

Sunday, April 26, 2026 Fourth Sunday of Easter Sermon

“The Lord Has Truly Risen” Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Ezekiel 1:10–11, 26–28; Luke 24:36–49

① **【God the Christ, who appeared to Ezekiel】**

Ezekiel saw a vision of God while in the land of Babylon. It was the image of God being carried by the archangels, the cherubim. The first mention of cherubim appears in Genesis 3. “So he drove the man out of the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. And he placed cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:24) Although they appear on one of the very first pages of the Bible, most people do not know what cherubim are. Furthermore, there was a pair of cherubim figures on top of the Ark of the Covenant, which was placed in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle, and cherubim were also embroidered on the curtain. In the Book of Isaiah, they appear when Isaiah sees God seated on the throne in the temple. “Above him were seraphim; each had six wings: With two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.” (Isaiah 6:2) Reading the Bible, we learn that both cherubim and seraphim are angels who are close to God. The Book of Ezekiel describes them in greater detail: cherubim are angels with four faces and four wings, resembling burning flames, and covered with many eyes. This is also mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

“The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like a young bull, the third had a human face, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings, and they were covered with eyes all around and within. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’ (Revelation 4:6–8) Since He is “to come,” we can see that the One seated on the throne is Christ. Later, in Christian tradition, these four faces came to be interpreted as symbolizing the four Gospels. It is said that Matthew represents the lion (Christ the King), Mark the man (the humanity of Jesus), Luke the ox (the sacrifice of Christ), and John the eagle (the divinity of Jesus).

The cherubim, who were in the Holy of Holies—a place visible only to the high priest and a select few priests—have now appeared in Babylon, a pagan land. This was a testimony that God is not confined to the Holy of Holies alone, but that the entire world, this created universe, is God’s Holy of Holies. This world was created by God the Christ. God’s divinity, power, and wisdom are revealed in all things in this world. (Romans 1:20) This world is a means for us to commune with God. In any case, God told Ezekiel that even this pagan land, Babylon, is His sanctuary; that He is here, and that He is still working and reigning here. How amazing is that! When you step outside the church, the streets you walk on and the workplace where you labor—all of it is God’s Holy of Holies. The whole earth is God’s sanctuary. God is active and is right beside you.

In times past, Christ appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush, to Isaiah in the temple as a figure resembling the Son of Man clothed in a robe, to Ezekiel as one carried by the archangels, and to the apostles as Jesus Christ in the flesh. And He takes delight in being carried not by the archangel Cherubim, but by the four Gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Now, man has become the one who carries God. The almighty Christ, whom even angels feared to look upon or touch, is seen with human eyes, touched by human hands, and carried by man. Man has been exalted above the angels. Not only that, but Christ has entered into us and become one with us. This is so that He may bestow divinity upon us and make us like Himself. I have become one who is not consumed by the fire of divinity, and I have become one who bears Christ. Oh, how awesome this is! How greatly man has been exalted! May we rightly fear and rightly love Christ.

② **Two Characteristics of the Resurrected Body**

Now, today's passage continues the story of Christ's resurrection and His appearance to the disciples. As Cleopas and Luke returned from Emmaus to the church in Jerusalem and gathered to talk about how Jesus was alive, Jesus stood among them and greeted them. "While they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" (Verse 36) The disciples were terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. Then Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; it is I myself. Touch me and see; A ghost has neither flesh nor bones, but as you see, I have them." (verses 38–40) Jesus' resurrected body was not a ghost. It was not merely a spirit; it had a physical body that could be seen with the eyes, had hands and feet, and could be touched by hand. Furthermore, afterward, He asked, "Do you have anything here to eat?" (verse 41), and it is said that He ate baked fish, which is earthly food. This is a mysterious body. It is said to be like a spirit yet capable of being touched, and to eat the food of this world. What we can conclude is that He perfectly possessed both an earthly body and a heavenly body, as well as both human nature and divine nature. However, this is nothing to be surprised about; for those who truly believe in the "Incarnation"—that God became man—it is something that can be fully accepted. This means that Christ perfectly possesses both human nature and divine nature. Divine nature is free and infinite, bound by nothing, but human nature has its limitations.

● The 6th-century Church Father Maximus said, "Christ cuts like iron and burns like fire." When a sword is placed in fire, the iron turns red-hot, enabling it to perform two functions: cutting and burning. Through His divinity, Christ raises a young girl from the dead; through His humanity, He supports her and helps her rise. Through His divinity, Christ raises Lazarus from the dead; through His humanity, He weeps before the tomb. Here too, Christ passes through doors by

virtue of His divinity, is touched by people, and eats fish by virtue of His humanity. Moreover, this humanity is a humanity permeated by divinity. It appeared only once during His earthly life, when His form was transfigured on Mount Tabor. That deified body shone brighter than the sun and became pure white. Yet He immediately hid that glorious form from His disciples. It seems as though Christ deliberately concealed the radiance of His deified humanity.

Jesus appeared to His disciples in His resurrected form to show them the “glorious form” they themselves would one day receive, and to give them courage and hope as He sent them out to preach. I hold the hope that my own body will become like that of Jesus. This is what the holy apostles also teach: “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.” (Romans 8:29), “We are God’s children now, but what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he appears, we will be like him.” (1 John 3:2)

This world is filled with sorrow and suffering. This is because all people in this world are sinful. It is because of that sin that illness, disasters, war, hatred, and conflict arise. When I look within myself, I see that I am filled with old age, sickness, and sin, and I cannot free myself from them. Eventually, I will die. How tragic it would be if that were all there were to life! However, in the world to come, I will be free from sin; there will be no death, only eternal life; and I will become perfect, free from sickness and old age.

●Pastor Motokichiro Osaka writes about his visit to a Trappist monastery in Hokkaido. “Truly, their bodies exist in both this world and the next. The abbot and I discussed this. The abbot said that since people tell him his teeth are bad, if I were to say mine are bad too, he would likely receive stronger teeth in the next life. ...The monks sang heartily, and when I remarked on this, the abbot replied, ‘We will sing even more in heaven.’ In other words, whatever they speak of is grounded in that realm, not in this world. ...Behind their life in this world lies the next world, and they carry the life of that world into this one—this is their way of life, and I am gradually coming to realize that within this life lies an age-old archetype.”

All human beings are born into this world to be resurrected. However, we cannot be resurrected by our own strength alone. Only by being united with Christ—the God who came down to earth and became human, and who rose from the dead—can we be resurrected. The Gospel is not merely knowledge, nor is it simply a matter of believing in Christ; it is the experience of the immortal Christ taking tangible form within our dying selves. Christ enters into a person, deifying them and gradually transforming them into the very image of the Lord. This is the mystery of Christianity. I believe there is no greater joy or delight than partaking of this Body and Blood. My joy lies in being transformed into an immortal body. I wish to live out my life in this world with this hope.