response to Roman provocation. One of the few but infamous examples of gross Roman insensitivity to Jewish piety was the emperor Caligula's proposal that a statue of himself be placed in the Temple. His death in 41 C.E. prevented this from occurring, but such a shocking proposal could easily be read—and was read—as an apocalyptic sign. A Jewish prophet named Theudas emerged in the wake of Caligula's astonishing suggestion. Around him, a following of some size formed. Theudas' followers expected their leader to part the water of the Jordan, recalling the biblical account of the miraculous parting of the sea at the exodus from Egypt (Exod 14:21–23). Nonetheless, Theudas and his followers were mowed down by Roman cavalry. Around the same time (according to Josephus), a man named Judah the Galilean and his two sons, again motivated by hopes for the restoration of Israel, began fomenting rebellion. The Roman authorities crucified Judah's two sons. Another Jew, known only as "the Egyptian," gathered an enormous following or force in the desert. Not only does Josephus mention him, suggesting he had thirty thousand soldiers, but the New Testament book of Acts also refers to him, though with a much smaller force of only four thousand (Acts 21:38). According to Josephus, the Egyptian planned to march on Jerusalem. He expected that, at his command, the walls of the city would collapse—another miracle with deep resonance in Jewish history, this one harking back to the taking of the land under Joshua. The Egyptian and his followers were also thwarted before the promised restoration could be attempted. These are the apocalyptic prophets about which we know; there could well have been more.

JESUS OF NAZARETH, APOCALYPTIC PROPHET

For about a century now, many New Testament scholars, following the lead of Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), have seen both Jesus and John the Baptizer as Jewish eschatological prophets who, like Judah and his sons, Theudas, the Egyptian, and presumably others, inhabited the cultural world of Jewish apocalyptic expectation and dwelt in the imaginative cosmos of Jewish apocalyptic literature. Naturally, not all scholars agree with Schweitzer's groundbreaking book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), in which the theologian and New Testament scholar (later an illus-

trious musician and humanitarian) argued his bold thesis. But scholars like E. P. Sanders and, more recently, Dale Allison have, to our minds, persuasively fortified the case Schweitzer presented, situating Jesus convincingly in his own first-century Palestinian Jewish context. The evidence for the Schweitzer thesis in its general contours is now extraordinarily strong.

We can begin to review this evidence by recalling that Jesus appears first to have allied himself with another Jewish apocalyptic prophet. John the Baptizer was himself a preacher of restoration eschatology. He preached hauntingly about the "coming wrath" of God, which was so close, he announced metaphorically, "Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees" (Luke 3:9). God would punish those who did not produce good fruit and would reward the good—and do so very soon: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17). This fearsome apocalyptic prophet baptized Jesus. (Baptism, which derives from the Jewish practice of immersion in a special pool of water known as a *mikveh,* is ultimately rooted in the laws of ritual purity of the Hebrew Bible. At some point, such immersion came to be required for those converting to Judaism, and this may be the connection between John's practice and his announcement of the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God.) Jesus must have accepted John's basic message and initially been a member of the movement that gathered around the Baptizer. Why else would he have submitted to baptism at his hand?

When Jesus came to form his own movement after the Baptizer's death, his apocalyptic view of history did not change. Like the Baptizer, he felt the cosmos to be in the control of evil forces. God would soon overthrow these principalities and powers and establish his kingdom to replace the evil kingdoms of this world. Each of these things he felt to be imminent. Like John, Jesus may have seen it as his mission to proclaim that the eschatological events foretold by the prophets were about to transpire.

Actually, it seems ever more likely that Jesus was seen, and probably saw himself, as an apocalyptic prophet in the style of John the Baptizer. Our earliest sources appear to agree that some of his contemporaries acknowledged Jesus as such. Mark, the earliest gospel (written probably around 70 C.E.), reports that some identified him with John the Baptizer: "Some were saying, 'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this rea-

son these powers are at work in him'" (Mark 6:14). A text from Matthew suggests that Jesus compared himself with the Baptizer: "[18]For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; [19]the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds" (Matt 11:18–19). Mark also announces that Jesus' contemporaries identified him as a "prophet, like one of the prophets of old" (Mark 6:15), as does Matthew: "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee" (Matt 21:11). When, in Luke, Jesus raises the widow's son (Luke 7:11–17), the crowd responds, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" In Acts 5:35–39, Gamaliel, while advising his fellow Jews how to treat Jesus' followers, likens them and their leader to Theudas and Judah the Galilean and their followers:

> [35]Then he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men. [36]For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. [37]After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. [38]So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; [39]but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"

Here, Gamaliel clearly sees Jesus as an eschatological prophet.

For many Jews of the Second Temple period, prophets like Judah the Galilean were regarded as potential or real revolutionaries. Josephus, for example, regarded some of the prophets we have discussed in precisely this way, and he even bitterly lays the blame for the Jewish-Roman war at their feet. We must, however, hesitate to classify Jesus purely and simply as a revolutionary. It is essential to remember that politics in the Jewish world in which Jesus lived was deeply involved in religion; there was no purely secular political action for a Jewish revolutionary of those times. What should not be reasonably doubted is that others saw Jesus as an eschatological prophet whose work would set in motion that which God would bring to completion. In addition, *anyone* preaching the coming resurrection, with

its allied notions of total transformation, punishment of the wicked, and vindication of the righteous, could be regarded as having revolutionary potential.

The Beatitudes present additional evidence that Jesus saw himself as a prophet of the last days. Consider Matt 5:3–10:

> [3]Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
> [4]Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
> [5]Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
> [6]Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
> [7]Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
> [8]Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
> [9]Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
> [10]Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Here Jesus seems to identify himself with the eschatological figure in Isaiah 61, who is anointed by God to bring good news to the poor. This is the oracle to which Jesus refers:

> [1]The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
> Because the LORD has anointed me;
> He has sent me as a herald of joy to the humble,
> To bind up the wounded of heart,
> To proclaim release to the captives,
> Liberation to the imprisoned;
> [2]To proclaim a year of the LORD's favor
> And a day of vindication by our God;
> To comfort all who mourn—
> [3]To provide for the mourners in Zion—
> To give them a turban instead of ashes,
> The festive ointment instead of mourning,
> A garment of splendor instead of a drooping spirit.
> They shall be called terebinths of victory,
> Planted by the LORD for His glory. (Isa 61:1–3)

Jesus appears to have seen himself in terms of this passage from Isaiah. That is, he understood himself as a medium of God's message, charged with proclaiming the imminent reversal for which Israel has longed. Jesus'

response to John the Baptizer reveals a similar self-understanding. In Matthew 11, John inquires from prison of Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

> [4]Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: [5]the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. [6]And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." (Matt 11:4–6)

Jesus' response again harkens back to Isaiah 61 and the cosmic reversals promised there, as well as to other texts from the same scriptural book (for example, Isa 35:5–6). He seems to understand himself in the terms laid out there: a prophet appointed by God to announce and even bring the final liberation of Israel. In short, he was seen and saw himself, as Dale Allison has helpfully put it, as "the last prophet in the cosmic drama," whose mission it was "to prepare his people for the eschatological finale."

Accordingly, a major theme of Jesus' preaching was the closeness of this eschatological finale and the impending arrival of the kingdom of God. In Mark, Jesus announces, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power" (Mark 9:1). In Mark 13:30, Jesus proclaims that the present generation will not perish before the end of the present order. In Matthew, when commissioning the disciples, Jesus assures them, "Truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matt 10:23). He urged his contemporaries to be ready and to repent. The time "was fulfilled," the kingdom of God was near, and the Son of Man would soon come: "You know that he is near, at the very gates" (Mark 13:29).

As Sanders and Allison have demonstrated, one of the most important elements of Jewish restoration eschatology in late Second Temple Judaism was not only imminence but the expectation that the ten lost tribes should return or be restored in the end. (The Assyrian Empire had exiled the so-called lost tribes in the eight century B.C.E.) Consider, for example, these verses from Isaiah 11:

> [11]In that day, my Lord will apply His hand again to redeeming the other part of His people from Assyria—as also from Egypt, Pathros, Nubia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands.

[12]He will hold up a signal to the nations
And assemble the banished of Israel,
And gather the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth. (Isa 11:11–12)

Many passages in the Jewish Bible indicate that this expectation—the anticipation that God would reassemble his people, all twelve tribes—was widespread in the centuries before Jesus' career; it was a major part of Jewish expectation of God's redemption. This almost surely explains why Jesus chose twelve disciples. The choice was doubtlessly symbolic. The point? That all of Israel would soon be restored: "Many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11–12; Luke 13:28–29). Here the kingdom is imagined as an eschatological banquet over which the fathers of the Jewish nation help to preside and to which the lost tribes will journey from the ends of the earth.

This, too, was a prophetic or *eschatological* point. Jesus chose twelve as a way of symbolizing the imminent restoration of the lost tribes, the apocalyptic ingathering of all Israel. In prophesying this ingathering, Jesus was expressing again the conviction, found in the prophetic books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Micah and in other ancient Jewish literature, that the Jewish people would in the end return to their God-given land and attain sovereignty in it. As Sanders has concluded, "in the first century Jewish hopes for the future would have included the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is . . . against this background that we are to understand the motif of the twelve disciples in the Gospels."

Certain of Jesus' teachings in which he invokes the idea of resurrection are also capable of being read as metaphors for the coming restoration of Israel. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) can certainly be read in many ways, and one way is as an allegory of the restoration of Israel.

[11]Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. [12]The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. [13]A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. [14]When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. [15]So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that

country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. [16]He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. [17]But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! [18]I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; [19]I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' [20]So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. [21]Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' [22]But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. [23]And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; [24]for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

[25]"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. [26]He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. [27]He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' [28]Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. [29]But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. [30]But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' [31]Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. [32]But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Read allegorically, the lost son becomes a symbol of Israel in exile in a distant country, his poverty a metaphor for the bitterness of displacement, alien rule, and general injustice, and his return represents the restoration of Israel by the action of the forgiving, loving God of the covenant. Twice in this parable, the son's return is explicitly celebrated in terms of resurrection from the dead: "This son of mine," the father proclaims, "was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (v 24); to the elder brother, the

father announces, "this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found" (v 32). Here individual return and restoration are connected explicitly to resurrection, and individual restoration stands symbolically for the way in which all Israel will be restored at the end of days.

Some evidence suggests that Jesus came into conflict with others over his belief in the resurrection to come. In Mark 12:18–27, the Sadducees (who, as we have already mentioned, did not believe in the resurrection) challenge Jesus (and, implicitly, the Pharisees) to explain his views. Jesus grounds his defense in the testimony of the scriptures and on the power of the God of life. He rebukes the Sadducees about their understanding of God and their disbelief in the resurrection of the dead. God, Jesus says, "is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong" (Mark 12:27). Buried in this rebuke is an allusion to Exod 3:6 and 3:15–16 and to Israel's God as the God of deliverance, victory, and life. Jesus' belief in the resurrection to come, then, is grounded theologically in faith in the God of creation to bring life out of death, in the power of God as the creator of the cosmos. This belief is also grounded scripturally in the conviction that the doctrine of resurrection is given in the Pentateuch—the only grounds on which the Sadducees could be persuaded. The same God who was God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would raise up his people at the end of time. The patriarchs experienced a God capable of vanquishing death. In the end, all of Israel would experience that same power in the final victory of God over death, a victory that mirrored his defeat of the primordial chaos in the act of creation.

Another example of Jesus' eschatological symbolism appears in the way in which he entered Jerusalem—on an ass (Matt 21:1–5). In the Jewish world of Jesus' time, a world pervaded with scripture, the detail could not but call to mind a prophecy in Zechariah:

> Rejoice greatly, Fair Zion;
> Raise a shout, Fair Jerusalem!
> Lo, your king is coming to you.
> He is victorious, triumphant,
> Yet humble, riding on an ass,
> On a donkey foaled by a she-ass. (Zech 9:9)

The evangelist Matthew inserts the prophecy right into the gospel, lest the point be missed (Matt 21:4–8). But Jesus' followers would have gotten it. Je-

sus was announcing himself to be the king promised in Zechariah. That Jesus' followers understood the point he was making symbolically is proven when his followers proclaim him king: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38).

NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH, AND NEW TEMPLE

A similar point can be made about the event that unfortunately has come to be called "the cleansing of the Temple." Sanders has gone to some pains to demonstrate that this, too, was a symbolic act, one that fit well with Jesus' overall outlook, that of Jewish restoration theology. The story is told in Mark 11 (and Matt 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22):

> [15]Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; [16]and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. [17]He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,
>
> > 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?
> > But you have made it a den of robbers."
>
> [18]And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. (Mark 11:15–18, quoting Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11)

Contrary to popular belief, the point of Jesus' action here had nothing to do with purification of divine worship. Now, it is certainly true that the accounts of the Temple action in the gospels make it appear, as it is often called, an act of "cleansing." But there are good reasons for doubting that Jesus thought the Temple needed to be reformed. For one, there is no indication in the gospel accounts, other than this one episode, that Jesus thought the Temple needed to be purified. Nor is there any evidence in the New Testament that Jesus opposed the system of sacrifice or the sacrificial theology that underlay it. As Sanders has reminded us, "the Temple was central to Palestinian Judaism and important to all Jews everywhere. To be against it would be to oppose Judaism as a religion. It would also be an attack on the main unifying symbol of the Jewish people." Jesus himself accepted the Temple, and, after his death and resurrection, his followers

continued to worship there. Had he been opposed to it, they surely would not have done so. The gospel accounts in which Jesus denounces the money changers were written long after his death. *By that time*, perhaps forty or so years after the crucifixion, Christians came to regard Jesus' death as an atonement for sin, and thus many of them came to regard the Temple as superfluous. But, as Sanders has observed, Jesus, like "all Jews everywhere," regarded the Temple as central to his religion. It is simply implausible, because it is anachronistic, to regard Jesus, a pious Jew, as "oppose[d] to Judaism as a religion."

Rather, Jesus' action at the Temple was symbolic; he was enacting his message and signifying that the Temple would be destroyed. This action in turn was related to his expectation of a new kingdom. In the coming new age, with the twelve tribes once again assembled, Israel would worship its God and thank him for his saving action in a new and more perfect Temple. The current Temple would be destroyed as a sign that the evil present order would soon be shattered and a new Temple given by God. Here Jesus was very likely following the biblical prophets again. Consider this passage from Isaiah:

> The majesty of Lebanon shall come to you—
> Cypress and pine and box—
> To adorn the site of My Sanctuary,
> To glorify the place where My feet rest. (Isa 60:13)

("My Sanctuary" is a reference to the Temple, as is "where My feet rest.") Nonbiblical Jewish texts, from roughly the same period as Jesus, make the same general point:

> [28]And I stood up to see till they folded up that old house; and carried off all the pillars, and all the beams and ornaments of the house were at the same time folded up with it, and they carried it off. . . . [29]And I saw till the Lord . . . brought a new house greater and loftier than the first, and set it in the place of the first . . . and its pillars were new, and its ornaments were new and larger than those of the first. (1 Enoch 90: 28–29)

The author of the book of Tobit (written perhaps 150 years or so before Jesus' death and now part of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles) has a similar prophecy:

> [T]hey will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfillment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it. (Tob 14:5).

Thus Jesus thought, not that the Temple would be permanently destroyed, but, as these texts suggest, that it would be replaced and renewed by God in the coming kingdom. In other words, the action by Jesus at the Temple and his prediction that it would be rebuilt are not criticisms of the forms of worship in the Temple, nor a protest against sacrificial theology, which he almost certainly accepted. They are characteristically symbolic predictions of the imminence of God's kingdom and signs of Jesus' confidence in the power and nearness of God's merciful, just, and final intervention in the world.

Both Jesus and his earliest followers did indeed dwell in a world of *imminent*, or apocalyptic, eschatological expectation. We have already seen that Jesus preached that the end was near. After his death, so did his followers. In Luke, we are told that they "supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). That is, the earliest Christian movement shared in the belief rooted in the apocalyptic perspective preached by Jesus. Like Jesus, they expected the restoration of Israel by an act of God. That this is so is reflected in Mark 9:12 (and its parallel in Matt 17:11): "Elijah," Jesus is reported as observing to his followers, "is indeed coming to restore all things." And in Acts 1:6, written perhaps between 80 and 90 C.E., the resurrected Jesus' followers ask him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Like Jesus, his followers expected the kingdom to come in the near future. They regarded Jesus as he likely regarded himself: namely, as a prophet of the restoration of Israel. It is quite possible that they thought that they, like Jesus, would play some sort of role in the kingdom: "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28). (By "judging" Jesus means to suggest that they will be governing, not criticizing.) As Sanders has summarized the matter, "that his followers worked within the framework of Jewish eschatological expectation

is indisputable." Like Jesus, the earliest Christians expected God to restore Israel, to renew or rebuild the Temple, and to regather the lost tribes.

AN ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGN TO THE PEOPLE

This shared theological perspective helps to explain why several of Jesus' followers announced that God had raised Jesus from the dead (Mark 16:6; Acts 2:24). Like Jesus, they were influenced by apocalyptic thinking and looked forward to the restoration of Israel. Before his death, Jesus had, as we have seen, proclaimed that there would be a resurrection of the dead at the end, one followed by a judgment of the good and the evil. When dining at a Pharisee's house, Jesus admonishes his host to invite the poor and the lame to his banquets, for then he would be blessed: "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12–14). In Matthew and Luke, Jesus is depicted urging his followers not to "fear those who kill the body" (Matt 10:28; compare Luke 12:4). He says this, of course, because he presumes that there will be a life to come beyond the death of his present body. Again, speaking of Jonah in the belly of the large fish for three days, Jesus prophesied, "The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment" (Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32). Just as Jonah was a sign to the people of Nineveh, so Jesus would be to this generation, when he would emerge, like Jonah, from the place of no return.

On at least three occasions, Jesus predicts his own resurrection. In Mark 8:31, he proclaims that he will "be killed, and after three days rise again." In the following chapter of the same gospel, he foresees that the Son of Man will be betrayed and killed, "and three days after being killed, he will rise again" (Mark 9:31). The same sort of sequence—betrayal, condemnation, death, and resurrection after three days—is predicted once again in Mark 10:33–34. The expectation of resurrection on the third day again harkens back to the Hebrew scriptures. We read in Hosea, for example:

> In two days He will make us whole again;
> On the third day He will raise us up,
> And we shall be whole by His favor. (Hos 6:2)

And in the book of Jonah, of course, Jonah rests within the great fish for three days (Jon 2:1). Many scholars regard these predictions as prophesies

formulated by the evangelist, Mark, rather than by Jesus. Nonetheless, it is possible that the basic expectation of betrayal, death, and final vindication does, in fact, go back to Jesus, in which case these verses represent Jesus' own understanding of how his life would end and his message and career be redeemed.

Convinced that the end was near, Jesus' first followers explained his vindication in terms with which they were familiar: as a resurrection. Jesus' own resurrection they interpreted, in turn, as an eschatological sign: namely, that the end promised by Jesus and foretold by the prophets had begun. As the apostle Paul put it, Jesus was "the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Cor 15:20). This statement assumes both that the end times had begun and that the general resurrection, of which Jesus' resurrection was a sign, would soon occur. Jesus had taught his followers that the resurrection of the dead was imminent. Once they became convinced that he had himself been resurrected, they regarded this stupendous event as a sign that the final gathering-in and judgment were at last at hand. They saw Jesus' resurrection as an apocalyptic sign. Or, as N. T. Wright has put it, "this event was . . . the proleptic fulfillment of Israel's great hope." Jesus' resurrection signified that the new age or kingdom, and with it the restoration of Israel, was near. Terrified, awestruck, jubilant, Jesus' followers now confidently expected that the new age had dawned.

RESURRECTION LIFE AND THE BODY

In Matt 28:9, Jesus meets the women who are rushing from the empty tomb, at once euphoric and frightened, in order to report on their astonishing discovery. In their flight, they encounter Jesus. At once, they "took hold of his feet" (Matt 28:9). This is a gesture of spontaneous affection and veneration, but it also testifies to the reality and materiality—the corporeality—of Jesus' body after the resurrection. In Luke, the resurrected Jesus shares bread with his uncomprehending followers (Luke 24:30). This, too, is an eschatological sign, for Jesus at his last meal had promised that he would not eat or drink of the vine again until the kingdom had come (Luke 22:16, 18). A few days later in Luke's narrative, Jesus consumes a piece of broiled fish. There could hardly be a more direct or simple testament to the reality of Jesus' resurrected flesh than hunger and its satisfaction.

No resurrection narrative underscores the identity of the crucified

and resurrected body as forcefully as Jesus' encounter with "Doubting Thomas":

> [24]But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. [25]So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."
>
> [26]A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." [27]Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." [28]Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20: 24–28).

So plainly corporeal is Jesus' resurrected flesh that it still bears the wounds of the crucifixion.

On the other hand, the resurrection narratives make it equally clear that Jesus' resurrected body is not *exactly* the same as his preresurrected body. In Matthew, for example, he stands quite "suddenly" in the path of the women running away in terror from the empty tomb (Matt 28:9). In addition, Jesus makes equally sudden appearances to the disciples. In John 20, for example, we learn:

> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked . . . Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19)

The objective of this text is to make it clear that the resurrected body of Jesus is not *merely* a resuscitated corpse. It is a *transformed* body. But it is still a body. N. T. Wright has helpfully used the term "transphysical" to describe Jesus' resurrected body. It is corporeal, but it is able also to transcend normal bodily limitations. It is clearly not the sort of "raised body" that Lazarus had (John 11:1–44). Having been raised by Jesus from the dead, Lazarus would nonetheless die again. Jesus, by contrast, had defeated death. Having risen, he would never die again. This is, to say the least, a different kind of embodiment. He had risen to immortal life.

Beyond this there is not much we can say about the nature of resurrected flesh. The character of the resurrected life is simply not a question that in-

terested the evangelists. The notion that did deeply engage the writers of the gospels was that God had raised Jesus bodily from the dead, and that this was a sign—*the* sign—that the present aeon was ending and the age to come dawning, and that the long-promised restoration had begun. Jesus' resurrection from the dead to new, transformed embodiment was, in the eyes of his followers, a sign that, after centuries of dispossession, loss, and oppression, God, faithful to his promises to his people, had powerfully and dramatically inaugurated the new age of all Israel.