



**SCRIPTURE:**

*"I am the resurrection and the life."* John 11:25

**MEDITATION:**

As a biologist, when Jesus says that he is the *life* in this passage, I feel like it's an invitation for me to engage scripture with my discipline, which happens to be the study of life and living organisms. If Jesus is life, *what is life, at least biologically?*

One of the first lectures I give in my intro biology classes is about characteristics that distinguish living organisms from nonliving things. The list includes things such as organization, energy, homeostasis, evolution, and reproduction. Essentially, living organisms are intricately organized from a molecular to a cellular level, can interact and respond to changes in their environment, and evolve and make more of themselves.

Not surprisingly, there are many organisms in nature that challenge our definition of life as we know it: viruses can reproduce but require a host; extremophiles can survive harsh conditions generally thought too hostile to support life such as temperatures above boiling and below freezing; and my personal favorite, chubby gummy bear microorganisms called tardigrades, which are virtually indestructible, have survived the vacuum of outer space, bombardment with deadly levels of radiation, and even decades without food or water.

We are also constantly discovering new species of organisms on our planet and even searching for life beyond Earth, both of which have the potential to challenge and broaden our current understanding of life.

I believe that Jesus embodies life in all of its biodiverse forms and expressions because he is the creator, giver, and sustainer of everything. Even life of a different kind that we have yet to discover, perhaps on our planet or beyond. And a type of life we may never understand until we experience it ourselves, the resurrected life.

Jesus entered the very fabric of life on Earth, in a human body that was animated with life just like our own in what has been called a "deep incarnation." Theologian [Neils Henrik Gregersen](#) defines deep incarnation thus: "The view that God's own Word (*logos*) and Wisdom (*sophia*) was made ordinary flesh in Jesus Christ in such a capacious manner that God, by assuming the particular

life story of Jesus the Jew from Nazareth, also conjoined the material conditions of all creaturely existence ('flesh'), shared and ennobled the fate of all biological life forms ('grass' and 'lilies'), and experienced the pains of sensitive creatures ('sparrows' and 'foxes') from within. Deep incarnation thus presupposes a radical embodiment of the Son of God that reaches into the roots (radices) of material and biological existence as well as into the darker aspects of creation, from the breaking down of material structures to animal and human suffering."

In other words, Jesus became human in a deeply intimate biological way that was interconnected to all life. He didn't just enter Earth in a vacuum, he became a part of it, the ecosystems, the web of life, and our shared human history. He became a part of the good parts of life, and even the darker broken parts. Given the beautiful metaphor of depth in the incarnation, a corresponding "deep resurrection" has been discussed by scholars. "Deep resurrection" alludes to the redemption of not only humans, but all of creation: ["The whole natural world, all of matter in its endless permutations, will not be left behind or rejected but will likewise be transfigured by the resurrecting action of the Creator Spirit."](#)

In our broken world, I find hope in the biology and theology of life, when I consider the depth at which Christ entered our world and the depth to which he will redeem it. How deep is his love for us that he became one of us and gave his life for us and all of creation because to him we were worth saving. May we live our lives comforted by the vastness and depth of his love, and live out the gift of life he has given us with grace and gratitude.

#### **REFLECTION:**

- Have you ever heard of "deep incarnation" or deep resurrection? What does the metaphor and meaning of depth add to your understanding of these events?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? Does science help you unpack this?
- I also offer a recording of a faith and science worship song I wrote called ["To Become Human."](#) It explores the biology and theology of what it means to be human and puts this in conversation with the incarnation. Consider listening to it and reflecting on the lyrics as a part of this devotional.

#### **PRAYER:**

Thank you for coming down to the earth you created and taking on human form in the person of Jesus. Thank you for laying down your life for all creation because you thought that we were worth saving. Thank you for coming to serve and not be served. And thank you for the miracle and hope of the resurrection we have in you. Let us never forget that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is alive and well in us. In Jesus name, Amen.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Ciara Reyes-Ton is a biologist, science writer, and editor who is passionate about science communication to faith communities. She has a PhD in cell and molecular biology from the University of Michigan. She has served as Managing Editor for the American Scientific Affiliation's e-zine [God and Nature](#), and previously taught biology at Belmont University and Nashville State Community College. She is currently Digital Content Editor for BioLogos and an adjunct professor at Lipscomb University. Outside science, she enjoys singing as part of her band [Mount Carmell](#) and drinking coffee. She recently released a new single "[To Become Human](#)," a song that explores the biology and theology of what it means to be human. She is also the author of [Look Closely](#), a science and faith devotional that explores the life of Christ by bringing scripture in conversation with science, from water walking lizards to dividing cells and resurrecting corals.