



Resurrection (Part 1): I Want A New Body

1 Corinthians 15

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Do you ever wake up in the morning and wish you could trade your body in on a newer model? I know that some reading this suffer daily with unimaginable pain and discomfort that would make anything I experience look like a paper cut by comparison, but allow me to indulge in a *little* self pity.

My body is fighting a battle it is destined to lose. Some mornings I wake up with a “trick knee,” likely a remnant of a bad bicycle accident I was involved in as a teenager that nearly took my life. It hurts to walk. Climbing the stairs brings an aching discomfort with every step. A couple doses of Ibuprophen and I make it through the day just fine. The next morning, the pain is gone. It comes and goes like the wind.

Last November I finally got my first pair of glasses. For 30 years I had perfect vision. I saw things with crystal clarity at any distance. Then I started to get frustrated that they weren't printing the road signs as clearly and legibly as they used to.

At first, I attributed the blurriness to dry eyes brought on by my summer allergies. That brings me to another frustration: why all of a sudden am I so allergic to pollen? I used to work in the hayfields as a kid and smell flowers. Now I squirt stuff up my nose every morning just to get by and still I avoid a close brush with a flower like Mike Tyson avoids a spelling bee.

I walk on a treadmill a couple times a week, work outside, and ride my bike, to stay in shape. I eat vitamins to stay healthy. Yet I know that I am fighting a battle I am destined to lose. There is nothing I can do to keep this body from the grave. The grave has an

insatiable appetite that ultimately consumes us all.

If our hope was in Christ in this life only, we would be of all men most to be pitied. **(1 Cor. 15:19)** We have a future beyond the grave. It is a glorious future. It is a future in our bodies!

Why This Topic

I decided to write this series of articles in response to a friend who asked me a question about the future resurrection and what heaven will be like. There are probably many reading this who have wondered, “What will eventually happen with my body? Will I get a new body, or will I be in heaven as a ‘spirit essence?’ What will that body be like? Does everyone get a new body, or just believers?” I hope to answer those questions and many more in this series of three articles on the subject of *Resurrection*.

In this article I am going to focus on the general promise in Scripture to the righteous of resurrection unto life and the form it will take.¹

In the next column we will turn our attention to the resurrection to damnation and what that will look like for those who reject God's gracious offer of salvation in Christ.

In part 3 of this series we will look at the resurrection of the cosmos and what is meant by the promise of a

¹ It is not my intention to discuss in detail the timing of these events, but instead to focus on the nature of these events. For more information on my eschatological views of when these Resurrections take place, see our doctrinal statement titled “**We Believe: The Doctrinal Statement of Kootenai Community Church**” available online at www.kootenaichurch.org.

new Heaven and a new earth.

With all that is given to us in Scripture on these subjects, it is a wonder that we don't spend more time thinking on these things!

The Christian View of the Body

Dualism was a basic tenet of much of ancient Greek philosophy. Dualism considered everything spiritual to be intrinsically and inherently good while everything physical was intrinsically and inherently evil.

To anyone who held to a dualistic worldview, the idea of spending eternity in a resurrected body was repugnant. For the dualist, the very reason for going to the afterlife was to escape all things physical and to be caught up in the essence of spirit. They viewed the body as a tomb, a corpse to which their spirits were shackled. The body was the last thing they wanted to take along to the afterlife.² Thus the teaching on the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was met by the Greeks with scoffing and disbelief (**Acts 17:32; 26:8, 23-24**).

Christianity does not view the body or physical matter as inherently evil. As Hank Hanegraaff writes in *Resurrection*, “Only in a biblical worldview do we become greater after death than we were before. Only in Christianity are our lowly bodies transformed into glorious, resurrected bodies, like unto Christ's resurrected body.”³

The Bible does not teach that anything physical is intrinsically evil. God is the one who created this physical world all things in it. When He finished His creation, He described it as “very good.” (**Genesis 1:31**)

Our bodies are an indispensable part of our humanity. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and their bodies were uniquely designed to give expression to that image (even though God Himself does not have a body). Man was created with both a material essence (body) and an immaterial essence

(soul/spirit). We are united to our bodies in such a way that Paul described being absent from the body as being “naked.” (**2 Cor. 5:3**) Upon our death, we shall certainly “lay aside this earthly dwelling” (**2 Peter 1:12-14**), and shall continue for a time absent from our bodies. God did not create us to live forever as a disembodied spirit being, but as a physical creature. Therefore, we can confidently expect that God will redeem our entire being, including our body. Salvation does not bring deliverance from our body, but it guarantees the resurrection and transformation of our body.

Does the Bible Promise a Bodily Resurrection?

Unequivocally, yes! The sheer volume of the Biblical revelation that answers this question prohibits me from commenting on every reference. I want you simply read over the following Biblical citations taking note of what I have put in italics for emphasis.

Job 19:25-27, “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even *after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!*” That is one of the most amazing statements in all of the Old Testament. Job believed that although his skin would be destroyed in the grave, at some time in the future, he would stand in his flesh on this earth and see (with physical eyes) his Redeemer!

David, speaking prophetically of the Messiah, expressed his hope in a God who raises the dead in **Psalm 16:9-11**, “Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; *My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*”

Listen to the bold promise of **Isaiah 26:19**, “*Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.*”

2 1 Corinthians, MacArthur, John F., Jr (Moody Press, 1984), pg 408.

This is why ancient mystery religions incorporated so much drunkenness, mind altering drugs, orgies, and altered states of consciousness into their “worship.” It was an attempt to exit the body and commune with the divine. They thought that only by being freed from the physical could man truly touch the “spiritual.”

3 *Resurrection*, Hanegraaff, Hank, (Word Publishing, 2000), pg. 66.

Job, the psalmists, and the prophets confidently expected God to eventually deliver them from the grave that they might stand in their flesh and see their Redeemer.

Beyond just those general promises of resurrection, the Old Testament promised that there would be a resurrection of both the righteous **and the wicked**. We see this in **Daniel 12:2**, “**Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.**”

Now on to the New Testament! Jesus promised in **John 5:28-29** that some day “**all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**” Further, in **John 6:39-40, 44**, Jesus promised that He would raise up on the last day all that the Father had given to Him. That is the hope of all who have believed on Him who called Himself the “**Resurrection and the Life**” (**John 11:25-26**) that “**even if we die, we will live.**”

It is for this “**hope and the resurrection of the dead**” that Paul was on trial in the closing chapters of Acts (**23:6; 24:15, 21; 25:19; 26:8, 23**). In fact Paul affirmed that he had confidence “**that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked**” (**Acts 24:15**).

This resurrection of the righteous is described by Paul in **Romans 8:11**, “**But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**”

In **2 Corinthians 4:14** Paul says we know “**that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.**”

Philippians 3:20-21, “**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.**”

I could multiply verses and continue for two more

pages, but I must stop for the sake of space and turn our attention to two very important questions.⁴

Two Good Questions

In correcting the Corinthian Christians misunderstandings regarding the doctrine of the resurrection, Paul answers two questions that he anticipates being raised by his readers in **1 Cor. 15:35-56**. I don't have space to quote the entire passage so I would encourage you to read it along with this article.

First, how are the dead raised? How could God possibly reassemble the bodies of everyone who has died throughout the ages of history? What about those who were burned, eaten, lost at sea? **Second, with what kind of body do they come?** When the dead rise again, what will the body be like?

The first question is a fair question, but one that betrays a lack of appreciation for the power and wisdom of God. The second question is one prompted by our curiosity. What will my resurrection body be like? Will it be like my current body? If so, how?

To answer these two questions, Paul gives an illustration from the plant world to show the similarity between the planting of a seed to produce a plant, and the dying of our natural bodies to produce our glorious resurrected body. **1 Cor. 15:36-38**, “**That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.**”

Notice three significant points in the analogy offered. **First, when you plant a seed, it dies.** It actually decomposes as a seed in the ground. It ceases to exist in its original form before coming to life in its final and more glorious form - the plant.

Second, there is a difference between the seed that is planted and the crop that results. That which is sown is different from that which grows. The corn seed looks *nothing* like the plant that comes from it. In fact, there is a radical difference between the seed

⁴ Read also **Psalm 17:15; 49:15; 71:20; Hosea 13:14.**

which is sown and the plant that grows.

Third, there is a continuity between the seed and the plant. In spite of the differences, there is a continuity that exists between the old and the new. A corn seed does not become a bean stock. A grain seed does not become a pea plant. The identity of the plant was and is contained in the seed!

So how can God possibly raise all the dead? It should pose no problem for us to believe that the same God who works so marvelously through this process in nature every day with plants can do the same with men.

What will the body be like? The resurrected body is much like the seed becoming a plant. The seed will die, disappear, and dissolve into the elements. When the resurrected body is brought forth by an act of God, it will be different from our current body as a plant is different from a seed, yet there will be a continuity. It will be **our body**.

How can it be a different body, yet have continuity with my current body? Think of it this way: there is continuity between your present body and the body you had at birth. Even though all of the cells that made up your body at birth have died off and been replaced, yet it is the same body. The body you have today is the same as the body you had back then. It is a different body, yet it is the same body. There is a difference, yet there is a continuity between the two. So shall it be in the resurrection.

What Will Our Resurrection Bodies Be Like?

Paul says in **Philippians 3:21** that Christ will “**transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.**” The body the redeemed receive in the resurrection will be fashioned after the body that Jesus received in His resurrection.

We can say that the resurrection body we will receive will be **demonstrably physical**. Jesus invited the disciples to examine His resurrection body (**John 20:27**). Jesus’ body was capable of being grabbed (**Matt. 28:9**). He was capable of eating food (**Luke 24:36-42**). It was a physical body. Every bit as physical as the body you now inhabit.

If someone had taken a picture of Jesus after His resurrection, the camera would have captured the image. Walking down the Emmaus road, His feet would have kicked up the dust. You could have patted him on the back and given Him a hug. It was that physical.

Do you realize that the eternal heaven will not be populated by disembodied spirits, but you and I in glorified physical bodies for all eternity? We will be able to shake hands with each other in heaven and feel each other’s grip!

Further, this question answered in **1 Corinthians 15:42-44** where Paul contrasts our present body with our heavenly bodies saying, “**So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.**”

Notice the four contrasts. First, it will be an **imperishable body**. For all eternity, you will enjoy a physical body free from any death, sickness, deterioration or decay. Some day this “perishable will put on the imperishable” and death will be swallowed up in victory (**1 Cor. 15:54**).

Second, it will be a **glorious body**. Today we have a ‘dishonorable’ body, a body racked by sin and unable to please God fully, our current bodies are characterized by dishonor. We will be resurrected in glory, a state in which our body will have no dishonor and will be fully honoring to the God who created us.

Third, it will be a **powerful body**. Our earthly body is sown in weakness, but raised in power. We are weak creatures. We are subject to injury, disease, and infection. Eventually, this weakness wins and the body dies. The resurrection body will be raised in power. We are not told what that power will entail, but it will be immense compared to what we are now capable of doing. Imagine serving God and working without ever getting tired; without any hint of weakness.

Fourth, it will be a **spiritual body**. It goes into the ground a natural body and is raised a spiritual body. Our natural body is dominated by natural desires, but our spiritual body will be Spirit dominated and sin free.

It will no longer be merely natural, but supernatural.

The body we wait for will be a supernatural, glorious, powerful, imperishable, physical body. For all of eternity we will dwell together in that wonderful glorious state.

Benjamin Franklin stated our hope well in the epitaph he wrote for himself. It is engraved on his tombstone in the cemetery of Christ's Church in Philadelphia: *The body of Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here food for worms. But the work will not be lost, for it will appear once more in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the Author.*

No more allergies, glasses, and aching knees! Until then, **“we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”** (Romans 8:23). Amen!

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