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THE NEW AUTHORITY OF THE RESURRECTED  
JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

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by  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

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For the glory of God

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1Q, 2Q, etc. | Caves of Qumran, in which writings were found  |
| <i>ANF</i>   | <i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . 9 vols. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, and Allan Menzies. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885-1897. |
| LXX          | The Septuagint   |
| MT           | Masoretic Text   |
| NT           | New Testament  |
| OT           | Old Testament  |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the resurrection accounts, the evangelists strive, first, to confirm Jesus's identity and, second, to present him as having authority.<sup>1</sup> Concerning the first point, the evangelists want to demonstrate that Jesus is the same person as before his death,<sup>2</sup> thus proving that Jesus himself truly rose from the dead.<sup>3</sup> Concerning the second point, we may divide Jesus's authority into two categories: *maintained* and *gained* authority. According to the Gospels, Jesus *maintains* his authority in the following ways: he is called "Lord" (Luke 24:3, 34; John 20:2, 13, 28; 21:7, 13), he goes ahead to Galilee,<sup>4</sup> and he is identified as the same Jesus who lived before his crucifixion. However, what is salient for this thesis is that, according to the Gospels, Jesus *gains* authority after the resurrection. The evangelists make this point when Jesus sends the disciples to preach the gospel everywhere (Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47; cf. Mark 16:15; John 20:21) and when he

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<sup>1</sup> I came to this conclusion by collecting all of Jesus's character traits presented in two or more resurrection accounts in a process that may be called "composite characterization." The idea is to identify what, according to the most influential first-century Gospel writers (that is, the four evangelists), was significant enough that multiple authors felt compelled to include it. In other words, instead of majoring on the distinctives of each evangelist (à la Redaction Criticism), I looked at traits of Jesus which are present across multiple Gospels.

<sup>2</sup> This is communicated in multiple Gospels via direct characterization in that he is called "crucified" (Matt 28:5; Mark 16:6; cf. Luke 24:7, 20) and "Lord"—via indirect characterization in how he shows his hands and feet/side (Luke 24:40; John 20:20), offers to be touched (Luke 24:39; John 20:27), goes ahead to Galilee (Matt 28:7; 16:7; cf. Matt 26:32; Mark 14:28), calls his disciples his "brothers" (Matt 28:10; John 20:17; see Matt 12:48-50; Mark 3:34-35; Luke 8:21; cf. Matt 18:15, 21, 35; 19:29; 23:8; 25:40; Mark 10:29-30).

<sup>3</sup> That someone could raise from the grave would not have been an obvious possibility, even among first century Jews (cf. Luke 20:27; Acts 23:6-9).

<sup>4</sup> Matt 28:7; Mark 16:7; that is, that he is able to successfully make predictions and lead people (cf. Matt 26:32; Mark 14:28).

makes surprising and dramatic appearances to them (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 26; cf. Matt 28:9).

This essay seeks to understand what these and other moments in the resurrection accounts tell us about the nature of Jesus's newly gained authority. In chapter 2, and in resonance with his Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), I will argue that the Gospels present Jesus as now having universal authority. In chapter 3, and as is primarily seen in his dramatic appearances, I will argue that Jesus exercises unmediated, new control over his body.

Moreover, when we tie in the rest of the NT, I believe we can take this one step further. In chapter 4, I will show how these two features of Jesus's new authority come together at the right hand of God. Jesus, according to his humanity, is now sitting in God's presence and administering a universal work (1 Tim 2:5) via universal authority; this is possible because of the nature of the resurrected body and his power over it.

## CHAPTER 2

### JESUS HAS NEW, UNIVERSAL AUTHORITY

Jesus acquires new, universal authority.<sup>1</sup> This is summarized in Matthew 28:18-20 in which he makes the sweeping claim, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (v. 18).<sup>2</sup> Then, as an inference of that claim (οὖν in v. 19),<sup>3</sup> he commissions his disciples to preach his message to “all nations” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη; Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47; cf. Mark 16:15). In this section, I will argue that, as it is presented in the Gospels, this heavenly, global authority is new to the risen Christ.

#### “On Earth” as a Limiting Phrase

Perhaps the simplest argument that the risen Jesus’s authority is new is as follows: although the pre-Easter Jesus, as “son of man,” had the authority to forgive sins “on earth” (Matt 9:6, 8; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24), the risen Jesus was given authority “in heaven” as well as “on earth” (Matt 28:18).<sup>4</sup> Further argumentation is needed to make this point, however, as it is not necessarily clear that Jesus’s authority was thus limited before his death.

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<sup>1</sup> If one believes in the divinity of Christ, then the idea of Jesus gaining authority may sound disagreeable. However, here for the remainder of the thesis, I will refer to Jesus according to his humanity, not according to his divinity.

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the the Christian Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> All Greek text from Eberhard Nestle et al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 624; Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 83, 204.

To begin, we will focus on the prepositional phrase “on earth” in Matt 9:6, 8; Mark 2:10; and Luke 5:24.<sup>5</sup> Why did the Gospels include this phrase? Many possible interpretations arise, but I will simplify the discussion to two questions. First, does “on earth” express something temporal, spatial, or both? Second, is heaven implicitly included or excluded in the scope of the Son of Man’s authority to forgive sins? Concerning the first question, the most popular reading of the phrase is that “on earth” expresses a temporal idea, that is, “(even now, while I am) on earth,” as opposed to the coming age.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, the context has an eschatological flavor to it.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, it does not seem likely the word  $\gamma\tilde{\eta}$  would be used to express this kind of temporal or sequential idea. Moreover, “heaven and earth” language elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew does not appear to be temporal (16:19; 18:18). On balance, then, some sort of spatial contrast is more probable than a temporal one,<sup>8</sup> although a combination of the two is possible.

The second question remains, does Jesus mean that the Son of Man forgives sins *only* on earth? Heaven and earth, taken together, are spatially comprehensive. Now if the Son of Man already could forgive sins everywhere, why add the spatial qualifier “on earth”? It is already remarkable enough that the Son of Man can forgive sins at all.

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<sup>5</sup> Via word position, Matthew and Luke want to clarify against Mark that what is done “on earth” is not the sin which needs forgiveness but, instead, the act of giving forgiveness. See John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 382.

<sup>6</sup> So Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 28; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 233-34; John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35A (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 237; Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 121.

<sup>7</sup> Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 237.

<sup>8</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 382. As Nolland correctly says, “The choice of the perfect participles is best explained as motivated by the desire to represent coordinated action: ‘What you bind/loose on earth will have been [at that precise moment also] bound by God’” (681). See Gen 30:33; 43:9; 44:32. The use of the future  $\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$  in Matt 16:19; 18:18 simply indicates that “you” have not bound or loosed anything yet.

Although the choice is not clear, I think that here Jesus adds “on earth” to limit his authority to earth, not heaven.

In sum, although authority to forgive sins exists in heaven with God (this would have been understood), it also exists, we now are told, with the Son of Man “on earth.” The Son of Man does not have the authority to forgive sins in heaven, in some sense, or else the phrase would be unnecessary. It follows that when Jesus says, after the resurrection, that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18), he indicates something more than what was available to him before.

### **Satan’s Authority as a Limiting Factor**

During the temptation in the wilderness, we read that Satan has possession of “all the kingdoms of the world” (4:8) as he offers to give them to Jesus in exchange for worship (ταῦτά σοι πάντα δώσω, ἐὰν πεσὼν προσκυνήσῃς μοι, v. 9). The extent or nature of this authority is obscure, but it seems that Jesus’s authority has something like an inverse, zero-sum relationship to Satan’s authority, or else the temptation could not be tempting. According to this reading, when Jesus is given “all authority” (Matt 28:18), this can be seen as an encroachment of whatever authority Satan is said to have in the desert.

### **Jesus and Angels on Earth**

Further support of the idea that Jesus’s universal authority is new can perhaps be found in how Jesus does not directly command angels until the eschaton. The following passages support this point. First, In the temptation of Jesus Satan cites the Psalmist, saying, “He will give his angels orders concerning you...” (Matt 4:6 [=Luke 4:10]) where “he” refers to God (presumably in heaven) but “you” refers to Jesus. It is not the Son of God who is commanding.

Second, in Matthew 13:41, Jesus says that the son of man will send angels, but this is obviously in the future: “Therefore, just as the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age [ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος]. The Son of Man

will send out his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom all who cause sin and those guilty of lawlessness.” The “end of the age,” whatever it is, is not the moment when Jesus is speaking. The reiteration of Jesus’s future sending of angels in Matthew 24:31 only affirms the eschatological nature of this use of authority. Also, after the resurrection, and in the final words of the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age [ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος]” (28:20), thus creating a parallel with 13:41 that reinforces a directionally future orientation.

Another text that could support the view that Jesus does not exercise heavenly authority before his resurrection is Matthew 26:53, where we see some evidence that Jesus ascribes to the Father authority over angels. During the betrayal scene, Jesus tells Peter to put away his sword and says, “Do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels?” If Jesus possessed direct authority to do this, he could have said so without reference to another entity (such as “my Father”). Moreover, according to Jewish literature, this kind of indirect authority is accessible to those who are not God, as is seen in 2 Maccabees 3:22-30. There, the Jewish people called on the Lord to protect the temple, and he dramatically provided angelic defenses.

These passages cannot prove on their own that Jesus did *not* possess this authority before his resurrection, but it seems a little more likely that if he did, these texts would be phrased differently. Therefore, they contribute as evidence to the idea that Jesus’s authority “in heaven” is something he did not have before his death.

### **All Authority; Therefore, All Nations**

One further piece of evidence that Jesus’s heavenly authority is new is in how his ministry is also newly expansive to the world. This is seen most clearly as Matthew’s Jesus inferentially links (via οὐρανῶν in 28:19) his universal authority and the universal mission on which he sends his disciples: “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore [οὐρανῶν], and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:18-19).

Jesus's ministry before his death was expressly *not* universal (Matt 15:24), and if the mission is new, the authority may be new as well. I will risk structuring it logically as a modus tollens:<sup>9</sup> If Jesus has all authority, then Jesus's ministry is universal (Matt 28:18); Jesus's ministry (before his resurrection) is not universal (Matt 15:24; cf. 10:5-6), therefore, Jesus does not have all authority (before his resurrection). The initial premise may be challenged by arguing that Jesus's all-encompassing authority is only a necessary-but-not-sufficient cause of his new, global ministry. In other words, just because Jesus has all authority does not necessarily mean that his ministry must be global, even if his authority must be all-encompassing for it to be. In this view, Jesus simply wanted to express that the universal authority made it possible for him to send out disciples to all nations. Still, on balance, it seems that Jesus added the statement of his authority with a sufficiently close connection to its inference that temporality is implied.<sup>10</sup>

### **Other Supporting NT Texts**

Other written works of the early church, including the remainder of the NT, confirm that Jesus is given new authority after the resurrection. I have selected the most explicitly relevant texts,<sup>11</sup> and I will ask two questions of each one. First, does this passage support the view that Jesus has new authority on account of the resurrection? Second, if so, what may be learned about this authority?

#### **Acts 2:36**

In Acts 2:36, Peter preaches that “Therefore [οὕτως], let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and

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<sup>9</sup> If A then B; not B, therefore, not A.

<sup>10</sup> So Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1971), 310. Also note that codex Bezae (D) and old Latin texts have νῦν (nunc) instead of οὕτως.

<sup>11</sup> Other themes can be drawn out to explore this further, such as the NT writers' association of the resurrection with his kingship (see Acts 13:16-41).

Messiah.” This statement follows a discussion of Jesus’s resurrection (vv. 24ff., esp. v. 31), his exaltation (v. 33), and his ministry of pouring out the Spirit on all flesh (v. 33; cf. v. 17). If these events are not in a temporal sequence they are at least in a logical sequence: Jesus’s exalted ministry of the Spirit is the inference of his resurrection (v. 32 and 33 are connected by *οὕτως*). Giving priority to the main verbs of the clauses, verses 32-33 may be simplified thus: “God raised this Jesus; therefore, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit.” If his “all flesh” ministry of the Spirit occurred without any connection to the resurrection, this would be an odd way of expressing it. Since the resurrection is the ground (again, *οὕτως*) for his Spirit ministry, it follows reasonably enough that the ministry began with the resurrection and is, therefore, new.

For the second question: what may we learn about this new ministry from this passage? I will make a few observations to illustrate the point that, whatever else this sermon may be doing, it communicates the expansion of Jesus’s rule to something more universal. First, Peter connects the events of Pentecost—a product of Jesus’s ministry (Acts 2:33)—to Joel 2:28-32 (3:1-5 LXX). The text in Joel describes, among other things, the universality of the work of the Spirit. This Spirit will be “poured on all flesh” (. . . ἐπιπάσσαν σάρκα; רִפְּזֵ-לְכָל-בָּשָׂר) including the lowest classes of people (Acts 2:17-18; Joel 2:28-29 [=3:1-2 LXX, MT]). The release of the Spirit will be cosmic (Joel 2:30-31; Acts 2:19-20), and indeed everyone “who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21). Because these events appear to be a direct result of Jesus’s activity following the resurrection (Acts 2:32-33), they suggest an expansion of Jesus’s work and, therefore, his authority. Second, the distinguishing feature of Pentecost, according to the onlookers, is that each person can hear and understand the followers of Jesus in their native tongue, wherever they were from (Acts 2:7-11). This also suggests a multinational expansion of Jesus’s ministry as he pours out the Spirit. Third, signaling Jesus’s authority, Luke’s Peter also directly cites Psalm 110:1, “The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’ (Acts 2:34-35). This Psalm, found

frequently in the NT, demonstrates the efficacious authority of Jesus over any opponents. In short, Luke’s Peter articulates a Jesus who, as a result of his resurrection, now possesses expanded, universal authority.

### **Romans 1:3-4**

Paul opens his letter to the Romans by speaking about “the gospel of God. . . concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh and was appointed [ὀρισθέντος] to be the powerful Son of God [υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει] according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead [ἐξ ἀναστάσεως]” (1:1, 3-4).<sup>12</sup> Does this text communicate a fresh authority for the risen Jesus? To answer this question, we must investigate this use of ὀρισθέντος.

The following list summarizes the options for understanding this verb.<sup>13</sup> (1) Jesus is “appointed” to be the/a Son of God, and he was not ever such a son before. This is classical “adoptionism.” (2) Jesus was already the Son of God, but he becomes (“is appointed”) the Son of God in some other sense. (3) Jesus was already the Son of God in every sense but is now merely “declared” to be the Son of God with no change in status.<sup>14</sup> In English, proponents of the first two views often render ὀρισθέντος as “appointed” or “established” and the proponents of the third option as “declared.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> If it is true that these lines are a traditional confession of the work of Christ, then all the more reason to see them as expressing widely held views of the earliest church. So C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 57; Richard B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 98-100. Scholars who do not believe it is pre-Pauline include: B. B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 235-36. See also the discussion in Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 45-46n31; James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of [Huiiothesia] in the Pauline Corpus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 48 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 227-36.

<sup>13</sup> Space precludes an exhaustive audit of the potential readings.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, 244.

<sup>15</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 10. To be sure, there are various nuances within these views,

The final option should probably be discarded, as in the NT *ὀρίζω* always denotes “appoint” instead of “declare,” and there is no reason to believe this instance expresses a unique meaning. In other words, *ὀρίζω* has efficacy to it; it is determinative, not merely descriptive. If Jesus is “declared” Son of God, he is simply named something he already is; if he is “appointed,” he is brought into this status by the act of appointing.<sup>16</sup> Even some of the most conservative interpreters—who are also some of the most allergic to so-called “adoptionism”—believe that “appointed” is the preferred rendering. For these reasons, it is most likely that Jesus is “appointed” Son of God, not “declared.”

Having eliminated view (3), two options remain: either Jesus was already the Son of God but comes into some new Sonship status or he was not Son of God before his “appointment” articulated in Romans 1:4. I prefer the first option, for even though Jesus is appointed Son of God after the resurrection, Paul still refers to Jesus as Son of God even before his death. Elsewhere in Romans, as well as the rest of the Pauline corpus, Paul affirms Jesus’s pre-death Sonship (Rom 5:10; 8:3, 32; Gal 4:4; 1 Thess 1:10). The alternative would be to read these texts as if Paul was designating Jesus retroactively, i.e., that Paul calls the pre-Easter Jesus God’s Son because he would eventually become God’s Son. This, however, is a stretch. What is more likely: that Paul says that the Son of God died, or that the (person who would become) Son of God died (e.g., Rom 5:10)?<sup>17</sup>

It follows from these points that, according to Paul, Jesus was already the Son of God before the resurrection, at least in some sense. Returning to our options for

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particularly the second one. For instance, Frédéric Louis Godet describes Jesus’s appointment as a recovery of Jesus’s status rather than a brand-new instantiation. Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 77. Still, for simplicity I will reduce the views to these categories.

<sup>16</sup> Etymologically, this verb indicates a demarcation of boundaries (from *ὄρος*, “mountain” or “hill”) and as such it came to be used in delimiting less concrete entities and ideas. See Walter Bauer and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 723.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 42, 43; Murray states that this is the “most natural interpretation.” Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 5.

interpreting *ὀρισθέντος*, view (2) now seems most likely: Jesus was already the Son of God but is “installed” into some new status as the Son the God.<sup>18</sup>

The first question (Is Jesus’s authority new?) is answered in the affirmative. Now for the second question: if Jesus has a new authority, what does this text say about it? I will argue that this passage indicates in Jesus a new, universal authority he did not previously possess. The passage in question rings with regality, as he is the Messianic king who extends the blessings of God to the world.<sup>19</sup> Consider the following points. First, there is an explicit connection to King David (v. 3). Second, verse 5 refers to the apostles going to the nations, suggesting a relationship between Jesus’s resurrection (*ἐξ ἀναστάσεως*, v. 4), power (*ἐν δυνάμει*, v. 4), and mission to the world (v. 5; cf. Matt 28:18-19). Third, the OT links sonship and kingship, most notably in 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7 (verses which are picked up on in Acts 2, 13:33, etc.),<sup>20</sup> and Romans 1:4 may, in fact, be an allusion to these OT texts.<sup>21</sup> Fourth, the Lukan Paul’s first sermon in Acts sees the resurrection as instrumental in God fulfilling his promises that include the nations (e.g., Acts 13:16-40, 46-47).

The verses immediately following this text confirm this view: “Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles, including you who are also called by Jesus Christ” (Rom 1:5-6). If one can trace some continuity between these clauses (and presumably we

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<sup>18</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 43. Cf. David B. Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2016), 173-218.

<sup>19</sup> So also Joshua Maurer and Ty Kieser, “Jesus, ‘Adopted Son of God?’ Romans 1:4, Orthodox Christology, and Concerns about a Contemporary Conclusion,” *Themelios* 46, no. 2 (2021): 334.

<sup>20</sup> Also see 4Q174, which comments on 2 Sam 7:11-14, and the debated 4Q246. See Michael Segal, “Who Is the ‘Son of God’ in 4Q246? An Overlooked Example of Early Biblical Interpretation,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 21, no. 3 (2014): 289-312; Tucker S. Ferda, “Naming the Messiah: A Contribution to the 4Q246 ‘Son of God’ Debate,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 21, no. 2 (2014): 150-75.

<sup>21</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 48.

can, considering their proximity and that they are grammatically in the same sentence), one can hardly do better than Godet:

The apostle started (vv. 1, 2) from the idea of apostleship, but in order to come to that of his apostleship to the Gentiles, which alone serves to explain the step he is now taking in writing to the Christians of Rome (vv. 5, 6). To pass from the first of these ideas to the second, he rises to the author of his apostleship, and describes Him as the Jewish Messiah, called to gather together the lost sheep of the house of Israel (ver. 5); then as the Son of God raised from the dead, able to put himself henceforth in direct communication with the Gentiles through an apostolate instituted on their behalf (ver. 4). In reality, to accomplish this wholly new work. . . He must be placed in one uniform relation to the whole race. This was the effect of the transformation wrought in His person by His death and resurrection. Thus there is no difficulty in understanding the transition from ver. 4 to ver. 5.<sup>22</sup>

I would add that Jesus came to be of “one uniform relation to the whole race” through not just his death and resurrection, but his ascension and session as well. This entire thesis seeks to demonstrate this point and add to it that his bodily “transformation” and increased authority therein unlocked this capability in his humanity.

In sum, this text offers evidence that according to the earliest Christian writers, that is, according to the NT, Jesus was, according to his humanity, established in a new, universal authority after the resurrection.<sup>23</sup>

### **Romans 14:9**

According to Paul in Romans 14:9, “Christ died and returned to life for this [εἰς τοῦτο]: that [ἵνα] he might be Lord over both the dead and the living.” Here, Jesus’s authority is the purpose (εἰς τοῦτο. . . ἵνα) for his resurrection. He was raised in order to rule. This is a slightly different angle than some of the other texts, where the resurrection is stated as the beginning or source of Jesus’s authority. Here, the authority is given as the

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<sup>22</sup> Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 81.

<sup>23</sup> The phrase ἐξ ἀναστάσεως can be variously interpreted; it may primarily communicate (1) source or cause: e.g., Moo, *Romans*, 49n47 (although he assents to possibility of a temporal quality); Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 80. (2) It can be understood as expressing temporal origins: e.g., Cranfield, *Romans*, 62; Schreiner, *Romans*, 48. (3) It can be understood as some combination of both. Of course, if the resurrection of Jesus is the source or cause of his appointment, then a temporal relationship is also implied. In this way one should say that Rom 1:4 refers, at the least, to an appointment in effect *after* the resurrection.

reason why the resurrection occurred. (These two angles are not, of course, mutually exclusive.) In any case, it seems that, according to this passage, this authority *follows* the resurrection and is, therefore, new to the risen Christ.

What do we know about the nature of Jesus's new authority from this verse? Members of the congregation in Rome disputed whether or not one should eat meat (Rom 14:1-3; the same point applies to days of the week in vv. 5-7). Paul responds, "Who are you to judge another's household servant? Before his own Lord he stands or falls. And he will stand, because the Lord is able to make him stand" (v. 4). Everyone comes under the Lord's authority, even if we are living or are dead (vv. 8-9). Paul concludes, "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God" (vv.10-11; cf. Phil 2:10-11). In short, Christ is Lord over everyone; that is, Jesus's authority is universal.

### **Ephesians 1:20-21**

Ephesians 1:20-21 reads,

He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and (*καί*) seating him at his right hand in the heavens—far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

In particular, it is worth noticing how this text illustrates his being placed at God's right hand *after* the resurrection. The sequence is not explicitly temporal (*καί*), but it can hardly be interpreted otherwise. At the very least there is a connection between the resurrection and this acquisition of authority. Otherwise, this phrase would have been expressed differently. Especially relevant is how Jesus was placed above all rulers and authority. In this way, we may answer the first question affirmatively: this text supports the view that Jesus acquired new authority after his resurrection. As for the second question—what may we learn about this new authority from this text?—its

comprehensive nature could not be clearer (“every ruler and authority. . .”). In sum, this text supports our thesis that Jesus gains new, universal authority after his resurrection.

### **Philippians 2:9-11**

In Philippians 2:9-11—a passage that is possibly based on an earlier Christian tradition—Jesus is “highly exalted” because “he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross” (vv. 8-9). Here the relationship between his death and exaltation is causal (*διό*). Although according to this text Jesus’s death leads to his exaltation, it would be strange indeed to argue that this exaltation was possible apart from a resurrection after his death. Therefore, our first question is answered: Jesus’s status expressed here is a result of his death (and, consequently, his resurrection), and is, therefore, new. As for the second question, the nature of his status is articulated in verses 9-11: “For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Surely, here Paul confesses the universal authority of Jesus as it crosses the boundaries of Israel to the ends of the earth.

### **First Peter 3:21-22**

Peter writes, “Baptism. . . now saves you. . . through the resurrection (*δι’ ἀναστάσεως*) of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him” (1 Pet 3:21-22). While the author of this text does not say that Jesus “has gone into heaven” *because* of the resurrection (e.g., *ἐξ ἀναστάσεως*), there appears to be some connection between salvation, the resurrection, and the cosmic authority of Christ. Answering the first question, does this authority occur after or on account of the resurrection? One cannot conclusively say so per this passage. On the other hand, this text certainly does not exclude it, nor does it say that Jesus’s authority as such is old.

The second question—what can we learn about Jesus’s new authority?—can be conditionally considered. Jesus’s authority expressed here is highly resonant with some of the other passages discussed above, especially Ephesians 1:20-21. The author of Peter ascribes to Jesus a very wide-ranging authority which is, at least, over “angels, authorities, and powers” (1 Pet 3:22). In any case, this text cannot contribute to our investigation as it remains uncertain whether or not, according to the passage, Jesus possessed this authority before the resurrection.

In sum, most of the texts considered above contribute to the thesis that Jesus’s authority is new after the resurrection and that this new authority is universal.

### **“All Things Have Been Entrusted to Me”: A Counter-Example?**

In two Gospel accounts, Jesus says, “All things have been entrusted to me by my Father” (πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22). This statement has prevented some readers from attributing new authority to Jesus after the resurrection.<sup>24</sup> The crux of the interpretation is answering what, exactly, is denoted by πάντα? The best reading is that it refers not to authority but revelation. That is to say, “All things (that my father reveals) have been entrusted to me.”<sup>25</sup> A few points support this view.

First, and perhaps most importantly, this is in the middle of comments from Jesus concerning revelation from the Father. He prays,

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, because this was your good pleasure. All things have been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal him. (Matt 11:25-27)

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<sup>24</sup> E.g., Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1265. Also see Origen, *Fragments on Luke*, 164.

<sup>25</sup> So W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 779. See Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 193, and others.

The revelation language is explicit: in particular, “you have hidden. . . and revealed” (ἔκρυψας...ἀπεκάλυψας) and “no one knows” (οὐδείς ἐπιγινώσκει...οὐδέ...τις ἐπιγινώσκει). It stands to reason that “all things” (v. 27) that the Father gave to Jesus, connects back to “these things” (v. 25) which the Father hid from the wise and revealed to infants.<sup>26</sup>

Second, the use of “all things” (i.e. inflected as πάντα as a substantive) is not necessarily gnomic or universal. Its reference is often restrained by its context;<sup>27</sup> in other places, πάντα appears to be more universal;<sup>28</sup> and in still other instances it is ambiguous.<sup>29</sup> These categories, and what texts should be placed in them, can be debated, but the point is the same: context delimits what πάντα denotes. A few examples should suffice to illustrate this view. Consider the episode of the two demon-possessed men of Gadarenes in Matthew (8:28-34). After Jesus exorcised the demons into death-bound pigs, “the men who tended them fled. They went into the city and reported everything [ἀπήγγειλαν πάντα], especially what had happened to those who were demon-possessed” [καὶ τὰ τῶν δαιμονιζομένων] (v. 33). Even though πάντα carries some sort of distinction from “what had happened to those who were demon-possessed” (namely, an overlapping distinction), it surely does not mean, literally, everything. It simply refers to everything pertaining to the events just described, and they had a special emphasis on what happened to the demon-possessed men (for other clear examples, see Rom 14:2; 1 Cor 9:22; Col 3:8, 17; Jude 5).

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<sup>26</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 779.

<sup>27</sup> See Matt 5:18; 8:33; 19:27; 22:4; Mark [3:28?] 4:11, 34; 5:26; [9:12?] 9:23; 10:28; 11:11; 13:23; Luke 5:11, 28; 11:41; 15:13, 14; John 10:4; 14:26; Acts 17:22, 25; 20:35; Rom 14:20; 1 Cor (2:15?) 6:12; 9:12, 22-23; 10:23, 33; 11:2; 12:19; 13:7; 2 Cor 2:9; 4:15; 12:19; Gal 3:22; Eph 4:15; Phil 4:13, 18; Col 4:7; 1 Tim 6:17; Heb 4:13, 15; 8:5.

<sup>28</sup> See Luke 21:32; John 1:3 [16:30?; 21:17?]; Rom 8:28; 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; 11:12; 12:6; 15:27-28; 2 Cor 5:18; Eph 2:10-11, 22-23; 3:9, 20; Phil 2:14; 3:8, 21; Col 1:16-17, 20; 3:11; 1 Tim 6:13; Heb 1:3; 2:8, 10; 3:4; 2 Pet 3:4; 1 John 3:20; Rev 4:11; 21:5.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., 1 Cor 9:25; 10:31; 13:7; 14:26, 40; 16:14; 2 Cor 6:10; 7:14; Eph 4:10; Col 3:20, 22; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 Tim 4:8; 2 Tim 2:10; Heb 2:17; 9:22. All of these references (in this and the previous two footnotes) are instances of πάντα that are substantival and not qualified by a relative clause.

A closer parallel is 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, where Paul writes, “So let no one boast in human leaders, for everything is yours [πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἐστίν]—whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come—everything is yours [πάντα ὑμῶν], and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.” However, I doubt any interpreter of this passage takes πάντα as meaning, universally, all authority. Moreover, John 3:35, which reads, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things [πάντα δέδωκεν] into his hands” (cf. also 13:3), does not work as a counter-example, for even though “all things” seems to be comprehensive, one can tell it is comprehensive because it is explicitly so (cf. 3:31, “above all. . .”). The text in question (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22) does not have that qualification.

Despite appearances, Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22 do not demonstrate that Jesus has universal authority before his death solely by the use of πάντα. Instead, there is reason to think that “all revelation” is the idea behind the word choice.

### **Conclusion**

With respect to Jesus’s authority, something changed as a result of the resurrection. I have argued here that Jesus, in his humanity, gained universal, global authority after the resurrection and that before his death he possessed a more locally limited authority (“on earth”).

CHAPTER 3  
JESUS NEWLY EXERCISES CONTROL  
OVER HIS BODY

In this chapter, I intend to argue that in the resurrection accounts, Jesus exercises capabilities with his body that he did not exhibit previously in the Gospels. Namely, he has extraordinary, direct control over his material, human body in a way that appears “supernatural.”<sup>1</sup> I argue this, first, by showing that his body is human and material; second, by demonstrating that he directly—that is, apart from the power of another—manipulates his body in extraordinary ways. How Jesus controls his material body affects the way we understand his authority over it. More control means more authority.

**Jesus’s Body Is Human and Material**

To argue that the Gospels present Jesus’s risen body as material, we will look at the following two moments. First and primarily, when Jesus appears to the disciples, he shows his wounded hands and feet (Luke 24:40) or hands and “side” (John 20:20); he even invites the disciples to touch him so that they may know it is him (Luke 24:39; John 20:27). Second, the women closest to Jesus, especially Mary Magdalene, grab onto Jesus in the excitement of seeing him alive (Matt 28:9; possibly John 20:17).<sup>2</sup> By examining

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<sup>1</sup> By “appears supernatural,” I do not intend any technical meaning, only the colloquial sense of “beyond our understanding of the physical universe.” Of course, one would be incorrect to assume that the ancient world held the same dichotomy (natural/supernatural) with the same denotations. Still, the colloquial distinction between “natural” and “supernatural” is sufficient for the purposes of this thesis unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew’s scene could be a shortened version of John’s. See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 3 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 668-69. In any case, the relationship between the two passages is close enough to group them together.

these texts, one can see that Jesus's body is, according to the evangelists, tangible, that is, material.

### **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

Concerning the first moment, in which Jesus presents his physical self to the disciples (Luke 24:39-40; John 20:20, 26), I believe that the gospel writers included these details to demonstrate, primarily, that Jesus is the same person as before<sup>3</sup> and, secondarily—especially in Luke—that Jesus's body is material in nature.<sup>4</sup> Most or all readers of the NT will easily agree with the first point; it is the second point that concerns us in this paper.

We will begin with Luke's account. Luke 24:36-43 describes an event where the risen Jesus suddenly appears to the disciples. The disciples respond with confusion—they thought he was a πνεῦμα (v. 37), a word which can be translated as “ghost” or “spirit.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus responds thus:

“Why are you troubled?” he asked them. “And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost [πνεῦμα] does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” Having said this, he showed them his hands and feet. But while they still were amazed and in disbelief because of their joy, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” So they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. (vv. 38-41)

Why did Luke include such details as Jesus's tangibility or ability to eat? Daniel Smith has directed the question to several possible opponents against whom Luke could be writing: “(1) ghostly interpretations of the appearances, (2) magical-daimonic interpretations, (3) docetism, (4) Marcionism, and (5) Pauline views of the nature of the

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<sup>3</sup> The scenes in which Jesus is not recognized (Luke 24:16; John 20:15) cannot be addressed here. Perhaps they did not recognize him because of a lack of faith (cf. Luke 24:25), because God prevented them (cf. Luke 24:16), or because Jesus had a different external form (cf. Mark 16:12). Although there are potential implications for the subject at hand, space disallows further investigation into the question.

<sup>4</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 1202.

<sup>5</sup> Notably, codex Bezae (alone) has φάντασμα here instead of πνεῦμα, perhaps in an attempt to more clearly connote an ethereal quality.

resurrection.”<sup>6</sup> Smith contends that Luke is working against Paul’s view that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50) when he presents Jesus as having “flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39).<sup>7</sup>

Alexander Thompson, however, has questioned this “mirror-reading” approach<sup>8</sup> and favors situating Luke’s account in intra-Jewish debates about the afterlife.<sup>9</sup> First, Thompson argues that many scholars, by finding Luke’s unique use of *πνεῦμα* in 24:37 as key to understanding the passage, have fixated too ardently on the word. Instead of *πνεῦμα* being a “lexical singularity” here, “there is adequate lexical warrant for reading *πνεῦμα* as a kind of shadowy existence after death, roughly equivalent to the Greek idea of a shade or ghost often described with the term *ψυχή*.”<sup>10</sup> From this, it follows that, rather than Luke combating some enemy like the docetists or Marcion, Jesus is answering the disciples’ own (explicitly noted) objections by proving his materiality (vv. 39-40, 42-43) and his identity (hence the emphatic and unique *ἐγώ εἰμι αὐτός* in v. 39).<sup>11</sup> Thompson’s interpretation has the advantage of simplicity as it prioritizes events in the episode itself rather than an historically hypothesized enemy of Luke.

Jews debated the nature and existence of the resurrection, as is shown in Luke 20:27 and in particular Acts 23:6-9 (where Paul used the heated debate in a tactic of

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel A. Smith, “Seeing a Pneuma(tic Body): The Apologetic Interests of Luke 24:36-43,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2010): 753.

<sup>7</sup> The relationship between these two texts will be addressed in the section titled, “Jesus’s extraordinary control over his material body.”

<sup>8</sup> Following John M. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987): 73-93.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Thompson, “The Risen Christ and Ambiguous Afterlife Language: An Examination of *πνεῦμα* in Luke 24:36-43,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138, no. 4 (2019): 820.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, “The Risen Christ,” 820.

<sup>11</sup> François Bovon notes, “Luke uses *ἐγώ εἰμι* only to reveal the identities of people for whom he gives the name: Gabriel (1:19), Jesus (Acts 9:5), Saul the Jew = Paul (Acts 22:3).” François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on Luke 19:28-24:53*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 386,

misdirection).<sup>12</sup> These two texts have some interpretive difficulties, but at the very least one can see that there were intra-Jewish debates on the afterlife and other issues: “For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, and neither angel nor spirit” (Acts 23:8, ἀνάστασιν μήτε ἄγγελον μήτε πνεῦμα). As if mapping to this exact list, Luke 24:36-43, through the proofs which Jesus presents, demonstrates that he is neither a spirit nor an angel. He proves he is not a spirit by having “flesh and bones” (v. 39) and he proves he is not an angel by eating (v. 42-43).<sup>13</sup> Instead, Jesus’s presence is explained as a resurrection of someone who died and now lives but still has a material body.<sup>14</sup>

The accounts in John 20:19-23 and 20:26-29 tell much the same story as in Luke. Jesus suddenly appears to the disciples and shows them his hands and side. To reiterate, it seems that John’s primary concern is to prove continuity between the Jesus of the rest of the Gospel and this newly raised Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Still, any casual reader will see evidence of Jesus’s materiality in these two texts, especially in 20:26-29, where Jesus even offers to be touched (v. 27). John does not state outright that Thomas or anyone else touched Jesus. Still, that omission does not disprove the thesis that John wants to present Jesus as tangible, even if the omission was intentional.<sup>16</sup> In fact, and at risk of stating the

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<sup>12</sup> Thompson, “The Risen Christ,” 823. That the Sadducees disbelieved the resurrection, see Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.16-17; *War* 2.164-65; Matt 22:23; Mark 12:18.

<sup>13</sup> Although angels apparently eat in Gen 18:8 and 19:3, Jewish interpreters insisted that angels do not eat at all. See David Goodman, “Do Angels Eat,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986): 160-75.

<sup>14</sup> So also Niels Henrik Gregersen, “The Extended Body: The Social Body of Jesus according to Luke,” *Dialog* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 242; Gerald O’Collins, *Interpreting the Resurrection: Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus’ Resurrection* (New York: Paulist, 1988), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Hence the wounds, which work to identify Jesus as the one who was crucified. In John, the connection between his wounds and his identity is made even more explicit through the author’s use of τῆν πλευράν instead of τοὺς πόδας (in Luke 24:39), most likely to match with John 19:34, where the soldier struck Jesus’s πλευράν as he was on the cross. Also, after Jesus shows them his hands and his side, the disciples “rejoiced, seeing the Lord” (John 20:20).

<sup>16</sup> So J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s, 1929), 72, 674.

obvious, the natural reading of these details is that Jesus *can* be touched, even if he is not in the text.<sup>17</sup> To make the opposite claim would be an argument from silence.

### **Jesus Appears to the Women**

For the second moment, consider first Matthew 28:9, “[The women] came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.” It is questionable that this text is in the first instance intended to demonstrate Jesus’s corporeality.<sup>18</sup> However, even if it is not Matthew’s primary goal, the text still gives evidence for it. There is nothing here to indicate that his feet were anything other than the kind of feet one would expect on a human: physical and tangible. In fact, this detail could be in direct contrast to widely held conceptions of ghosts in the ancient world. As Allison notes, “Throughout worldwide folklore ghosts often have no feet; and if the text presupposes this idea, then the grasping of feet indicates that Jesus is not a spirit—precisely the same thought found in Lk 24:37-43.”<sup>19</sup>

Related to this is in John’s account when Mary clasps at Jesus upon recognizing him, and he tells her to let go (or not to touch her in the first place; μή μου ἅπτου, John 20:17) because he is “ascending” to the Father, even though he has not yet (fully?) ascended (v. 17). This part of the text is notoriously difficult. For our purposes, the primary question is whether or not she touched Jesus, demonstrating, from the perspective of the evangelists, the materiality of Jesus’s body. The different views on this seem largely to hinge on the interpretation of μή μου ἅπτου. Was Jesus telling her not to touch him at all (DO NOT START X), or to stop touching him (STOP DOING X)? Although the answer is not fully clear, I will argue that it seems he was prohibiting her from continuing to cling on to him (STOP DOING X), thereby suggesting that she had

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<sup>17</sup> See Ignatius, *Epistles*, 6.3.

<sup>18</sup> So Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 2:607.

<sup>19</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 669.

already touched him. The following points support this view.

First, the grammar leans in this direction. Translations of *μὴ μου ἄπτου* (John 20:17) can be conveniently vague, such as Haenchen’s “Do not hold me”<sup>20</sup> or CSB’s “Don’t cling to me,”<sup>21</sup> where one cannot tell if Mary had already touched him or not. Other translations appear to make a decision, such as NASB’s “Stop clinging to me,”<sup>22</sup> or Beasley-Murray’s near-paraphrase: “do not keep on trying to hold me.”<sup>23</sup> Huffman renders in with an emphasis on the imperfective aspect of *ἄπτου*, “do not be clinging to me.”<sup>24</sup> Many NT Greek grammars have long maintained or suggested that a prohibition in the present tense is used “to demand that action then in progress be stopped.”<sup>25</sup> More

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<sup>20</sup> Ernst Haenchen, *John*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 207; NIV, NLT.

<sup>21</sup> So also ESV.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. KJV; so also Walter Bauer and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 126; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 570. A. T. Robertson writes, “Jesus indicates that Mary must cease clinging to him.” A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 853. Moulton translates, “Stop touching me!” J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), 79.

<sup>23</sup> George Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Milton Keynes, UK: Word, 1991), 365.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas S. Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory and the Prohibitions in the Greek New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Greek 16 (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 147.

<sup>25</sup> H. E. Dana and Julius R Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 301; Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 851-54; Friedrich Wilhelm Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), §336.3; Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3, 74-75. Grammars of ancient Greek more broadly have maintained some ambiguity. Herbert Weir Smyth writes, “*μὴ γράφε*, like *don’t write*, is ambiguous and may mean, according to the situation, either *cease writing* or *abstain from writing*.” Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), §1841.a. Still, it seems that the “abstain from writing” meaning is used for a more gnomic statement. As Smyth says, “In maxims *μὴ* with the present imperative is preferred” (§1841.e).

cautious grammarians will express some measured qualifications<sup>26</sup> or ambiguity<sup>27</sup> on the question. In a comparatively recent article, Michael Aubrey has argued that a construction motivated to express STOP DOING X will contain four criteria: “Imperfective aspect, imperative mood, nuclear-scope negation,” and “a specific, referential event.”<sup>28</sup> Our clause, μή μου ἄπτου, clearly contains the first two criteria. We may now ask if this prohibition possesses the others. Is this negation one of “nuclear scope?” That is, does the negation apply to the verb alone? Grammatically, it seems so, for if the argument was negated, one might expect the full pronoun ἐμοῦ rather than the clitic μου.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, the prohibition almost certainly refers to a “specific, referential event.” For these reasons, the grammar still supports the standard reading of μη μου ἄπτου as a STOP DOING X construction.

Second, in line with this, to argue that Jesus did not want to be touched at all by Mary would require making sense of this later instance in which Jesus offered to be touched (20:25-27) by the disciples.<sup>30</sup> Jesus’s cited reason for why he could not be touched or held on to was that he has “not yet ascended.” Because of this, some argue that Jesus was in a state of transition; that is, by the time he is with Thomas he is more

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<sup>26</sup> See Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 106.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel B. Wallace categorizes present imperative prohibitions as either “cessation of activity in progress” or “general precept (customary).” Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament; with Scripture, Subject and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 724-25. Robertson also assents that such a construction could be used to mean “do not . . . from time to time” or “do not as you are in danger of doing,” hence explaining the negative present imperatives in Paul’s letters. Robertson, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 854. For a summary of this history, particularly in NT scholarship, see Huffman, *Verbal Aspect Theory*, 75-104; Michael Aubrey, “Greek Prohibitions,” in *The Greek Verb Revisited: A Fresh Approach for Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Steven E. Runge and Christopher J. Fresch (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 486-91.

<sup>28</sup> Aubrey, “Greek Prohibitions,” 534.

<sup>29</sup> Aubrey clarified this point to me in personal correspondence.

<sup>30</sup> It is unlikely that John was so inconsistent in so small an interval as to forget this. Also, the difference is probably not that she is a woman, considering his general disposition toward women in the Gospels. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1193.

fully ascended or materialized.<sup>31</sup> However, to hold this view, one would have to argue that something changed with respect to his “ascension.” But what could that be? And what would be the evidence for it? There is nothing in between the scene with Mary and the one with the disciples that indicates such a change. The simplest way to harmonize these two texts, then, is to take *μή μου ἄπτου* as “stop clinging to me,” thereby suggesting that Jesus was already touched by Mary and that, whatever was Jesus’s problem with her grasping, it was not in the simple act of touching. If all this is correct, it follows that Mary made tangible, physical contact with Jesus, reinforcing his material nature.

This reading is confirmed when compared to Matthew’s parallel scene (28:9). Physically grasping Jesus with physical contact is exactly what Matthew describes her as doing. Given how close these passages are, the burden of proof seems to be on the one who argues that, although she touched Jesus in Matthew, she did not at all in John. To argue that, because John does not include Mary grabbing Jesus explicitly (as Matthew does), Mary must not have done it, sounds like an argument from silence. On the contrary, that Mary enthusiastically grabs Jesus seems understandable and unsurprising under the circumstances.<sup>32</sup>

Fortunately, for this paper, I do not have to decipher why, exactly, Jesus did not want Mary to touch him, just that she did. For the reasons stated above, I believe that, on balance, it seems that Jesus’s tangibility was demonstrated in Mary’s contact with him in John 20:17 and Matthew 28:9.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the Gospel writers clarified that the resurrected Jesus was a material entity with a material body—that is, not an angel or an *πνεῦμα*— through the display of

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<sup>31</sup> Haenchen writes, “The Evangelist presupposes a demythized concept of the resurrection, in which Jesus returns as a spirit. Mary appears to encounter Jesus in a state in which the transition from his earthly form to a state of spirituality has not yet taken place.” Haenchen, *John*, 2:210.

<sup>32</sup> So Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1192-93.

Jesus's hands and feet/side.<sup>33</sup> Were these the only texts bearing on the question of Jesus's body one could end the discussion here and conclude, very simply, that Jesus possessed a material nature exactly as one would expect a human to have. However, the resurrection accounts in the Gospels also include details that make Jesus seem immaterial. It is to these details we now turn.

### **Jesus's Control over His Risen Body Is Extraordinary and Direct**

As a resurrected person, Jesus has new and extraordinary control over his body,<sup>34</sup> achieving ambulations that appear "supernatural." On this point, we will explore the following three moments.<sup>35</sup> First, Jesus seems to disappear in front of the two disciples who walked with him on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:31). Second, Jesus makes surprising and probably miraculous appearances to the disciples in Luke 24:36 and John 20:19 (we will here include v. 26). Third, Jesus ascends to heaven at the end of Luke (24:51). For each scene we will attempt to answer two questions: (1) Are these movements of a supernatural kind? (2) Is Jesus exercising these capabilities directly, indirectly through some other source, or passively without any agency at all? After answering these questions for these scenes, we will inquire if these capabilities are unique to the resurrected Jesus as opposed to the pre-Easter Jesus of the Gospels.

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<sup>33</sup> Also I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1978), 900; Grant R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 127.

<sup>34</sup> Haenchen writes, "As someone resurrected, Jesus is no longer subject to mundane limitations: that is illustrated by his arrival through closed doors." Haenchen, *John*, 2:210.

<sup>35</sup> Space disallows investigation into every possible relevant moment. Apart from those listed, at least two other movements warrant a comment. First, it is possible Jesus passed through the door of the tomb in order to exit it, as is perhaps suggested in Matt 28:2, 6. For this view, see Murray J. Harris, *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament: Including a Response to Norman L. Geisler* (Grand Rapids: Academic, 1990), 143; Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 53. Second, Jesus may have phased through his burial clothes. Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 388-389; Köstenberger, *John*, 563, 567; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1182n134. Against this view, see Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 833. However, the clothes may be arranged, the primary purpose is to show that robbers did not come and take the body. Haenchen, *John*, 2:208.

## Jesus Vanishes from the Two Disciples at Emmaus

First, Jesus seems to vanish before the disciples' eyes (Luke 24:31).

Concerning question (1), I believe it is relatively clear that this disappearance is more than natural.<sup>36</sup> In verse 31, Jesus “disappeared from their sight” (ἄφαντος ἐγένετο ἀπ’ αὐτῶν), expressing, most likely, a sudden and vanishing transportation. If it were purely natural, this would be an odd choice of words. Even though ἀπό is not used with ἄφαντος in Greek literature before the NT, the prepositional phrase should probably still be construed with ἄφαντος instead of ἐγένετο.<sup>37</sup> Luke’s novel usage here may be explained by Semitic influence, where ἀπό correlates with the Hebrew preposition מִן.<sup>38</sup> Such a reading would further support the view that ἀπ’ αὐτῶν indicates spatial separation from the disciples.<sup>39</sup> If Luke wanted to express that Jesus became invisible but stayed (in an invisible body?) with them, perhaps he could have used ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν or ἐν αὐτοῖς (cf. Phil 3:15).

Concerning question (2), although we do not see clear evidence in either direction as to whether or not this disappearance was performed through some source extrinsic to Jesus, the data slightly point us in this direction of affirming a direct agency for this movement. First, instances in the Bible in which someone disappears usually

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<sup>36</sup> Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (1896; repr., Edinburgh: Clark, 1981), 559; Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 613.

<sup>37</sup> Plummer is right that “it is very unnatural to take ἐγένετο with ἀπ’ αὐτῶν and make ἄφαντος adverbial: ‘He departed from them without being seen.’” Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, 557. Cf. Sophocles, *Oedipus*, where the preposition ἐκ goes with ἄφαντος: “But may I vanish from among men [ἀλλ’ ἐκ βροτῶν βαίην ἄφαντος] before I see the stain of such a disaster come upon me!” Sophocles, *Oedipus* 830; trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Loeb Classical Library 21 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 409.

<sup>38</sup> So Jean Psichari, *Essai Sur Le Grec de La Septante*, Extrait de la Revue des Etudes juives (Paris, 1908), 204ff. Hebrew verbs such as נָסָה (which is often modified by נָסָה) usually have a mental dimension; that is, the subject becomes obscured from view, either visually or mentally (e.g., Job 28:21; Eccl 12:14; Prov 28:17; etc.). Cf. Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 761.

<sup>39</sup> Contra Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, 559.

contain some sort of explanation as to how they vanished. Enoch, for instance, “walked with God; then he was not there because God took him” (5:24; LXX οὐχ ἠύρισκετο ὅτι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός).<sup>40</sup>

The closest parallel in the NT would be Philip and his sudden transportation in Acts 8:39. Notably, however, the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of Philip’s movement: “the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away [πνεῦμα κυρίου ἤρπασεν τὸν Φίλιππον], and the eunuch did not see him any longer [καὶ οὐκ εἶδεν αὐτὸν εὐκέτι ὁ εὐνοῦχος] but went on his way rejoicing. Philip appeared in Azotus...[Φίλιππος δὲ εὐρέθη εἰς Ἄζωτον]” (Acts 8:39-40). However, with Jesus in the resurrection accounts, no such cause is indicated.<sup>41</sup>

With these examples,<sup>42</sup> we are left with a couple of options: either Jesus’s disappearance—construed with the miraculous vanishings of Enoch and Philip—must also be caused by the Holy Spirit, or Luke’s omission of a cause indicates that there was no external cause, namely, that Jesus was his own cause. This second option seems more likely, for although Jesus operates “by the finger/Spirit of God” (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20) before his death, the resurrection accounts not only omit dependence on the Holy Spirit but also John’s Gospel reports Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit on the disciples (John 20:22). In sum, then, it seems that Jesus was the direct agent of his vanishing away from the two disciples in Emmaus.

### **Jesus Moves through Walls**

In the second moment, Jesus appears to the disciples as they are discussing his

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Rev 16:20, where mountains disappear (ὄρη οὐχ εὐρέθησαν).

<sup>41</sup> Arguably in contrast with earlier in the Gospels, i.e., Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1. Another potential counterexample is Jdg 6:21: “Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight” (LXX, καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐπορεύθη ἀπὸ ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ). However, the verb form ὤφθη does not tell anything about the manner of the entrance but, rather, the significance of the visitor (See 1 Macc 9:27; 2 Macc 3:25; cf. 1 Macc 4:6; Song 2:12 LXX; Bar 3:22; Dan 4:22).

<sup>42</sup> Other potential examples include Ezekiel in Ezek 3:12-15 and Elijah in 2 Kgs 2:1, 11. The Ezekiel passage will be considered below. As for Elijah, his ascension is spelled out with colorful details that do not parallel anything that happens to Jesus

resurrection and/or hiding from their opponents (Luke 24:36; John 20:19). Luke rather bluntly describes Jesus's entrance: "As they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst" (24:36). John's accounts, while still snappy, are a little more descriptive: "the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them" (20:19); and later in verse 26: "Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them."<sup>43</sup>

Concerning question (1), the evidence favors that these appearances are supernatural<sup>44</sup> for the following reasons. First, Luke 24:36 seems to be "analogous" to verse 31, which, as I argue above, describes a supernatural disappearance. Admittedly, Luke does not give us very clear verbal indicators that Jesus's sudden appearance in verse 36 correlates with his sudden disappearance in verse 31. Still, they share some qualities. First, both instances happen in the middle of some other action. In verse 31 Jesus is distributing the bread to the two disciples (note the imperfect tense, ἐπεδίδου, in a paragraph full of aorists); and in verse 36, the disciples are in the middle of talking (note the genitive absolute αὐτῶν λαλούντων). Second, the disciples react strongly to both events, where in the first case the two disciples change their travel plans and immediately return to Jerusalem (vv. 33) and in the second case the disciples are struck with fear (v. 37). Third, Luke gives no indication that Jesus moved naturally, either to leave or to arrive. Compare verse 36—"he himself stood in their midst" (αὐτὸς ἔστη ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν)—with verse 15—"Jesus himself came near and began to walk along with them" (αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς ἐγγίσας συνεπορεύετο αὐτοῖς). Luke could have used such verbiage to express a more physically understandable entrance. Fourth, Jesus initiates his exit in verse 31 with a blessing and commences his appearance in verse 36 with a word of peace. Fifth, before verse 36, Jesus's miraculous disappearance in verse 31 is the freshest image of Jesus in the reader's

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<sup>43</sup> Whether or not the CSB's concessive translation is best ("Even though") will be discussed on p. 31 and following.

<sup>44</sup> So also Köstenberger, *John*, 567. John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 368.

mind, thus perhaps connecting the two by a simple character association. It is a subtle point, but if Luke wanted to communicate a mundane entrance, he arguably would have had to work against such expectations. For all of the above reasons, one should probably read these events in light of each other. In turn, since Luke 24:31 is, as argued above, a miraculous event, the connection between verses 31 and 36 increases the plausibility of verse 36 also being miraculous. This is the first piece of supporting evidence that Luke 24:36 and John 20:19, 26 should be understood as supernatural occurrences.

The second piece of evidence that these verses describe “miraculous” movements is that Luke makes it clear that the two disciples wasted no time getting back to the others after Jesus vanished. Luke writes that it was “that very hour” (v. 33) when they left for Jerusalem. Why does Luke add the time stamp? I think he wants to suggest that Jesus’s appearance to the disciples in verse 36 was more than natural; Jesus should not have been able to get there so quickly. Note also how there is no break in time in which someone else would have been able to travel a long distance. “That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven... Then they began to describe... As they were saying these things, [Jesus] himself stood in their midst” (vv. 33, 35-36).

Third, Luke’s verbiage points to a surprising and, therefore, probably supernatural visit. The imperfect ἐξηγοῦντο in 24:35 and the genitive absolute in verse 36 (αὐτῶν λαλούντων) set up an aspectual contrast with the aorist ἔστη, popping its narrative effect. Also, we may, with some confidence, categorize the genitive absolute as temporal (“while they were speaking...”).<sup>45</sup> In addition to this, as mentioned above, compared to verse 15 the grammar in verse 36 suggests a brusque entrance. Finally, one may find in the verb ἔστη an allusion to the appearances of angels in the OT, reinforcing the

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<sup>45</sup> So most EVV.

supernatural nature of Jesus’s appearance.<sup>46</sup>

In John’s account, we read that Jesus ἦλθεν and ἔστη among them (20:19). The addition of the verb ἦλθεν (against Luke 24:36) probably indicates some sort of movement into (εἰς) the closed room.<sup>47</sup> John likely wanted to clarify that Jesus was not in the room before he “stood” and, therefore, added a verb of movement—and a generic one at that (John could have used, e.g., εἶσηλθεν). For this reason, it appears not that Jesus suddenly became visible after already being present in the room, but that he “stood” as an end result of some locomotion. This is made even more likely given the proximity of the two verbs (ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη, v. 19).

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, in John’s account, the author deliberately indicates that there was no easy way for someone to come in. Not only did Jesus (suddenly) come and stand in their midst, he did so despite locked doors (John 20:19), making his surprise visit all the more shocking.<sup>48</sup> Some have suggested that the genitive absolute θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων does not necessarily mean that the doors were locked, but that it could mean, simply, that they were shut.<sup>49</sup> Lexically, this may not be impossible, but it is implausible.<sup>50</sup> If the door was closed-but-enterable, the inclusion of κεκλεισμένων would be a bit of a redundancy. Instead, this combination of words lends

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<sup>46</sup> Gen 18:2; Num 22:22-24; Deut 31:15; Dan 8:15; 12:5; cf. 1 Chron 21:15-16; Tob 5:4. So John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35C (Nashville: Nelson, 1993), 1212; Bovon, *Luke 3*, 389. Also relevant is Luke 24:4 where the angels’ appearance is described in that they ἐπέστησαν (“stood by”) the women.

<sup>47</sup> Murray J. Harris, *John*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 330. See Bauer and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 289.

<sup>48</sup> So Haenchen, *John*, 2:210.

<sup>49</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 608-14.

<sup>50</sup> Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1201; Samuel Safrai says, “Whether from fear of theft or simply from good manners, the doors remained locked.” Samuel Safrai, “Home and Family,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, vol. 2, *Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1974), 734,

itself to mean that the doors are set to disallow someone from entering.<sup>51</sup> To take one strikingly parallel example, in *Joseph and Aseneth*, Aseneth locks herself into her room to confess to the Lord. She sees a “morning star” rising in heaven, and then

the heaven was torn open near the morning star and an indescribable light appeared. And Aseneth fell on her face upon the ashes; and there came to her a man from heaven and stood at her head [ἔστη ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς]; and he called to her, “Aseneth.” And she said, “Who called me? For the door of my room is shut [ἡ θύρα τοῦ θαλάμου μου κέκλεισται] and the tower is high: how then did anyone get into my room?”<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, the expectation is that if a door is shut, no one is coming in. It seems likely that John is following such a use of this combination of words. The disciples, insofar as they were hiding because of fear, would have been motivated to secure the entrance to prevent others (namely, “the Jews”) from coming in.

If the doors were locked, we can now ask: why did John add this detail? There are at least three possible reasons: (1) John only wanted to demonstrate how afraid of the Jews the disciples were. The locked doors, in this reading, serve to emphasize the disciples’ fear.<sup>53</sup> (2) John wanted to make it clear that Jesus’s entrance was remarkable.<sup>54</sup> In other words, in (1), τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων adds emphasis to διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, and the main verbs ἦλθεν and ἔστη are not obviously related. In (2), διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων explains τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων, which, in turn, gives context for

<sup>51</sup> See 2 Chr 28:24; Neh 6:10 (2 Esdr 16:10 LXX); 7:3 (2 Esdr 17:3 LXX); Eccl 12:4; Ezek 46:12. See Homer, *Odyssey*, 19.30; 21.236-241, 382-389; Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 198; cf. Aristophanes, *Hellenica*, 5.4.7; *Joseph and Aseneth*, 5.8-9; 10.5-8; Chariton, *Callirhoe*, 7.6.7. Doors can be closed in order to block sound (Euripides, *Alcestis*, 546). Still other uses are more ambiguous (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 1071; Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 1.17b.12; 5.2.8; Apollonius, 3.101; Chariton, *Callirhoe*, 1.12.5)

<sup>52</sup> *Joseph and Aseneth*, 14.3-5, trans. H. F. D. Sparks, in *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 473-503.

<sup>53</sup> See Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 165; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1201.

<sup>54</sup> Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 844; Köstenberger, *John*, 572. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1201, proports both (1) and (2). Osborne suggests that surprise may be the “real point” why the locked doors are mentioned. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives*, 165. I doubt it as that would seem an odd way to express that the disciples were surprised. Luke’s method—to tell us they were frightened—would be much more to the point.

the main verbs ἦλθεν and ἔστη.

There are a few problems with (1). First, fear of the Jews is not something John emphasizes at this point in the narrative. Even though he uses the label “The Jews” to describe a group of people opposed to Jesus’s teachings, the immediate narrative context (the resurrection account) offers no other clues suggesting that the author wants to bring the religious leaders into the story at this point in any significant way. This is the only verse in which the author mentions them after Jesus’s death. In other words, if John wanted to make a point about “The Jews” one would expect the Jews to play some role in the episode.

Second, in Jesus’s second sudden appearance in 20:26, John writes that the disciples were “inside” without making any reference as to why. Now, John probably did not need to reiterate why they were hiding since it was already understood (via v. 19), but if their reason for hiding was already implied, why did John then want to include again that the doors were locked? Therefore, he must have added that the doors were locked for a reason other than that they were hiding from the Jews, since, again, hiding from the Jews is already sufficiently implied. The best candidate for this other reason is probably found in the main verb under which the genitive absolute τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων is (again) grammatically subsumed: Jesus appears (ἔστη). What was it about Jesus’s appearance that required a reminder of the locked status of the doors? Most likely, Jesus came in in spite of the doors, which is to say, he entered in a way that one cannot usually come, given the limitations of humans.

Third, as was implied above, the first view does not map to the grammar very well. If the two ideas—locked doors and Jesus’s appearance—were unrelated, why did the author grammatically construe them together? It is more likely that John would have separated them into two clauses if he did not want them to be understood in close relation to each other.

It follows from the above points that there is a qualifying relationship between

τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων and the two verbs. Considering the discussion above on the locked status of the door—and remembering that locked doors usually have the idea of keeping someone out—it seems most likely that we can categorize this genitive absolute as “concessive,” that is, Jesus entered *in spite of* the doors being locked.<sup>55</sup>

We can now ask, how could he have entered if the doors were locked? If Jesus came in by busting through the walls or by some other such method, we can guess with some safety that the Gospel writers would have mentioned it. It is also unlikely that he entered by stealth. Consider such an idea: Jesus opened the door, blending into the crowd of disciples, and then he stood up to be noticed. It is unclear how many people were present (cf. Luke 24:33), but it seems improbable that he would have gone unnoticed until this moment (excepting, perhaps, some other miracle).<sup>56</sup> Further, Jesus stood (appeared) not at the entrance of the door but “in their midst” (John 20:19; see also Luke 24:36). I doubt this phrase was added to indicate something ordinary, namely, that he walked into the middle of their group. Instead, John likely included it to suggest an instantaneous, supernatural appearance, despite the doors.

In response to the view that Jesus entered the room miraculously, Tholuck has argued: if John wanted to express that Jesus went through the doors, he could have phrased it, διὰ θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων.<sup>57</sup> Further, John could have construed the genitive

<sup>55</sup> For other concessive uses of the genitive absolute in John, also see 12:37 and 21:11.

<sup>56</sup> As argued previously, John seems to add ᾗλθεν in order to remove the idea that Jesus was already there, invisibly, and then became visible. The same reasoning can also be applied to the idea that the disciples were kept from seeing Jesus until the moment he “stands.” One can find support for this view in Luke 24:16, where the two disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize him. However, on closer inspection this connection more likely confounds this view rather than supports it, for the verbiage in the Emmaus episode is precisely different in such a way as to show that the disciples were not seeing him for who he was. John, neither in 20:19 nor in v. 26, neither adds, “they did not recognize him,” nor, “they recognized him.” The hinge separating his non-presence and his presence is in his movement from without to within the room (hence ᾗλθεν).

<sup>57</sup> August Tholuck, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, trans. Abram Kaufman (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1836), 414.

absolute with ἔσθη instead of ἦλθεν.<sup>58</sup> However, I am not arguing that Jesus necessarily came through the door (he could have come through the walls), I am arguing that Jesus came in spite of the locked doors. That is, despite there not being a way for someone to naturally enter.

In sum, John notes the locked doors in order to qualify Jesus's entrance as being supernatural, thus answering the first question ("were these appearances supernatural?"). How, more precisely, he entered the room given his material body will be discussed further below in the section "Jesus's Extraordinary Control Over His Material Body."

For this second scene in which Jesus appears to the disciples, the first question has been answered. Now for question (2): how direct is Jesus's agency in these movements? In addition to the parallels described above, one may consider Ezekiel 3:12-15, when the Spirit "lifted up" (ἀνέλαβέν) Ezekiel and took him to Tel-abib.<sup>59</sup> As in the other texts, Ezekiel is not the direct agent of these movements, the Spirit is. In contrast, the verbs used in the scene in question to describe Jesus's supernatural movements are active with Jesus as the subject (Luke 24:36; John 20:19). The same reasoning as applied above may be argued here as well; these parallels, if anything, support the idea that Jesus is not described as utilizing some other source for his movements.

### **Jesus Ascends to Heaven**

Lastly, Luke clearly presents Jesus's Ascension (Luke 24:51; cf. Acts 1:9) as a miraculous movement. The only question is, how direct was Jesus's agency in it? For a few reasons, it seems that Jesus was not the direct agent of his ascension. First, the verb in Luke 24:51 is a passive ἀνεφέρετο. Other than this instance, ἀναφέρω is found only in

<sup>58</sup> Tholuck, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 414.

<sup>59</sup> Ezek 8:3; 11:24, will not be included as these instances are labeled visions.

active forms in the NT,<sup>60</sup> suggesting that a medio-passive form is not used with an “active” meaning. Jesus was “taken up” by some other power. Second, the account in Acts makes this even more explicit: “After he had said this, he was taken up (ἐπήρθη) as they were watching, and a cloud took him (ὑπέλαβεν) out of their sight” (1:9; cf. v. 11). Whatever it means for Jesus to be taken up by a cloud, we may say that Luke does not place agency of this movement on Jesus himself.

This conclusion does not go against my view that Jesus makes extraordinary manipulations with his body, but it does demonstrate how not everything needs to be directly attributed to Jesus’s human agency. In other words, if the authors wanted to make Jesus the non-direct agent of his movements in the other scenes, they could have done so similarly to Luke’s account of the ascension.

### **Is This Control New?**

Having looked at a few moments in the resurrection accounts, we may conclude that at least some of them describe Jesus as making supernatural movements with his own, direct authority. The question remains: is this a new, distinctive feature for Jesus after the resurrection as opposed to before his death? I will argue that, before the resurrection, although Jesus does many miraculous deeds, the evangelists do not present Jesus as exhibiting authority over his body in a way that is intrinsic to his own human agency. To argue this, we must examine the following potential counterexamples. Jesus does not exercise supernatural and direct control over his body (1) when he narrowly escapes danger (Luke 4:29-30; John 5:13; 7:30; 8:20, 59; 10:39; 12:36), (2) when he walks on water (Matt 14:22-34; Mark 6:45-53; John 6:15-21), or (3) during the transfiguration (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36).

First (1), Jesus does not supernaturally vanish or reappear before the

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<sup>60</sup> Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2; Heb 7:27; 9:28; 13:15; Jas 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5; 2:24. See Bauer and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 75; Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 125.

resurrection in the gospels during his notable escapes (Luke 4:29-30; John 5:13; 7:30; 8:20, 59;10:39; 12:36). The chart below highlights, according to these texts, how he escaped, why he escaped, and from what danger he escaped:

Table 1. The language of Jesus's escapes

|              | How He Escaped  | Why He Escaped               | From What Did He Escape                     |
|--------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| Luke 4:29-30 | αὐτὸς . . . <b>διελθὼν</b><br>διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν<br><b>έπορεύετο</b> |                              | (αὐτοῦς)<br>κατακρημνίσαι αὐτόν             |
| John 5:13    | <b>έξένευσεν</b> ὄχλου<br>ὄντος ἐν τῷ τόπῳ                        |                              |   |
| John 7:30    |   | οὐπὼ ἐληλύθει ἡ<br>ᾠρα αὐτοῦ | Ἔζήτουν . . . αὐτόν<br>πιάσαι               |
| John 8:20    |   | οὐπὼ ἐληλύθει ἡ<br>ᾠρα αὐτοῦ | οὐδεὶς ἐπίασεν αὐτόν                        |
| John 8:59    | Ἰησοῦς . . . <b>έκρύβη</b><br>καὶ <b>έξήλθεν</b> ἐκ τοῦ<br>ἱεροῦ  |                              | Ἔκραν . . . λίθους ἵνα<br>βάλωσιν ἐπ' αὐτόν |
| John 10:39   | <b>έξήλθεν</b> ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς<br>αὐτῶν                             |                              | Ἔζήτουν . . . αὐτόν<br>πάλιν πιάσαι         |
| John 12:36   | <b>ἀπελθὼν</b> <b>έκρύβη</b> ἀπ'<br>αὐτῶν                         |                              |   |

Six different verbs (made bold in the chart) are used in describing the manner of Jesus's getaways: *διελθὼν*, *έπορεύετο*, *έξένευσεν*, *έκρύβη*, *έξήλθεν*, and *ἀπελθὼν*. By examining these verbs as well as any other relevant details, I intend to show that there is nothing here that demonstrates a supernatural movement of the same nature as what is found in the resurrection narratives.

Concerning *έξένευσεν*, John 5:13 reads, "But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there [*έξένευσεν ὄχλου ὄντος ἐν τῷ τόπῳ*]." The verb *έκνεύω* (an NT *hapax*) virtually always has a perfectly natural meaning.<sup>61</sup> One exception is instructive: the phrase is *έκνεύειν τὴν ἐμφάνειαν*, suggesting that in order to describe someone slipping away supernaturally, the

<sup>61</sup> 4 Kgdms 2:24; 23:16; Judg (in A, replacing *έκκλίνω*, LXX) 4:18; 18:26; 3 Macc 3:22; Cf. Micah 6:14. See entries in Bauer and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 307; Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 514.

author would want to add something like τὴν ἐμφάνειαν.<sup>62</sup> In this way, there is no real evidence that Jesus escaped notice by supernatural means.<sup>63</sup>

The aorist verb ἐκρύβη, found in John 8:59 and 12:36, contains little to no information as to how Jesus escaped. For instance, in John 8:59, Jesus is under threat of being stoned by the Jews, but instead of getting killed, he “was hidden [ἐκρύβη] and went out of the temple.”<sup>64</sup> Although this is an impressive dodge, nothing in the text makes it clear that Jesus vanished or transported supernaturally.

The remaining verbs (διελθὼν, ἐπορεύετο, ἐξῆλθεν, and ἀπελθὼν) shed no light on the question, as they are generic enough to give an interpreter no real sense of how, exactly, Jesus moved. However, the episode of Luke 4:29-30 adds a little more color on top of the participle διελθὼν. Instead of getting killed, Jesus simply “passed right through the crowd and went on his way” (αὐτὸς δὲ διελθὼν διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν ἐπορεύετο, v. 30). Some commentators call it a miracle,<sup>65</sup> finding support for this view in the emphatic language (such as αὐτὸς and διὰ μέσου). However, even if it is a miracle, it is not of the same species as that which occurred in 24:36 and John 20:19, 26. The emphatic language itself commends this view. Jesus is described as passing through the crowd, not suddenly disappearing and/or appearing on the other side of them. It is διελθὼν instead of ἦλθεν (in John 20:19) and διὰ μέσου instead of ἔστη ἐν μέσῳ (αὐτῶν). What is remarkable is precisely that he physically traveled through them. If it is a miracle, it is not a miracle with respect to Jesus’s body; it is with respect to the angry mob which did not—or could not—seize him as he went through.

In sum, given the ambiguity of the language employed in these episodes, I believe the burden of proof is on the one who wants to interpret it as Jesus moving

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<sup>62</sup> Bauer and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 307.

<sup>63</sup> Bernard, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 234.

<sup>64</sup> CSB keeps its rendering ambiguous and passive.

<sup>65</sup> Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, 129-30.

around supernaturally before his death. There is no evidence that he did so in any supernatural manner with his body involving vanishing or reappearing, and, in fact, one could argue that an evangelist would be motivated to include that detail if he did.

Second (2), Jesus walking on water (Matt 14:22-34; Mark 6:45-53; John 6:15-21) does not present an example of Jesus exercising direct, supernatural control over his body. The mechanics of walking on water are about as obscure as those of multiplying bread and fish. It is not obvious that Jesus was exercising control over his body; it could be that the sea, not his body, was being changed to allow for water walking.<sup>66</sup> For our purposes, we can focus on the question, “is this power intrinsic to the man, Jesus?” According to Matthew, this ability is available to anyone with faith. Peter also walks on water (14:30), and when he stumbles, Jesus calls him out for doubting (v. 31). Assuming this power was extrinsic to Peter, we may, with caution, reckon it as extrinsic to Jesus as well.

Another potential counterexample is (3) the transfiguration (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36). However, in Matthew and Mark Jesus’s transformation was passive (μετεμορφώθη, Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2)<sup>67</sup> and Luke is unclear (with ἐγένετο...τὸ εἶδος, Luke 9:29). Moreover, 2 Peter 1:16-17 recollects the transfiguration in this way:

For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased!”

The “honor and glory” of the transfiguration is from the Father; it may follow that “his majesty” did too (v. 16). Jesus’s “power” and “coming” are simply “of...Jesus,”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Apart from the scene in question, it is questionable at best that Jesus exerts extraordinary control of his body before his death, however directly or indirectly, as I will continue to argue in this section. On the other hand, Jesus does exhibit authority over nature, especially the sea (Mark 4:35-41; Matt 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25). Arguably, then, as Jesus walked on water he simply continued in this pattern.

<sup>67</sup> Where the source of the divine voice is most likely the agent; cf. Jesus’s baptism (Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11).

<sup>68</sup> τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν

rendering their source ambiguous. It is also unclear what, specifically, “power” refers to here, as it could be a more introductory statement preceding a more specific reference to the transfiguration (cf. v. 3).<sup>69</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Considering the above points, I contend that the authority Jesus exerted over his body after the resurrection was of a new kind, a sort of authority that he did not exhibit according to his humanity before his death—one that involves direct and extraordinary control over his body.

### **Jesus’s Extraordinary Control over His Material Body**

Up to this point, we have identified that the risen Jesus possessed (and was directly identified with) a material body and that he exercised new, supernatural authority over his body after the resurrection. We are now prepared to ask: given these two points, what are the implications for the nature of Jesus’s resurrected body? How do these ideas fit together? This question has raised not a little controversy in the past as it concerns the relationship between spirit and body and the nature of the resurrection bodies, including those that belong to both Jesus and his followers. With so many unknown variables, it seems wise to admit some ignorance at the outset. As Murray J. Harris writes, “In reality we are dealing here with one of the ultimate mysteries of the universe -- the relation of matter or ‘body’ to spirit -- so that all these hypotheses are at best accommodations to human language.”<sup>70</sup> Still, the question should be asked, with the hope of, at the very least, beginning to point the interpreter in the right direction.

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901), 253.

<sup>70</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 375.

Harris presents five possible choices for the nature of Jesus’s risen body: (1) “Jesus’ resurrection body was basically ‘material’<sup>71</sup> or ‘fleshly’ but either was capable of temporary dematerialization or had nonmaterial properties;” (2) “His body was customarily ‘immaterial’ or ‘nonfleshly’ but was capable of temporary materialization;”<sup>72</sup> (3) “His body was matter ‘spiritualized,’ matter ‘wholly and finally subjected to spirit;”<sup>73</sup> (4) “His body was composed of ‘glory’ (cf. Phil 3:21), regarded as its ‘material or ‘substance;”<sup>74</sup> and (5) “His body was in the process of transition from the material to the spiritual during the forty days of appearances.”<sup>74</sup> For our purposes, we will focus on the first two.<sup>75</sup>

### **Is Jesus’s Body Material or Immaterial?**

Both choices (1) and (2) take Jesus’s body as possessing both material and non-material elements or aspects; the difference is in whichever is more foundational. Is Jesus’s body “basically material” or “customarily immaterial”?<sup>76</sup> Harris affirms the latter, arguing that Jesus is, in his default state, both invisible and immaterial after the

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<sup>71</sup> The NT writers were not physicists, but it seems they followed the understandable human intuition that there is a difference between something that is perceivable to the sense of touch and something that is not. Thus, in the NT, the primary distinction between substances is in between something tangible and πνεῦμα (or φάντασμα), as can be seen in Luke 24:39-40. Cf. Eph 2:2, where the disobedient spiritual realm is mapped to air (ἀέρος τοῦ πνεύματος). Hence the “intangible” category would include things one would call matter, such as air and fire. This also explains why ghosts are called πνεῦμα. On this, see J. R. Porter, “Ghosts in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East,” in *The Folklore of Ghosts*, ed. H. R. Ellis Davidson and W. M. S. Russell (Wellingborough, UK: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1981), 224, 236.

<sup>72</sup> This is Harris’s own view.

<sup>73</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 478.

<sup>74</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 375. Excluded here is a view which sees Jesus’s resurrection as purely spiritual in the sense that is in no way objectively manifest. In this view, the disciples had an experience of sorts and called that the resurrection. The NT writers seemed to work intentionally against this view. I will not discuss it here.

<sup>75</sup> Concerning the third view—that Jesus’s body is matter “spiritualized”—I do not find it incompatible with the idea that Jesus is basically material. For the fourth view—that Jesus is “composed of glory”—there is little evidence for it. For the fifth view—that Jesus is in transition—I have already argued that there does not seem to be any evidence for it.

<sup>76</sup> There was a lively debate in the 1980s and early 1990s between Murray Harris and Norman Geisler within the Evangelical Free Church on this question. For a history of the debate, see Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 337-69.

resurrection. My thesis does not depend on whether or not he is invisible—although I would not frame it in those terms<sup>77</sup>—but whether or not he is material.

Harris makes five points to reach his conclusion.<sup>78</sup> First, the event of Jesus’s resurrection coincides with his session at God’s right hand. Therefore, he was not on earth when he appeared to the disciples but was in heaven and appeared “from” heaven. Harris sees Jesus as having two bodies, one that is of glory (cf. Phil 3:21) and one that is of flesh (cf. Col 1:22). The former is fit for heaven and the latter for earth.<sup>79</sup>

It is true that the NT often groups together the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ, but that does not mean the writers consider them to be synchronized. None of Harris’s cited texts give solid evidence of this view. Acts 2:32-33 actually works against it as Jesus’s exaltation is grammatically connected with his dispensing of the Spirit (i.e., Pentecost), which occurs after his ascension. In Romans 8:34, Paul writes, “Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also [ὅς καὶ] is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.” Not only does this give no clear indication that his resurrection and exaltation are contemporary events, he (1) adds some space between them with an adverbial καὶ and (2) groups this with his intercession “for us,” a work that, assuming it applies also to Paul, does not happen until at least Paul converts. I do not suppose Paul would say that Christ interceded for him before his experience on the road to Damascus. In Ephesians 1:20; 2:6, one could argue that if God performed these actions at the same time, Paul could have constructed these sentences more hypotactically (e.g., 1:20 could read, “having raised him from the dead, he sat him at his right hand”). Instead, Paul writes with relative parataxis, “... raising him from the dead and seating him at his

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<sup>77</sup> In my view, even if Jesus was invisible, that does not necessarily mean he was immaterial. Conversely, just because he is visible does not necessarily indicate he is material.

<sup>78</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 386.

<sup>79</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 386.

right hand” (similarly in 2:6 and Harris’s other examples, Col 3:1; 1 Pet 1:21).<sup>80</sup> In short, there is nothing in the NT that expresses Jesus’s resurrection and exaltation as simultaneous.<sup>81</sup>

Harris’s second point in arguing that Jesus is “customarily immaterial” is that Jesus passes through walls. Since we discussed this above, I will not comment further on Jesus’s supernatural movements, except to say that they plausibly support Harris’s view. Concerning his third point, Harris writes, “If, in his resurrected state, Jesus was normally invisible to the human eye, it follows that he also usually lacked a fleshly form, for a person who customarily cannot be seen (rather than simply is not seen) must at the times of his invisibility be both intangible and immaterial.”<sup>82</sup> However, by no means is it obvious that Jesus was “normally” invisible. In the moments in which the disciples were not looking at him, he could have, simply, been somewhere else. As I argued above, his miraculous appearance to the disciples does not seem to be an instance of him, invisible in the middle of the room, suddenly becoming visible. Rather, there was a supernatural movement through the walls.

Fourth, Harris argues that if Jesus’s body was primarily material, one would need to explain where his body was when he was not with his disciples. Also, the disciples did not seem concerned about Jesus’s physical needs.<sup>83</sup> In response to the first argument, I say, simply, no: one does not have to explain where Jesus was when he was not appearing to the disciples—the evangelists do not. He could have been anywhere. Concerning the second argument, Harris calls it a “remarkable silence” that Jesus’s

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<sup>80</sup> This spot in Eph 1:20 is part of a long sentence beginning in v. 15 and ending in v. 21. Still, the participles here are paratactic relative to each other. Eph 2:6, although the object of the verbs seems to be “us,” is surprisingly paratactic given the style of the letter up to that point.

<sup>81</sup> Theologically, one may find a problem with Harris’s view in that Jesus, in his humanity, would be in two places at once, an idea which is not favorable to many Christian traditions.

<sup>82</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 390.

<sup>83</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 386.

friends do not provide for his bodily nourishment and shelter.<sup>84</sup> Is it? How often do we read of followers of Jesus making sure he has food and shelter in the Gospels? Luke 8:3 (the text Harris cites) informs us that various women “were supporting them [Jesus and the twelve] from their possessions.” However, this text refers to all the disciples. I find this point weak, as, even if the evangelists were in a habit of detailing how Jesus received food and shelter, it does not necessarily follow that they should after the resurrection. Further, even if Jesus does not need food or shelter, that does not necessarily mean he has to have an immaterial body. This would be a false dichotomy; he can be in a state of not needing food and also have a material body.

Last, Harris notes that the primary purpose of Jesus’s appearances was “for his disciples to be assured that he was the same Jesus whom they knew and loved.”<sup>85</sup> This is true, but it does not explain everything. As I discussed above, Jesus also wants to demonstrate his materiality. Moreover, and importantly, his material body is intimately connected with his identity. Especially in Luke’s account, the author makes an extremely close identification with Jesus the person and his material form: “Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have” (Luke 24:39). Jesus’s identity is found in Jesus’s body. Harris explains these physical appearances as instances of temporary physical manifestations “from heaven.” If this were so, I would find it difficult to believe that the evangelists would have Jesus insisting that such proof of his identity is found in his material body.<sup>86</sup> In fact, this may be the best reason to see the evangelists’ view of Jesus’s body as one that is primarily material: when Jesus presents himself, it is with explicit identification with his flesh. In light of these considerations, of the first two options the

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<sup>84</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 391.

<sup>85</sup> Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 391.

<sup>86</sup> Moreover, nothing in the text suggests that Jesus is appearing from heaven. See Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1183; Brian K. Donne, *Christ Ascended: A Study in the Significance of the Ascension of Jesus Christ in the New Testament* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1983), 8.

second view, that Jesus is primarily material, seems better.<sup>87</sup>

If so, how does this work? How can Jesus be basically material yet pass through walls? Of course, one can only speculate. Geisler, who rigorously insists on the physicality of Jesus's resurrected body, admits that Jesus can pass through walls and still maintain his material nature (material in the sense of being composed of atoms).<sup>88</sup> If Philip can transport supernaturally with his materiality unquestioned, the Gospel writers do not commit us to an immaterial or airy Jesus. Instead, they want their readers to believe in a resurrected Jesus who can be sensed by our natural faculties (see also 1 John 1:1).

### **Paul and the Materiality of Jesus's Risen Body**

Does this contradict Paul's teaching that "flesh and blood cannot inherit into the kingdom" (1 Cor 15:50)? When "flesh and bones" in Luke 24:39 is taken as synonymous with "flesh and blood," a potential contradiction appears. Interpreters such as Daniel Smith argue that Luke is familiar with Paul's conception of the resurrection and disagrees with Paul by affirming a non-spiritual, fleshly resurrection.<sup>89</sup>

However, Smith does not take into account the rhetorical strategy Paul is employing in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul adds the comment on flesh and blood primarily to draw a distinction between decaying and immortal bodies, not between material and immaterial ones. According to Martin, of the different groups of Corinth, some, whom he dubs the "Strong," believe that bodies are made of heavy, decaying stuff. Therefore, when a person dies, the body decays, but the soul lives on as a lighter material (like air or

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<sup>87</sup> This view also has the advantage of finding advocates in much of the early church, who were actively working against Gnosticism: e.g., Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.33.1.

<sup>88</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 42.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, "Seeing a Pneuma(tic Body)," 752-72.

fire).<sup>90</sup> The uneducated, whom Martin calls the “Weak,” on the other hand, would not have much of a problem with the idea of rejuvenated and immortal bodies. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is mediating between these two sets of beliefs. Therefore, while “flesh and blood” cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, bodies can through a process of transformation (vv. 50-53). A corruptible body of flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but a transformed, incorruptible body can.

Tertullian expresses this point thus: Paul says, “neither shall corruption...inherit corruption” (1 Cor 15:50), “This he says, not that you may take flesh and blood to be corruption, for they are themselves rather the subjects of corruption...But inasmuch as he had plainly said that the works of the flesh and blood could not obtain the kingdom of God...he deprived corruption itself...from all inheritance of incorruption.”<sup>91</sup> He continues that when Paul says “*this* perishable body...*this* mortal body” he is talking, concretely, about his own tangible body.<sup>92</sup> If the body can be both subject to corruption *and* incorruptibility, the body itself is not what Paul is talking about when he says, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”

We need not see Paul as teaching that the resurrection body is immaterial. Such bodies will be characterized by “glory” and will be “spiritual.” These two words, taken together, do not necessarily mean ethereal or imperceptible to natural or instrumental methods of detection. Instead, these words primarily have a moral orientation. If something is “spiritual” (πνευματικός) it is under the control of the spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit or the spirit of the person.<sup>93</sup> If something is “of glory” it is marked for moral perfection, not necessarily for visible brilliance.

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<sup>90</sup> Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 117-20.

<sup>91</sup> Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 51, trans. Peter Holmes in *ANF*, vol. 3, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 584.

<sup>92</sup> Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 51.

<sup>93</sup> Charles Gore, *The Body of Christ: An Enquiry into the Institution and Doctrine of Holy Communion* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney, 1909), 124-26; Augustine, *The City of God*, 12.21.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus exhibits extraordinary control over his resurrected body that is material and identified directly with him. Although he is able directly to control his body in apparently miraculous ways, his body is still material and tangible. How this works is a bit of mystery, but there is no real contradiction either within the Gospels or in comparison to the teachings of Paul.

## CHAPTER 4

### CHRIST THE HUMAN IN HEAVEN

When we expand our scope of inquiry beyond the Gospels, we see the NT connect Jesus's new spheres of authority in the following way: Jesus, as a human newly enabled by his resurrected body, can now sit at God's right hand and fulfill his own offices, the government of which extends to the world. I hope to demonstrate this point, first, by showing how, according to the NT writers and especially Paul, the resurrected body is capable of dwelling in heaven. Second, I will argue that the NT shows Jesus as a human, in heaven, performing his universal ministry at the right hand of God.

#### **The Resurrected Body Can Dwell in Heaven**

The NT shows us that, in spite of ancient views to the contrary,<sup>1</sup> an embodied human can dwell in heaven. To demonstrate this point, we must return to Paul's discussion on the nature of the resurrected body in 1 Corinthians 15. At first glance, it seems that Paul articulates precisely the opposite view: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 50). Why would he say that in light of the traditions about Jesus's appearances?

As mentioned above, there was no consensus on the nature (or existence) of the resurrection among Jews in the first century.<sup>2</sup> Following Martin's categories, on the subject of earthly bodies in the celestial stratum, the "Strong" (that is, the philosophically sophisticated), would have taken issue with the idea of a body inhabiting heaven. Bodies

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief picture of competing cosmologies in the Greek milieu, see David J. Furley, *The Greek Cosmologists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 108.

are composed of earthy stuff, but heaven, being the higher plane, consists only of airy matter such as fire. Because these two realms are composed of different elements, an object in one cannot exist in the other. As Plutarch puts it, “to mix heaven and earth is stupid.”<sup>3</sup> He continues:

Let us therefore take the safe course and grant, with Pindar, that “Our bodies all must follow death’s supreme behest, but something living still survives, an image of life, for this alone comes from the gods.” Yes, it comes from them, and to them it returns, not with its body, but only when it is most completely separated and set free from the body, and becomes altogether pure, fleshless, and undefiled. For “a dry soul is best,” according to Heraclitus, and it flies from the body as lightning flashes from a cloud. But the soul which is contaminated with body, and surfeited with body, like a damp and heavy exhalation, is slow to release itself and slow to rise towards its source. We must not, therefore, violate nature by sending the bodies of good men with their souls to heaven.<sup>4</sup>

The body is too profane for heaven. Only the purest aspects of humanity (i.e., the soul) can reach it.<sup>5</sup> The heavier or earthier the material is, the lower its status; and the airier the better.<sup>6</sup>

Asher has shown that Paul, in response to these views, acknowledges (“accommodates”) such a cosmological polarity in the philosophical setting of the Corinthians. He argues that the resurrection, and the subsequent habitation of resurrection bodies in heaven, is possible because it involves a certain kind of change.<sup>7</sup> Paul writes:

Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the

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<sup>3</sup> Οὐρανῶ δὲ μιγνύειν γῆν ἀβέλτερον, *Romulus*, 28.6.

<sup>4</sup> *Romulus*, 28.6-8; Pindar *Fragment* 131, in *Plutarch Lives*, vol. 1, *Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 46 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914); Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 113.

<sup>5</sup> For other examples of the Greek philosophical class and their condescension at the idea of a bodily resurrection, see Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 108-17

<sup>6</sup> Hence the heavenly objects (e.g., stars) were made of fire or ether.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey R. Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15: A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection*, *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen Zur Theologie* 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 3, 169-72. Cf. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 32-33 (although Endberg-Pedersen believes that the resurrection body is changed to one composed of πνεῦμα).

trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible body<sup>8</sup> must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body must be clothed with immortality (vv. 51-53).

In Asher's reading, Paul assents that the standard human body ("flesh and blood") cannot mix with heaven (v. 50), but he solves this problem with the concept of changed bodies, now "clothed with incorruptibility...immortality." According to this reading, Paul did not believe that the body was discarded, but "clothed" in (that is, changed to) something that enables the body to inhabit heaven.

This conclusion maps perfectly well with what we have found so far in our study. Jesus has a new resurrected body with new capabilities. His ability to walk through walls and disappear illustrates a new kind of humanity not so easily bound by space and not hindered by objects within space. This allows him, fully in his humanity, to be taken up to the right hand of God, to the heavenly realm. He has "changed." His body becomes one that is "raised in incorruption...glory...power," and is "spiritual" (1 Cor 15:42-44). In this way, Christ, in the flesh, sits at God's right hand to perform his ministerial offices. I will now examine some texts outside of the Gospels that help connect these ideas to Jesus.

### **"The Man Christ Jesus" Is in Heaven**

Subsequent to Jesus's ascension, he sits at the right hand of God. The following texts suggest that it is Christ's human nature (in addition to, arguably, his divine nature) that is in this place of honor. During his "session" Christ administers his saving work as mediator to all the world. Consider the following verses, some of which have already been discussed, on the session of Christ at the right hand of God, and note how Jesus's human nature is closely associated with the one identified as being present in heaven with God.

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<sup>8</sup> Although *σῶμα* is not in the text, CSB is correct to include "body" here, as that is most likely the idea. Tertullian writes, "When he says, '*this corruptible*' and '*this mortal*,' he utters the words while touching the surface of his own body. He certainly could not have pronounced these phrases except in reference to an object which was palpable and apparent." Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 51, trans. Peter Holmes in *ANF*, vol. 3, 585. Also see Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology & Self in the Apostle Paul*, 32.

First, in Matthew 26:64 (=Mark 14:62), Jesus says, “I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Whatever else “Son of Man” denotes, we should not forget its basic meaning: *a human being*.<sup>9</sup> Matthew’s Jesus also connects this to the universality of his work: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (24:30). Second, Acts 2:36 reads, “God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this. Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God...” The same person who was raised now is at the right hand of God. The one who was raised must have been the one who died, and someone who died must have been human. Moreover, as was noted above, Peter’s sermon at Pentecost describes Jesus’s ministry post-ascension as worldwide (e.g., 2:17). Third, in Ephesians 1:20-21, Paul writes: “He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens—far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given.” Again, Christ’s humanity is demonstrated in this text by the continuity between his death and exaltation, and his authority is, yet again, universal.

Fourth, and perhaps most significantly, 1 Timothy 2:5-6 reads, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind [*ἀνθρώπων*], the man [*ἄνθρωπος*] Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.” The word *ἄνθρωπος* here means, precisely, a human as opposed to a god.<sup>10</sup> Jesus, the man, mediates between God and all people, presumably at God’s right hand.

Finally, Paul sees a connection between Christ’s exaltation with his universal administration of salvation: “It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our

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<sup>9</sup> E.g., Num 23:19; Job 25:6; Ps 144:3; Ezek 2:1; 3:1, and many other verses.

<sup>10</sup> Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 141.

justification” (Rom 4:24-25). This is a justification that is extended to everyone who believes, Jew or Gentile (Rom 1:16; cf. 5:10; 1 Pet 1:3).

### Conclusion

According to the NT writers, transformed, resurrected, incorruptible human bodies are capable of entering the heavenlies. This is seen first and foremost in Jesus, who was raised from the dead, taken up to heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God, all in his humanity. Dawson phrases it well: “Clad now in a priestly garment of glorified flesh, humanity in its fullest, restored unto eternal life, Jesus ascended into the Most Holy Place...Jesus Christ ascending passes through the heavens and goes where no flesh has gone before: into the other realm, into the immediate presence of God.”<sup>11</sup> According to Tertullian, Jesus was “clad with a garment down to the foot” in his glorified body after his resurrection, thereby able to administer his priestly duties.<sup>12</sup> Louis Berkhof summarizes: “We cannot say that any religious or ethical change took place in Him; but He was endowed with new qualities perfectly adjusted to His future heavenly environment.”<sup>13</sup> This adjustment to his qualities—such as his supernatural kineticism—enabled Christ, in his humanity, to ascend to heaven and exercise his new universal authority.

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<sup>11</sup> Gerrit Scott Dawson, *Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ’s Continuing Incarnation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 123-24.

<sup>12</sup> Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, 14, trans. Sydney Thelwall in *ANF*, vol. 3, 173; see also *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 478.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In this study, I have contended that Jesus, in his humanity, gains authority after and because of the resurrection in two ways. First, his authority expands to become universal in scope, now including both heaven and earth (Matt 28:18; cf. 9:6). Second, his authority—that is, his control—over his body changes. Although he is still identified with his tangible, material body, he can now also move in apparently supernatural ways, such as walking through walls (Luke 24:36; John 20:19) and suddenly disappearing (Luke 24:31). His body is primarily material, made of “flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39), but because of his miraculous movements, at times he appears to be immaterial. If the relationship between these two features seems to be at odds, Luke does not find them as mutually exclusive. Moreover, the presentation of Jesus in the Gospels does not contradict Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:50 (“flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God”), for Paul is describing the corruptibility of bodies, not the bodies themselves. Finally, these two ways in which Jesus gains authority converge at the right hand of God. The man Christ Jesus, newly enabled by his resurrected body to inhabit heaven, exercises his universal authority in God’s direct presence by administering salvation to all peoples in all nations.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE NEW AUTHORITY OF THE RESURRECTED JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

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Following the evangelists' emphases in characterizing Jesus, a study of all four resurrection accounts reveals two major themes, namely, that Jesus is (1) the same person as before and (2) one with great and expanded authority. This thesis will focus on the latter point and seek to answer in what ways his authority is new. I will argue that the Risen Jesus's authority is new (1) in that it is now "in heaven" as well as "on earth" (Matt 28:18; cf. Matt 9:6)—that is, that it is universal and global—and (2) in that he exercises new control over his body. After considering some of the implications for the body of Jesus, I will argue that these two points are related: Jesus's universal authority which he exercises in his humanity, in heaven, and after the ascension is enabled by his resurrected body and the extraordinary power he has over it.

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