

FIRST CORINTHIANS

The New, Resurrected Body I Corinthians 15:35-49

The resurrection of Christ is a historical fact, and from this event we Christians have the answer to life, death and immortality. All we know about the resurrection of Christ is recorded in the Bible. Apart from divine revelation, men are in the dark about death. Modern man is just as ignorant about life and death as were the ancient philosophers such as Plato, Socrates and Aristotle who lived hundreds of years before Christ. Yet Christ and the Apostles have spoken to this issue for us in Holy Scripture so it is not a matter of human speculation for us but of divine revelation. Those who study the issue of Christ's resurrection will be convinced of the historical accuracy of this event and will be forced to make an intelligent acceptance or rejection of it.

There were two lawyers, Mr. Ebbison and Mr. West, who on one occasion were talking about the Christian faith. Neither believed it for both were Deists. They did not deny the existence of God but the providence and activity of God in creation. They decided, as objective and intelligent lawyers, to discredit Christianity. They agreed that to do this they would have to disprove two things in the Bible, two historical facts. They would have to disprove the conversion of the Apostle Paul and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Each of them chose one of these topics to disprove and went on his way, agreeing to meet the other a year later with his findings. They subjected the facts to the best of legal and scientific procedures. When they came together again, Mr. West asked Mr. Ebbinson if in fact he had written his book. Ebbison said, "Yes, I have. I have taken the alleged fact of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and scrutinized it as an objective lawyer and have concluded it is a historical event. And I have been converted myself to Christianity, for I have received the same Christ that Saul received." Mr. Ebbinson then said to Mr. West, "Have you written your book?" He replied, "Yes, I have. I have taken the facts about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and have sifted through the evidence, and I have concluded that it was an historical event and I have come to know this resurrected Christ as my personal Lord and Savior."

The facts of the resurrection speak for themselves. The issue is whether men will or will not bow to the resurrected Christ.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is directly related to the Christian's bodily resurrection from the dead. If Christ did not rise from the dead, then

we Christians will not rise from the dead. If Christ did rise, then we too shall rise from the dead at His second coming.

By way of review, you recall how some professing Christians at Corinth had taught the false doctrine that there is no bodily resurrection of the dead, whether of Christ or those who are Christ's at His coming. They were ridiculing the whole idea of resurrection and the nature of a so-called resurrected body.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION 15:35

How Are The Dead Raised?

But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? These skeptics in the church at Corinth were reasoning about the possibility of resurrection; that is, to them it was totally impossible. They reasoned that bodies put in a grave decompose and return to dust after hundreds of years. They rationalized that atoms which make up bodies would pass into other forms of matter. Those atoms of a decomposed body might pass into plants which could be eaten by animals and in turn are eaten by humans. Would those atoms be a part of two or more resurrected bodies because that would require one atom to be in two places at once? Furthermore, what about people who died and were buried at sea? Their bodies were eaten by fish. How could they have a resurrected body? What about those who have been cremated and their ashes spread over the ocean? In twentieth century America, what about people-who will parts of their bodies to science? Whose heart and kidneys belong to whom in the resurrection?

The natural mind finds it incredible to believe in a bodily resurrection in light of the above facts. Now I ask you how John Wycliffe will be raised from the dead? His body was in the grave for twelve years and was then exhumed and burned as a body of a heretic and his ashes scattered over a river which took them out to the North Sea. Will Wycliffe be raised? Yes! Surely all this is impossible with man but not with a sovereign, supernatural, miracle working God. The Sadducees asked Christ a skeptical question about the resurrection, and He answered, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). Nothing is impossible with God. How are the dead raised? By God in supernatural power. The real issue is whether a person believes in the dimension of the supernatural.

... we think that an earthly body is all there is. But man himself is not a prisoner to this earthly dimension. We have the power to dream and hope beyond this dimension. Man also has the power with his mind to transcend this dimension. A lot of healing and other activities can happen when a person's mind goes beyond the physical limitations. God's power goes beyond man's. In a sense, God lives in the fifth dimension and is not captured or is not a prisoner or is not bound to the dimensions He created on this earth. Those intellectuals who are not satisfied with Paul's answers are too little in their thinking. They have been trapped by the three-dimensional aspects of planet earth. The real intellectual is big enough to include God's dimension. The real intellectual sees potential

where the test tube does not. Thus, Christians are the real intellectuals in this world and should not be duped by the pseudo, so-called intellectuals (Knofel Staton, I Corinthians).

What Kind Of Body Will It Be?

With what kind of body will they come?" Even if there were some kind of resurrection, the skeptics questioned whether it would be the very same body. For them resurrection was not only impossible but inconceivable. Would the resurrected body have flesh and blood? If a person died a cripple, would he rise a cripple? Would the body have individual identity? They could not conceive of a resurrected body because they had bought the humanistic, rationalistic thinking of the godless Greek philosophers that the body was a prison house for the pure spirit of man and the spirit was set free at death, leaving the body to rot in the grave and turn to dust.

Modern man may reason the same way as the ancient Greeks but also has some additional problems with resurrection. For instance, if a person believes in reincarnation, where it is taught that man's spirit returns to earth in various bodies, whether human or animal, the natural question would be, "Which body is raised from the dead?" Will it be the cow body a person once had or a gorilla body or a rat body? This sets forth an entirely different problem than the Corinthians faced, but is one that modern man does face, even though reincarnation is not scriptural.

ANSWER TO HOW THE DEAD ARE RAISED 15:36

How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. The Apostle Paul briefly answers the question of the possibility of resurrection. Apparently he did not have much patience with people who said they believed in God but did not see Him as a supernatural working God. He used an illustration from nature, from the vegetable kingdom. Death is a necessary process in resurrection. Far from being an obstacle, death is essential to resurrection. An oak tree seed, even so small, is buried in the ground, dies and decomposes; yet, from that death process comes a gigantic, living oak tree. The seed passes through death and decay to rise to a higher form of life in the tree. If God can take a decomposed seed and bring out of it a living oak tree, surely he can take a decomposed body and bring forth a new, resurrected body. Nothing is too hard for a supernatural, miracle working God. Those who would deny this do not know the power of God.

ANSWER TO WHAT KIND OF BODY IT WILL BE 15:37-39

General Answer

In 15:37-41, Paul gives a general answer to what kind of body the resurrection will bring forth. He concludes it will be a different body but will retain its individual identity.

When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. The first principle which is taught here is that the resurrected body will be a different body than that placed in the grave. When a seed is planted, that which comes up

is different than the seed. The beautiful tulip is different than the ugly seed that was placed in the ground. Surely there will be a difference between the resurrected body and the body that dies. The second principle is that the resurrected body will have a continuity and identity with the human body. The seed that is placed in the ground, even though it dies, always results in a new crop of grain, for the law of nature is "each after its own kind." There is always a fundamental essence between the seed and the plant, so there will be a fundamental essence between the resurrected body and the human body. Therefore, we conclude that the resurrected body will preserve the individual identity of the human body. God will give the Christian a different body but one which preserves its identity.

The resurrected body is a different body but the same body in essence. That should not be too difficult for us to understand for every particle of our body changes every three years. In a seventy year life span, our bodies are completely different 23 times; yet we are the same person. Therefore, we can assume our future bodies will resemble our present bodies in a fundamental principle of identity and yet do not have to be the same bodies in identical nature and quality. The resurrected body will be material, immortal, identical with the present body and probably reveal the same personality. Yet it will be different in nature and quality. It is not necessary to say that every particle of the new body will be the same as the old as long as there is a fundamental connection in essence between the two. If exactness of particles is required for identity, then cripples must rise cripples and the aged as aged. This would destroy much of the meaning of the believer's blessed hope, for that is the hope of receiving a new, future, resurrected body which will be perfect in every way. . . . While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, . . . (Titus 2:13). Part of our blessed hope in a new resurrected body without losing our individuality and personality.

This solves the problem as to whether we are going to know each other in heaven. The answer is "yes." We will know our mates, our children, our families and friends in heaven but it will be a different kind and quality of existence than we now know.

It should not shock us that God could supernaturally bring about a resurrected body for Christians. If modern day scientists can clone a frog and a sheep and now have the capacity to clone a human being, reproducing that body from a single living cell, then God can most certainly resurrect a dead body to give it new existence.

All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. God has given different kinds of bodies in the animal kingdom to fit a certain kind of habitat. Each body is differently created for a different function. So why can't God make a resurrected body different yet having fundamental identity with the human body so as to fit it for the heavenly environment? The resurrected body will be fit for the eternal kingdom.

This is a very accurate scientific statement. A trained scientist, through DNA testing, can tell whether a single cell comes from a human, an animal, a bird or a fish. Each is different in God's order of creation.

There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. If God has made trillions of different celestial bodies, in the heavens and not one of

them is the same and yet they all have similar qualities, why is it so inconceivable that He could make a resurrected body different from the earthly body but maintain individual identity? Nothing is impossible with God.

Specific Answer

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. In 15:42-49, Paul gives some specific answers, five of them, to show how the resurrected body will be different than the present body. Just as God has made different bodies in this world and universe, so He will make resurrection bodies different from our present bodies.

Perishable-Imperishable. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable. The resurrected body will not be liable to decay nor will it be subject to disease. It will be free from every process of deterioration. Our bodies are decaying now and will rot in the grave, but they will rise incorruptible and imperishable.

Dishonor-Glory. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. There are few things more dishonorable than a corpse. While living, the body may ache, sag, groan and smell, but when it dies it will be foul and loathsome. This is why we do not want much to do with the body after death. We try to avoid this dishonor of death by powdering and painting the corpse, but death is so real. Yet, the resurrected body will be a glorified body, whole, complete and perfect. It will be more beautiful than any body today. It will be far superior in attractiveness and radiance.

Weakness-Power. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. The present body is feeble in structure, easily worn out, a victim of continual waste, in need of medical care, unpredictable and limited in knowledge. The new body will have enlarged powers and be incapable of fatigue. It will have an expanded intellect capable of comprehending the mind of God. Though perfect, the mind will never be divine. We will always be the creature and inferior to the Creator and ever learning about Him. Nevertheless, the resurrected body will have unbelievable power.

Natural-Spiritual. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. The natural body is one designed for the human soul and spirit so as to live on planet earth. The human body is an "earth suit" designed for time and space. The spiritual body is not immaterial or ghost-like but a body designed for heaven, outside of time and space. It will be a body adapted to the eternal state.

Not Like Adam But Like Christ's Resurrected Body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. Paul's final argument is based on a scriptural principle. All humanity has a human body like that of the first man, Adam. We now believe through DNA testing that all of humanity goes back to one original source, and we Christians know this to be Adam. The Bible is true and real science will always confirm it as true. Paul goes on to say that those who follow the last Adam, Christ, who is the head of the spiritual race, shall receive a resurrected body like that of Christ.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from then, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philip. 3:20-21).

What then was Christ's resurrected body like? What was its nature? What were its qualities? We know His resurrected body was recognizable because His disciples could identify Him. His body could eat food, for we are told He ate fish and honeycomb. This does not mean, however, that His body was dependent upon food for nourishment. With our new bodies, we may abstain or indulge in eating, depending on our desires. His new body breathed. It was composed of flesh and bones; therefore it had a physical structure. Yet we are told that this resurrected body could appear and disappear at will it was not bound by time and space. It could pass through closed doors, walls and grave clothes. Christ was not a ghost but had a body. It was a real body but not of the same material substance as the human body. Science tells us if we could change the molecular makeup of the human body, it could easily pass through walls. Christ's new body was infatigable, so it never got tired, never had to sleep. What an exciting future we have as Christians with our new bodies. The possibilities for the resurrected body of the Christian are infinite. Now if this does not excite you, then you have a problem and you have little anticipation of the future life, probably have little hope and most likely fear the act of death.

The Bible records us about Christ's resurrected body but what about His glorified, ascended body? Perhaps His resurrected body took on many more wonderful characteristics after it ascended and went into its final glorified state.

Yet precisely because he had not yet ascended and been fully exalted and glorified, even Jesus' body as the Gospels describe it may not have been exactly what he ended up with. One could assume, for example, that he eventually no longer had any scars in his hands and side (Craig Blomberg, I Corinthians).

The future, resurrected body is fantastic and sounds almost too good to be true, but nothing is impossible with God. Throughout this whole section of Scripture, the Apostle Paul is trying to describe the indescribable.

Who can imagine a body without weakness? Or infection? Or tiredness? Or sickness? Or death? This is a body utterly unknown to earthly, historical experience. . . it is an order of existence in which the "laws of nature". . . no longer obtain. In fact, when one puts his mind to it, it is quite unimaginable (G.E. Ladd, I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus).

CONCLUSION

We who are Christians know it does not make any difference whether our dead bodies decompose in a grave or are eaten by fish at sea or are cremated by fire. We are assured we are going to get a resurrected body like Christ's body, and it will be given to us by the supernatural, sovereign power of Almighty God. We also know that the future hope of the second coming of Christ when we will receive our resurrected bodies as Christians, affects how we live in this life right now. God respects the body and so must we. We desire to live a life of purity and holiness with our minds as well as our bodies.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (I Jn. 3:2-3).

We also know when we believe in the future resurrection of the body, we see the importance of the body to God and seek to keep it pure and holy.

"Food for the stomach and the stomach for good"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also (I Cor 6:13-14).

When the Apostle Paul stood before that unbelieving tyrant King Agrippa, he said,

"Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?" God can and will raise the dead in the resurrection by His miraculous power.

Yet, God also does another miraculous work, even superior to the resurrection of the body. He can take a man or woman who is spiritually dead in sin and shoot life into that person so he or she comes alive spiritually. God will do that for you if you will receive Christ as your Savior for sin and bow to Him as Lord of your life. If you will trust Christ, you will come alive spiritually and you will be a part of the resurrection unto life at the second coming of Jesus Christ to this world.