

Mohammed's tomb is located in Medina, Saudi Arabia; Buddha's body was cremated and ashes were distributed to his followers; Confucius' cemetery is in Qufu in Shandong province, China. What do these graves/tombs of famous religious leaders/philosophers have in common? The remains of the deceased are all there.

But the Garden Tomb of Jesus is famous because it is empty. The uniqueness of Christianity is the worship and commitment of God's people to a Risen Jesus/Leader; and the rise and fall, the crucible of Christianity depends on the authenticity of the resurrection of one God-Man, Jesus Christ.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices went to anoint Jesus' body, they couldn't find Jesus' body. "Don't be alarmed," a young man dressed in white said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. **He has risen! He is not here.** See the place where they laid him." (Mk. 16:6)

On Good Friday:

¹ Regarding Satan/the Devil, John says in 8:44, "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

- The disciples and close associates of Jesus scattered and acted as if they were the living dead.
- Satan danced to the tunes of the hammer that pounded the nails into Jesus' hands and feet.¹

But on Easter Sunday, the disciples were transformed from a band of zombies to become a legion of truth at Pentecost, proclaiming the power and presence of the Risen Christ.

The physical appearances of the resurrected Jesus to the early followers changed everything and let's look at one pivotal appearance:

Jn. 20:19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**"²⁰... he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord."

But Paul writes Jesus' triumph over forces of darkness in Col. 2:15, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

The first message of the risen Jesus given to the band of disciples when he appeared to them in the upper room is a message of peace – ***Shalom*** – turning a common Jewish greeting into something loaded with significance for his followers!

It is equally significant to us today, especially when we are daily reminded by the media that we are constantly living in the midst of unrest and confusion, in the absence of peace in every arena of daily life!

The Resurrection of Jesus reclaims peace amidst turmoil and trumpets TWO life-giving messages

1. Resurrection-peace satisfies the deep longing for a better future.

Are you longing for a better future? Show a hand or Type “Yes” in the Chat.

The disciples were drowning in the downward spiral of FEAR fueled by a relentless sense of despair and hopelessness.

Death was staring at them, in the face, especially when the religious leaders bribed the guards to lie to the

governor and the story among the Jews that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus was being circulated!²

Like the disciples, especially in the past two years and now daily reports of wars and violence as well as reports of new Covid variants, we see and hear about death 24/7; many of us are threatened by death of various kinds, living under constant stress and anxiety of potential as well as actual loss of mind, body, and soul.

How many of you can relate to this threat and are living in fear and anxiety?

Of course, death is

- a stark and haunting reality
- and considered to be “the fundamental crime” that makes life ultimately futile.³

So if we don’t handle it well, death will

- haunt our mind,
- invade our imagination,
- terrorize our spirit,
- imprison our will,
- paralyze our day-to-day living.

² Cf. Matt. 28:11-15.

³ Richard N. Longenecker (Ed.), *Life in the Face of Death*, pp. 1, 3.

But Jesus' first message of peace – *shalom*, the wholeness of life – must bring immediate relief and remind the disciples what He had said to them earlier before His crucifixion:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (Jn. 14:27)

Jesus' resurrection-peace declares the “death of death,” restores confidence and hope.

We can handle bouts of illness, survive financial reversals, cope with disappointments, or endure unemployment, or overcome loss of a loved one, **so long as we are certain of a better tomorrow.**

We are constantly looking for something to hang on to, some solutions or answers to the questions about death.

In 2006, David Copperfield [66 yrs. old], the famous illusionist who made the Statue of Liberty vanish, purchased four tiny islands in the southern Bahamas he called Musha Cay. He paid \$50 million [= US\$127.5

⁴ <https://www.today.com/news/copperfield-says-he-s-found-fountain-youth-wbna14364107>

million in 2022]. He believes that one of the islands contains the fountain of youth.



Copperfield insists his archipelago also contains the legendary waters that bestow perpetual youth. "I've discovered a true phenomenon ... You can take dead leaves, they come in contact with the water, and they become full of life again ... Bugs or insects that are near death come in contact with the water, and they'll fly away. It's an amazing thing—very, very exciting."⁴

Copperfield spent an additional \$40 million to revamp the 11 islands he owns now and designed a luxury resort. The people who can afford to stay on the island's resort are expected to pay at least US\$50,000 a night for the stay.⁵



⁵ Read More: https://www.grunge.com/406439/the-truth-about-david-copperfields-bahamian-islands/?utm_campaign=clip.

The last I check, the 66 yrs. old Copperfield looks pretty good for his age but he doesn't look "forever 21" and, one day, he will not be around.

But "Jesus said ... '**I AM** the resurrection and the life. The one who **believes** in me will live, even though they die.'" (Jn. 11:25)

Jesus' message of resurrection-peace assures a better future and offers "an anchor of the soul"⁶ for **EVERYONE who believes** – that is, having that confidence and certainty that nothing fazes those who believe in Him, not just for the super rich and wealthy folks.

Death is not the final destination but a step toward living out afresh what we are created for, to unleash the infinite potential in God's terms.

If there is nothing worth dying for, then there's no reason to live because there's more beyond the grave!

Eternal life [cf. Hebrew: "life of the age"] is **not**

- just about going to heaven after you died,

- or the eternal existence of our immaterial/body-less souls,
- or the length of life⁷
- **but the depth of living out afresh what we are created for in the presence of God – NOW and in the coming new heaven and earth!!**

Good news: you don't need to pay US\$50,000/day to get it – it's **free gift** offered by Jesus to all who want to receive it **by faith**, that means,

- to believe in Jesus is to connect with Him,
- to reach out and receive His gift of everlasting life,
- to trust His promises and apply His word as you walk with Him moment by moment.

Show your hand or type "Yes" in the Chat, if you want this deep and full life – "abundant life" -'having Jesus be your protector and provider, leader and life coach?

If you have just indicated that you want to receive this free gift of a better future and lean into His enabling to live "more and better life than [you] ever dreamed

⁶ Cf. Heb. 6:19.

⁷ Cf. "It is not about the length of life but the depth of life." (Ralph Emerson)

of,”⁸ then follow along aloud or in your heart the following prayer:

Dear Jesus,

I thank you for offering this gift of peace that assures a better tomorrow, starting today, so I can live by faith instead of fear.

I believe that you rose from the dead, and in doing so, you conquered sin and death. I ask you to be my Lord, Leader, and Life-coach.

Give me confidence and courage to follow you all the days of my life.

In Christ’s name I pray, amen.

- 2. Resurrection-peace generates an exuberant joy because of a fresh start and releases power to re-engage in life mission.***

Jn. 20:19 Jesus came and stood among them and said, ***“Peace be with you!”*** ²⁰... ***he showed them his hands and side.*** The disciples were ***overjoyed*** [“to experience ***God’s grace***”] when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, ***“Peace be with you!*** As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” ²² And with that ***he breathed on them*** and said, ***“Receive the Holy Spirit.”***

⁸ Jn. 10:10 (MSG)

⁹ Cf. <https://brenebrown.com/articles/2013/01/15/shame-v-guilt/>

The disciples were like “freedom fighters” turned deserters who were totally demoralized, dejected, and disgraced because of their cowardice, betrayal, and denial.

- They were stricken with ***guilt [holding something we’ve done or failed to do]***,
- and drowning in ***shame [the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging]***.⁹

I wonder if some of you feel the same way as the disciples?

When Jesus appears to them, the first questions that probably generated by fear would be, “How can I face Jesus? What will be His retribution?”

The “show and tell” of his hands and side proves that He’s not a phantom or a ghost, but the same Jesus with the same body that was executed on the cross.

This word of peace relieves their anguish souls, lifts their down casted spirits, re-establishes a tender and caring relationship.

See also Ch. 8 “Places We Go When We Fall Short, in her latest book, *Atlas of the Heart*, (pp. 132ff).

There's no word of condemnation or punishment from the risen Lord. Instead, Jesus' repeated message of peace emphasizes

- His *compassion* and *care* for the restoration/ *wholesome life* of the disciples
- and communicates *grace* [*God giving us something we do not deserve*] and *mercy* [*God not giving us what we do deserve*].

It underscores His **suffering love and mercy that brings spiritual healing and newness of life** for the whole world – an emblem of **acceptance, forgiveness, spiritual renewal, and cosmic restoration.**

When their hope was crushed and their leader crucified,

- they abandoned their cause and mission,
- they lost their purpose of living,
- they were in a rut,
- they were dying inside and out!

Jesus' resurrection presents second chances – a NEW beginning for anyone who floundered, fell and failed!

The good news of resurrection-peace is this:

Easter is the New Year's Day of the soul.

A.B. Simpson

Listen carefully, again, to the text:

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he ***breathed on them*** and said, '***Receive the Holy Spirit.***'" (Jn. 20:21-22)

Does this remind you of another story in the bible?

Yes, it's the story of creation:

"Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and ***breathed into his nostrils the breath of life***, and the man became ***a living being.***" (Gen. 2:7)

So when Jesus breathed on the disgraced and demoralized disciples who received the Holy Spirit, we have here **a new creation** story.

With the infusion of the Spirit, Jesus re-affirms their original calling or vocation as image-bearers conforming to the image of the risen Christ.

And He sends them into the world to fulfill their life mission as originally intended by God to be peace-

makers and hope-dealers by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Today, in the same way, the Spirit of God enables us to experience God's acceptance and forgiveness, brings spiritual renewal, and enables us to align our life with God's will and purpose.

Are you stuck in the mud because of what you have or have not done? Laden with guilt and covered in shame because of sins of commission and/or omission, conscious disobedience and/or selective obedience, open defiance and/or subtle avoidance?

Jesus' resurrection-peace aims to bring wholeness and healing, offers a fresh start, and enables you to "get back on track" to align your life with His purpose.

Do you want to get back on track and pursue your life calling? Make these words of King David be your prayer today (Ps. 51:10-13):

¹⁰ *Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

¹¹ *Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

¹⁰ N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*, p. 116.

¹³ *Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.*

As N.T. Wright has pointed out: "When Jesus rose again God's whole new creation emerged from the tomb, introducing a world full of new potential and possibility ... Indeed, precisely because part of that possibility is for human beings themselves to be revived and renewed, the resurrection of Jesus doesn't leave us as passive, helpless spectators ... We find ourselves ... commissioned to go and make new creation happen in the world."¹⁰



What we do in life echoes in eternity.

Maximus

Maximus' words are only partial truth because if we have the resurrection-peace that Jesus offers, we are sharing in His resurrection life and already living in the eternal now.