

The Bodies of the Resurrection

by Doug Hamilton

Paul poses two questions in 1 Corinthians 15:35 *“How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”* These are two great questions that every Christian should contemplate. It would be wise to use not only this text from 1 Corinthians 15, but the many others from the whole Bible to answer it.

Question #1) How are the dead raised?

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

- Paul is addressing that glorious moment of the return of Jesus when He will gather His elect from the four corners of the earth for the event of the resurrection. There are two types of saints that will be affected by this event, the dead in Christ and the living in Christ. The dead in Christ are they that are already asleep in Paradise of the Hadean realm. They will be the first of those whom are affected. At that moment, which only the Father knows (Mt 24:36; 2 Pet 3:10), the sky will be rolled back like a scroll (Rev 6:14; Is 34:4) and the resurrection will occur.
 - First the dead in Christ will be raised by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11; 2 Cor 4:14). Instantaneously they will be transformed into their new bodies (1 Cor 15:52) by the authority of Jesus (Philippians 3:21; Jn 5:28).
 - It does not matter if they were in the grave or eaten by a shark in the ocean, the God of creation, Who formed man from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7) is more than able to reassemble the body from the elements.
 - Second, those whom are alive will also be instantaneously transformed, for *“...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Cor 15:50). 1 Corinthians 15:51 says *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed...”*
 - Their old bodies will be immediately transformed into the new body. They will join the others with Jesus in the air and will be forever with Him in heaven.
 - It is important to note that the last human observation of Jesus in this realm was on Mount Olivet during the Ascension into Heaven. To this the angel said to the apostles in *Acts 1:11 They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”*
- The resurrection will occur quickly, surprisingly and mightily before the eyes of all. From there the judgments of God will be carried out upon those who did not know God or obey His gospel (2Th 1:7-9). They will face a second death following their resurrection unto judgment (John 5:28-29; Rev 20:8).

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Question #2) What kind of body do they come?

Paul writes in Colossians 1:18 states concerning Jesus that "*He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*"

- Jesus is referred to as "the firstborn from the dead", a rather intriguing phrase. We know Jesus was not the first person in the Bible to be resurrected.
 - Elijah raised the son of a widow in 1 Kings 17.
 - Elisha raised the son of the Shunamite woman in 2 Kings 4.
 - A corpse was brought back to life when it came into contact with the bones of Elisha in 2 Kings 13.
 - Jesus brought at least three people back to life during his earthly ministry: 1) the son of the woman of Nain (Luke seven), 2) The daughter of Jairus (Luke eight) and 3) Lazarus (John eleven).
- How could Jesus be the firstborn from the dead if there were already many prior to Him whom were resurrected? It is quite simple, for all others whom were resurrected prior would go onto die again to this life. It was their earthly body brought back from the dead, not a new body incapable of dying.
- Only Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (Romans 6:4) to never die again (*Revelation 1:17-18 "...I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore..."*). He arose from the grave never to die again! He was the FIRST to be permanently brought out of the tomb and in this He is the FIRSTBORN from the DEAD.

We will have a body like Jesus.

- 1 Cor 15:49 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.
- Phil 3:20-21 "Jesus...will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory..."
- 1John 3:2 "...We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."

What kind of body did Jesus have?

- Luke 24:13-33 tells us that Jesus appeared before two travelers going to Emmaus. They could not recognize Him until He revealed Himself when breaking the bread. Then He vanished before their eyes.
- Luke 24:34 tells us that He then "appeared" before Peter. This was later confirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5.
- Luke 24:36-37 confirms that Jesus just mystically appeared in a house where the apostles met. He transported miles away from Emmaus and appeared in the house in the middle of the group. It was such a surprise and they thought He was a spirit. Yet while there He was able to show fleshy evidence of the marks in His hands and the pierce in His side.

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- John 20:15 tells us Mary talked with Him, but thought He was a gardener or someone else.

Conclusion: He had a fleshy/spiritual supernatural body that defied the laws of physics and at will His earthly appearance. Though He was in the world, but was not subjected to the limitations of the same.

- In Acts 10:41 Peter stated that they "*...ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.*"
- Luke 24:41-43 says that He ate a broiled fish with them.
- John 21:12-14 states in one account Jesus actually had breakfast with the disciples by the sea.
 - Note: It must be noted that Jesus was still in the realm of the earth for weeks, for He had not yet ascended into heaven. In this realm people eat, for they need food to satisfy hunger. In the afterlife we will not be subject to hunger and thirst (Rev 7:16), but until that time we still require nutrition. Yet there are references to dining in heaven.
- In Luke 14:15 Jesus said, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"
- Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.
- Rev 19:9 Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."
 - Note: In the Bible, dining is often synonymous with fellowship. That is why we are not to eat with rebellious Christians (1 Cor 5:11). Doing so emboldens the sinner to continue is an evil path and runs the risk of spreading the corruption to others. This is why we call meals at the church building "fellowship meals". If this concept is applicable here, then we won't eat in heaven, but will be capable of extreme fellowship with our Lord and each other on a communal level of which could never be attained in this life. THERE WILL BE SUPER FELLOWSHIP!

Conclusion: We will be capable of extreme fellowship with our new body, for we will be in the presence of the Lord Himself. We will know Him and His people on the highest terms.

- One of the more common questions I receive as a preacher is "Will we be able to know each other in heaven?" Is there an association with our earthly body and the body which is to come?
- 1 Cor 15:42-44 makes the association of connection to our identity. "...**It** is sown a perishable body, **it** is raised an imperishable body; ⁴³ **it** is sown in dishonor, **it** is raised in glory; **it** is sown in weakness, **it** is raised in power; ⁴⁴ **it** is sown a natural body, **it** is raised a spiritual body..."
- The body type changes, but the person associated with the body is the same person. The indication is that there will still be identity with the body. Other indicators of this concept are the following:

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- The known identities of Lazarus, the rich man and Abraham in Hades in the parable of Luke 16.
- The known identities of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Matthew 8:11-12.
- The known identity of Samuel in 1Sam 28:3-19.
- The known identity of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-5)
- We will likely know each other in the afterlife, but it will not be in the same way. I am persuaded it will be a recognition of the soul of the individual. We must remember that...
 - Mary did not recognize Jesus until He spoke her by name (John 20:16).
 - The men from Emmaus did not recognize Jesus until broke the bread at the meal (Luke 24:30).
 - The apostles did not visually recognize the Lord at the breakfast on the beach, but knew Him through His behaviors (John 21:10 None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.)

Conclusion: I am persuaded that we will have a body in the afterlife that identifies with us individually. The body will be new, but our soul will be associated with it. We will intimately recognize and know their soul.

What are the most significant characteristics of our new body?

- 1 Corinthians 15:52-53 states "*...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*"⁵³ *For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*"

Conclusion:

1) Our new body will be imperishable. This means our new body will not breakdown like the "body of our humble state" (Phil 3:21). We will not have the sufferings of poor health nor poor conditions. Our outer man will be restored and decay no longer, keeping up with the inner man (i.e. soul 2 Cor 4:16).

- Romans 8:38 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
- Revelation 21:4 "...and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

2) Our new body will be immortal. This indicates that like Jesus, we will live forever. Our body will not die again.

- Revelation 7:17 "...for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life.."
- Revelation 21:5 "...and they will reign forever and ever."

How powerful is God concerning the resurrection?

Answer: Just as powerful as He was in the creation.

- Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

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Conclusion: We should not doubt the power of God to resurrect our bodies from the grave. *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 John 11:25-26 Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Closing Question: Do you believe this?

- If we know without a doubt that this is our belief, then Jesus being our resurrection and life will be ours. How can we know for sure that we truly believe this? We know it when it is confirmed while embracing that mindset in baptism into Christ. Baptism is the outward signal to us that we fully believed in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. To borrow the denominational phrase, it is the "outward sign of the inward glory", for we can only know that we inwardly believe when the outwardly sign is carried out. Then and only then can we fully say we believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

Closing Passage:

Ezekiel 37:1-10 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. ² He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Son of man, a can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, You know." ⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.' " ⁵ "Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. ⁶ 'I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.' " ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they bcome to life." ' " ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.