

A Glorified Body: The Necessity of Our Resurrection

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:1–2; 1 John 3:2

Code: B130701

The following blog post was originally published in June, 2013. —ed.

First Corinthians 15 is the definitive chapter on the subject of resurrection. There Paul severely rebukes anyone who would doubt or question it: “But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’” To which Paul responds, “You foolish person!” (1 Corinthians 15:35–36). That is one of the most caustic retorts in all the Pauline writings. But in Paul’s estimation, this doctrine is fundamental. To deny an actual, physical resurrection is to embrace something other than genuine Christianity: “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:16–17).

God made human beings body and soul together. He “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7). We consist of an inner self and an outer self (2 Corinthians 4:16). Therefore our ultimate perfection demands that both body and soul be renewed. Even the creation of a new heaven and earth demands that we have bodies—a physical earth calls for its inhabitants to have physical bodies. An honest approach to Scripture does not permit these realities to be simply spiritualized or allegorized. Eternal life as a mere state of mind would defeat the whole point of many of the promises of Scripture.

Death results in the separation of the body and the soul. Our bodies go to the grave and our spirits go to the Lord. The separation continues until the resurrection: “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28–29). Right now the souls of believers who have died are in heaven. Someday their bodies will be resurrected and joined to their spirits, and they will enjoy the eternal perfection of body and soul.

Similarly, the bodies of unbelievers who have died are in the grave, and their souls are in hell. There will also be a day when the bodies of the ungodly will be raised from the graves and joined to their spirits. They will then stand, body and soul, before the judgment throne of God and will be cast bodily into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20:11–15).

Christians need not dread that judgment. There is no possibility of condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). We eagerly await the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23). “For in this [body] we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling” (2 Corinthians 5:2). Precisely what does this mean? Does it imply that we will receive all-new bodies? Will they be anything like our current bodies? Will we look anything like we do now?

First of all, note that our resurrection bodies *are* our earthly bodies, only glorified. The bodies we receive in the resurrection will have the same qualities as the glorified resurrection body of Christ. “We know that when He appears we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

Christ's resurrection body was the same body as before, not a whole new one. After He arose, the tomb was empty. The body itself was resurrected—the very same body, but in a glorified state. The wounds from His crucifixion were still visible (John 20:27). He could be touched and handled—He was not merely an apparition or a phantom (Luke 24:39). He looked human in every regard. He conversed a long time with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and they never once questioned His humanity (Luke 24:13–18). He ate real, earthly food with His friends on another occasion (Luke 24:42–43).

Yet His body also had otherworldly properties. He could pass through solid walls (John 20:19). He could appear in different forms so His identity was not immediately obvious (Mark 16:12). He could suddenly appear out of nowhere (Luke 24:36). And He could ascend directly into heaven in bodily form, with no adverse effect as He went through the atmosphere (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9)

Our bodies will be exactly like that. They will be real, physical, genuinely human bodies—the very same bodies we have while on this earth—yet wholly perfected and glorified. Second Corinthians 5:1 calls the resurrection body “a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

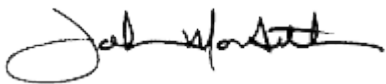
First Thessalonians 4 describes how the earthly bodies of believers are reunited with their spirits. At the trumpet of God, “the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

Paul speaks of this same reality in 1 Corinthians 15:51–52, where he says,

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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 shall be changed.

Believers who are dead will be united with their perfected bodies; then those who are still alive will be caught up and instantly “changed.” So every Christian still living on the earth when Christ comes will be instantly perfected. And both the living and the dead will have their old bodies made new, glorified.

Next time we'll take a closer look at a passage that illustrates what that glorification will entail.



(Adapted from [*The Glory of Heaven*](#); all Scripture references are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted.)

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).