

YOUR BODY'S RESURRECTION

Yes, *You* Can Expect to be Raised from the Grave



God incarnate, Jesus died,
For our sins was crucified;
Conquered death, He lives to save,
Resurrect us from our graves.

Some religions teach reincarnation. They say that after you die your soul is recycled and you come back as something else. Some teach assimilation. They say that after death the spirit is absorbed into the 'Universal Energy' from whence it came. Others teach extinction. They say death ends all. While these faiths have different views as to what happens to the spirit or soul of man after death, they all agree that the human body returns to dust: end of matter.

In contrast to these stand Christianity and its living Head - the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that Christ both *died* for our sins and *arose* bodily from the dead to

put us right with God. These two great truths lie at the heart of the gospel the apostles preached. This is truly good news, to be received *not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God (I Th 2:13)*. For the gospel of Christ is the power of God to rescue lost souls from the power of sin and death.

In I Corinthians 15, commonly referred to as the resurrection chapter of the Bible, the apostle Paul speaks of the power of Christ's death and resurrection to save all who truly believe (1-4). And it is believable, for there were many (in fact, over 500) eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection (5-8). The apostles themselves did not find Christ's body in the grave, dead. They found Christ in His body – alive!

Beginning in verse 12 of this chapter, Paul addresses those in the church who did not believe their bodies would also be raised from the dead as was their Lord's. Influenced by the philosophers of their day, this teaching regarding a spirit-body reunion in eternity was met with cynicism. As a corrective, Paul penned the words we find in our text. In doing so, he speaks to both the relevancy and reasonableness of the Holy Bible's teaching on the resurrection of the body.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY IS RELEVANT

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead then is Christ not risen (12-13)

The apostles preached that Jesus Christ, after having satisfied the just penalty for our sins by His death on the cross, arose from the dead. Some who said they believed

this were at the same time saying there will be no end-time resurrection of all who lived and died, unable to accept the idea that dead bodies can be restored to life. If that is the case then Christ, whose lifeless corpse lay in a tomb, could not have come back to life. No resurrection of the dead means no resurrected Christ.

Jesus was as fully human as any of us are. God's Son was *made of a woman (Gal 4:4), made in the likeness of men (Phil 2:7)*. As we are *partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same (Heb 2:14)*. Jesus had a human body like unto ours, and in that body He died. Now if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Jesus is still dead. The future resurrection of *our* dead bodies is relevant to Christ's own resurrection - and to all that Christianity teaches. It all stands or falls together, as Paul goes on to say.

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: (14-16).

No resurrected Christ means no redemptive truth. God said to man, *the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezek 18:4)*. God said of Christ, *I shall make his soul an offering for sin (Isa 53:10)*. The Lord Jesus Christ became humanity's sin-bearer, dying in our place, as our substitute, for our sins. Having paid sin's penalty, God raised Him from the dead; living proof, that God's promise of forgiveness and eternal life is truly there for all who trust Christ. That is what the apostles preached and that is what the Corinthians believed.

But if the dead rise not, as some say, then Christ has not risen. And if Christ be not risen, “then is our preaching vain.” There is no truth to what we are saying. And “your faith is also vain.” There is no truth in what you are believing. If the dead rise not, both our preaching and your faith are rooted in a lie. We apostles are “false witnesses of God,” testifying that God did something He did not do.

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (17-19).

No redemptive truth means no remaining hope. For if Jesus did not rise from the dead, “your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” The words translated *vain* in verse 14 mean ‘devoid of truth.’ Here in verse 17 the word *vain*, translated from a different Greek word, means ‘devoid of results.’ Not only is there no truth in what we preach or in what you believe, there is no benefit to believing it. For if Jesus is still dead, faith in Christ neither frees you from sin’s guilt nor delivers you from sin’s penalty. Consequently, believers who have “fallen asleep in Christ” (i.e., died) fare no better than non-believers. They too have “perished.”

The word *perished* does not refer to extinction but to ruination and destruction. Jesus used the same word in a parable: men do not put *new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish (Mt 9:17)*. In Jesus’ day, broken bottles that perished did not cease to exist; archaeologists are still excavating such bottles today. Rather, these bottles were ruined and rendered useless for the purpose they were de-

signed. So it is with souls that perish. Created to glorify their Maker and enjoy Him forever, they will forever be without the ability to do either.

If perishing is the future lot of believers - "if in this life *only* we have hope in Christ," Paul says, "we are of all men most miserable." In this life, all who set out to follow Christ will have their faith tried *with fire* (*I Pet 1:7*). *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (*II Tim 3:12*). Now, if Christ be not raised and Christianity is a lie, Christians are a most pitiable people.

If there is no resurrection of the dead - if in the end *our* dead bodies are not raised from the dead - then there is no resurrected Christ, no redemptive truth, and no remaining hope. *But*, Paul says, **Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (20-23).** The resurrection of the body is relevant.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY IS RATIONAL

Beginning in verse 35, Paul answers two questions he anticipates some might ask regarding the bodily resurrection of the dead. Both answers focus our attention on the natural world as created by God. The God of nature is the God of the resurrection, and contemplating the wonder of God's working in the one arena helps us grasp the wonder of His working in the other.

But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: (35-36)

Here Paul answers the first question, “How are the dead raised up?” He does so by alluding to nature and how new life rises out of death and decay. But first, to those who doubt the body will be raised to life because of the decay it naturally experiences, Paul says, “thou fool.” He is not being offensive. The word signifies one who lacks perception, who is not thinking. Paul seeks to adjust our thinking in order to help us perceive the looming reality of our body’s resurrection. He does so by giving an object lesson from nature.

The object used is a seed: “that which thou *sowest* is not quickened, except it die.” Everyone knows that when you sow a seed in the ground that seed must die and decay before it can sprout new life. A seed lying in dry dust not experiencing any decay can produce nothing. But let it begin to decay and what happens? Life comes forth out of the seed! As the God of nature brings new life out of dead, decaying seeds that lie buried in the ground, even so the God of the resurrection will bring new life out of dead, decaying bodies wherever the remaining elements of those bodies exist.

Now God normally works in nature through the process of time. A man plants a grape seedling, and God sends water from heaven to make it grow. In the course of time that seed becomes a vine that produces grapes used to make wine. But the Creator need not spend years watering a plant in order to bring forth grape juice. If He chooses, He can fill water-pots with water one minute and draw out the fruit of the vine the next, as did Jesus at a wedding (Jn

2:1-11). The Eternal is not a prisoner of time. What God does with decaying seeds over a period of time, He can and will do with decayed bodies in a moment of time: *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ... the dead shall be raised incorruptible ...* (see *I Cor 15:51-57*).

“How are the dead raised up?” Friend, look thoughtfully at nature and understand: the God of nature is the God of the resurrection.

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but *there is one kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds. *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the *glory of the* terrestrial is another. *There is one* glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory (37-41).

Here the apostle answers the second question, “With what body do they come?” Again, he points to nature - to the sown seed, and to the many different kinds of bodies the God of nature has birthed.

The first thing we learn about the resurrection body is this: “that which thou sowest, thou sowest *not that body* that shall be.” A farmer sows “bare grain” in his field (whether wheat, corn or some other grain). But bare grain is not what comes out of the ground. Instead, “God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him.” Out of a corn seed comes a corn stalk; out of an acorn an oak tree. Even so, out of

the elements of the earthly body comes the resurrection body. The earthly body is taken up into the resurrection body – they *found not the body of the Lord (Lk 24:3)*. Nevertheless, as the plant is unlike the seed, so the resurrection body differs from the earthly body.

This difference is limited: “to every seed his own body.” As creation reproduces after its own kind, even so the body will be resurrected after its own kind. No grain of wheat ever died to give life to a stalk of corn; no human being will ever die and come back to life as a toad (or something else) as reincarnation imagines. Every seed has its own peculiar characteristics. You will not rise in a body that looks like mine, and vice versa. “To every seed his *own* body.”

In the resurrection, a new type of body will come forth out of our earthly remains – a different kind of body. If you have trouble imagining that, Paul says, look at nature. Look *in* the earth (at all the seeds and variety of plant life). Look *upon* the earth (see bodies with flesh, fur, fins and feathers). Look *above* the earth (to the heavenly bodies: the planets, sun, moon and stars). God has created many kinds of bodies in the world and one more will not be difficult for Him. In the beginning, God created them all different out of nothing before making for Adam a body out of dust. In the end, from the remains of Adam’s offspring that have returned to dust, God will once again make a different kind of body. Thus, we read:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body (42-44).

“So also is the resurrection of the dead” – that is, as the God of nature gives to all seeds “a body as it hath pleased him,” so also will the God of the resurrection. Like a seed, the body is sown in corruption, having been subjected to decay by sin. But God is pleased to raise it in incorruption, wholly immune to decline and decay. It is sown in dishonor, a tarnished vessel degraded by the sins of this world. It is raised in glory, a grand vessel fitted for the splendor of the next. It is sown in weakness, having oftentimes failed the man. It is raised in power, never to fail him again. It is sown a natural body, one created from the elements of nature. It is raised a spiritual body, one recreated by the Spirit of God.

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” Notice, it does not say a *spirit* but a *spiritual body*. When Jesus showed Himself alive to His disciples, He said, *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have (Lk24:39)*. Christ arose bodily from the grave, but in a different kind of body - a spiritual body. A body that could walk through closed doors (Jn 20:26) and vanish from plain sight (Lk 24:31), and yet partake of food and be recognized by friend. Jesus had a body tailored for heaven’s glory, and this promise belongs to the heavenly minded (believers) who look for Christ to come in glory: He shall *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body (see Phil 3:17-21)*. Indeed, *If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom 8:11)*.

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a

quickeningspirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (45-49).

How should we respond to the Bible's message concerning the future resurrection of our bodies? Paul ends this chapter written to believers with these words. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (58).* Believers are to dedicate themselves to faithful service in the Lord's work, confident their labors of love are not futile.

As for the unbelieving, they too can expect a bodily resurrection. However, having shunned their Creator and Savior through unbelief, and snubbed His holy Word as their guide for life, a dreadful judgment awaits – a resurrection unto damnation. How do we know this? *Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31).*

God has given assurance to us humans that a day is coming when He will “judge the world in righteousness.” He has done so by raising from the dead the coming Judge: His Son Jesus. God has ordained the sinless “Son of man” - the only truly righteous man - to summon all other men from their graves and execute righteous judgment. *For as*

the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (Jn 5:26-29).

We read of this last, dreadful resurrection in the Book of Revelation. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:12-15).*

Those are frightful words, and are meant to be, for *God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Pet 3:9)*. They are terrifying words; but they need not be, for Jesus is a *Living Savior!* And the evidence of His resurrection found in the Gospels is the very kind of pragmatic evidence people demand; He was seen, heard, and touched by human eyes, ears, and hands. As for death, *it was not possible that he should be holden of it (Acts 2:24)*. Like His Father, the Son has *life in himself (Jn 5:26)*. He does not draw His life from another source. *He is the life (Jn 14:6)*. *In him was life (Jn 1:4)*. And about His life, Jesus said, *I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again (Jn 10:17-*

18). This He did, giving assurance to humankind that death is a conquered foe that we need not fear. For a dying race, facing the Day of Judgment, this is truly good news - or should be. I hope it is for you.

Someday you will respond to the Son of God's voice calling your remains from their resting place. Today, among the responses Jesus calls for is this: *fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Mt 10:28)*. Dear friend, fear your Creator - the almighty, omnipresent Eternal Spirit who both contains and fills the universe. Not an atom in the world, nor a cell in your body, is ever out of His sight or control. Humble yourself before His Majesty. Turn away from your sins. Give allegiance to *the Son, lest he be angry and you perish ... Blessed are they that put their trust in him (Ps 2:12)*. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (Jn 3:16)*.

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