



Resurrection (Part 2): A Body In Hell

Acts 24:15

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Last month I focused on the general teaching in Scripture concerning the certainty of the resurrection, and particularly on the resurrection of believers to eternal life.¹ I trust that that brief survey of the teaching of Scripture has helped you to think more biblically about the centrality of the body in the Christian worldview and doctrine.

We should be reminded that our hope is not that we might be redeemed *from* our bodies, but that our bodies themselves would be redeemed and glorified in order that we might dwell in perfection, power, honor, and glory for all eternity. We were created with a body and to be absent from the body is to be “naked” (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Truly, we “groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). That is our confident expectation and hope.

Our bodies will be like Christ’s glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21), in which He was raised from the dead and in which He still dwells.

Heaven will not be a place populated by disembodied spirits, but a place in which we will stand in our flesh and see our Redeemer (Job 19:25-27).

But what about those in Hell? Do only Christians get a body? Are only believers resurrected? If the redeemed get bodies in which to dwell for all eternity, what is to come of the lost who are punished in eternal torment? Is Hell populated by disembodied spirits?

¹ Previous columns can be accessed at our website: www.kootenaichurch.org. It is not my intention in this series 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**” also available at our website.

The Righteous AND The Wicked

The Scriptures affirm that not only to believers receive a body in resurrection, but unbelievers are raised in a physical body as well. Paul spends a good deal of time describing the characteristics of the glorious body in 1 **Corinthians 15**. However, much less is revealed about the body given to the lost in which they will spend an eternity being punished for their sins. We can survey the Biblical data and draw some conclusions from it. Let’s begin with the Biblical texts from four sources.

First, **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.**”

Daniel doesn’t give us any information about the timing of these resurrections, but simply affirms that some will “awake” unto everlasting life and others to everlasting contempt. As we saw last month, the resurrection to life involves a body. Both the Old and New Testaments teach this.

The parallel structure of Daniels’ prophecy indicates that if the awakening to everlasting life is a physical resurrection of the body, then so also is the awakening to everlasting disgrace and contempt (i.e. punishment and destruction).

Based on the teaching of the Old Testament prophets, the Jews understood that God would resurrect both the righteous and the wicked in a body. Some would experience life, others judgment.

When we turn to the New Testament, we get an even clearer teaching on the subject.

Second, listen to Jesus’ own testimony in **John 5:25-**

29, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which 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."

What Jesus is speaking of is obviously a physical resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. All come forth from the grave at His command.

It is not Jesus' intent to indicate the chronology of these resurrections, but to instead insist on His own role in them. The Jews were seeking to kill Him for claiming to be God (5:18), and Jesus is answering by showing that He exercises all the prerogatives of Deity, even those of raising all the dead in their bodies and giving life to some and exercising judgment on others.

Jesus uses the same word (GK: *anastasis*, meaning resurrection of a body) for those who receive life and for those who receive judgment. If those who are judged are not resurrected in a body, then Jesus is speaking nonsense.

Third, we turn to Paul's affirmation in Acts 24:15 that he believed that "there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." Paul uses the same Greek word translated "resurrection" that Jesus used, *anastasis*, which refers to the resurrection of a body. We know that Paul believed in the resurrection to life in a glorified body (1 Cor. 15). Here we see that he affirms the same Old Testament teaching that there will also be a resurrection of the wicked. In other words, both the righteous and the wicked will have their bodies raised.

Fourth, the Apostle John reveals in the book of Revelation information regarding not only the nature, but also the timing of these resurrections.

Revelation 20 describes the events that precede the literal physical reign of Jesus Christ, the Son of David on earth for one thousand years (the Millennium). Prior to the establishment of that kingdom, the tribulation martyrs "those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand," (20:4), come to life and reign with Christ

for a thousand years. It is those who are blessed and holy who take part in this first resurrection; the resurrection to life.² Over them the "second death has no power."

John also describes a resurrection at the end of the thousand year reign in vv. 11-15. "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:11-15)

The "dead" in these verses are the unrighteous dead from all ages, whose resurrection is a part of universal Jewish and Christian belief (cf. Dan. 12:2).³ The fact that the people raised at this time experience the second death precludes any possibility that there are righteous people included in their number.

At this resurrection, the unredeemed dead receive their body, they are judged by Jesus as He promised in John 5:25-29, and are thrown into the lake of fire for eternal punishment.

Physical Suffering

Hell is a place of physical suffering. Hell is not a place with a "metaphorical fire" or just spiritual suffering. Jesus taught that the body would be thrown into Hell.

Matthew 5:29-30, "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is

2 This first resurrection takes place in three phases. First the rapture (resurrection) of the church (1 Thess. 4:16), the resurrection of the O.T. saints (Dan. 12:2), and the tribulation martyrs (Rev. 20:4-5). The result of all three of these phases is a resurrection to blessedness, holiness, and life. The bodily resurrection of OT saints takes place with the tribulation martyrs in Rev. 20:4 in order that they might enjoy the blessing of the kingdom promised to them.

3 *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary*, Thomas, Robert L. (Chicago: Moody Press), pg. 430-431.

better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into Hell." Yes, Jesus is using hyperbole to emphasize the seriousness of sin in our lives. However, it is no hyperbole to say that Hell involves punishment in a body, since elsewhere Jesus affirmed the resurrection of the body for the wicked (**John 5:25-29**) and since He taught elsewhere that we should "not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to **destroy both soul and body** in Hell." (**Matthew 10:28**)

C.H. Spurgeon rightly observed, "Since the body sins, it is only natural that the body should be punished. It would be unjust to punish the soul and not the body, for the body has had as much to do with sin as ever the soul has had."⁴

We were created as physical creatures to exist as physical creatures. Our bodies are an essential part of our humanity. We will dwell forever in a body, either in blessedness or punishment.

What About the Body for the Wicked

We know that the body received by the redeemed is honorable, imperishable, glorious, and powerful, but what can we conclude about the bodies in which the lost will suffer the "second death" in the lake of fire?

First, we know that it will be a **physical** body. If it does not have physicality, then Scripture is nonsensical in calling it a "resurrection" or referring to it as a "body" that goes to Hell.

Second, it will be an **eternal** body. If Hell is eternal and the punishment of the wicked is eternal, then the body in which the wicked are punished will be an eternal body. The worm does not die and the fire is not quenched because both have an eternal source of fuel, the body in torment (**Mark 9:43-48**). Although, the body suffers in a lake of fire, the fire is never quenched and never devours the body. Although the body is burned, it is never consumed in the flames.

Third, it will be a body **fit for eternal punishment**. Just as the glorious body of the redeemed will be fit for the blessedness of everlasting joy and bliss, so the body of

⁴ From a sermon titled "The Resurrection of the Dead" on **Acts 24:15** (<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0066.htm>).

the lost will be a body perfectly fit for eternal torment.

As *Spurgeon* powerfully described it, "That same body which is now standing in the aisle, or sitting in the pew, if thou diest without Christ, shall burn for ever in the flames of Hell. It is not fancy of man, but a truth that thy actual flesh and blood, and those very bones shall suffer: 'thy whole body shall be cast into Hell.'⁵

Abandon Hope, All Ye Who Enter Here

Have you ever paused to consider what having an *unredeemed* body will be like for those in Hell? When it comes to the imagination and eloquence in describing such a reality, I can do nothing better than to quote the prince of preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon which I do here at length:

"As I have remarked, wherever Christ speaks of Hell and of the lost state of the wicked, He always speaks of their bodies; you scarcely find Him saying anything about their souls. He says, "Where their worm dieth not," which is a figure of physical suffering - the worm torturing for ever the inmost heart, like a cancer within the very soul. He speaks of the "fire that never shall be quenched."

Now, do not begin telling me that this is metaphorical fire: who cares for that? If a man were to threaten to give me a metaphorical blow on the head, I should care very little about it; he would be welcome to give me as many as he pleased. And what say the wicked? "We do not care about metaphorical fires."

But they are real, sir - yes, as real as yourself. There is a real fire in Hell, as truly as you have now a real body - a fire exactly like that which we have on earth in everything except this - that it will not consume, though it will torture you. You have seen the asbestos lying in the fire red hot, but when you take it out it is unconsumed. So your body will be prepared by God in such a way that it will burn for ever without being consumed; it will lie, not as you consider, in a metaphorical fire, but in actual flame.

Did our Savior mean fictions when He said He would cast body and soul into Hell? What should there be a pit for if there were no bodies? Why fire, why chains, if there were to be no bodies? Can fire touch the soul? Can pits shut in spirits? Can chains fetter souls? No; pits and fire and chains are for bodies, and bodies shall be there. Thou wilt sleep in the dust a little while. When thou diest thy

⁵ Ibid.

soul will be tormented alone - that will be a Hell for it - but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin Hells, body and soul shall be together, each brimful of pain, thy soul sweating in its inmost pore drops of blood, and thy body from head to foot suffused with agony; conscience, judgment, memory, all tortured, but more - thy head tormented with racking pains, thine eyes starting from their sockets with sights of blood and woe; thine ears tormented with "Sullen moans and hollow groans. And shrieks of tortured ghosts."

Thine heart beating high with fever; thy pulse rattling at an enormous rate in agony; thy limbs crackling like the martyrs in the fire, and yet unburnt; thyself, put in a vessel of hot oil, pained, yet coming out undestroyed; all thy veins becoming a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on; every nerve a string on which the devil shall ever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament; thy soul for ever and ever aching, and thy body palpitating in unison with thy soul.

Fictions, sir! Again, I say, they are no fictions, and as God liveth, but solid, stern truth. If God be true, and this Bible be true, what I have said is the truth, and you will find it one day to be so.

But now I must have a little reasoning with the ungodly on one or two points. First, I will reason with such of you as are very proud of your comely bodies, and array yourselves in goodly ornaments, and make yourselves glorious in your apparel. There are some of you who have no time for prayer, but you have time enough for your toilet; you have no time for the prayer-meeting, but you have time enough to be brushing your hair to all eternity; you have no time to bend your knee, but plenty of time to make yourselves look smart and grand. Ah! fine lady, thou who takest care of thy goodly fashioned face, remember what was said by one of old when he held up the skull: "Tell her, though she paint herself an inch thick, To this complexion she must come at last."

And something more than that: that fair face shall be scarred with the claws of fiends, and that fine body shall be only the medium for torment. Ah! dress thyself proud gentleman for the worm; anoint thyself for the crawling creatures of the grave; and worse, come thou to Hell with powdered hair—a gentleman in Hell; come thou down to the pit in goodly apparel; . . .

Again, hear me when I say to you who are gratifying your lusts - do you know that those bodies, the lusts of which you gratify here, will be in Hell, and that you will

have the same lusts in Hell that you have here? The debauchee hastes to indulge his body in what he desires - can he do that in Hell? Can he find a place there where he shall gratify his lust and find indulgence for his foul desire? The drunkard here can pour down his throat the intoxicating and deadly draught; but where will he find the liquor to drink in Hell, when his drunkenness will be as hot upon him as it is here! Ay, where will he find so much as a drop of water to cool his parched tongue? The man who loves gluttony here will be a glutton there; but where will be the food to satisfy him, when he may hold his finger up and see the loaves go away from him, and the fruits refuse his grasp. Oh! to have your passions and yet not to satisfy them! To shut a drunkard up in his cell, and give him nothing to drink! He would dash himself against the wall to get the liquor, but there is none for him. What wilt thou do in Hell, O drunkard, with that thirst in thy throat, and having nought but flames to swallow, which increase thy woe? And what wilt thou do, O rake, when still thou wouldst be seducing others, but there are none with whom thou canst sin? Do I speak plainly? Did not Christ do so? If men will sin, they shall find men who are not ashamed to reprove them. Ah! to have a body in Hell, with all its lusts, but not the power to satisfy them! How horrible that Hell will be!

But hear me while I again affirm God's truth. I tell thee sinner, that those eyes that now look on lust shall look on miseries that shall vex and torment thee. Those ears which now thou lendest to hear the song of blasphemy, shall hear moans, and groans, and horrid sounds, such as only the damned know. That very throat down which thou pourest drink shall be filled with fire. Those very lips and arms of thine will be tortured all at once.⁶

There shall certainly be a resurrection of **both** the righteous and the wicked (**Acts 24:15**).

Without Wax-



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⁶ Ibid.