

A Glorified Body: Resurrection Illustrated

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:35–49; John 12:24

Code: B130703

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

As we saw in our post on Monday, bodily resurrection is an essential element of our future in heaven. Believers will enjoy eternity in the presence of God in glorified, perfected bodies. But what do we know about those bodies? How will they function, and what will they be like? The apostle Paul gives us some insight in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

Paul uses a series of comparisons to explain the resurrection of the body. The first is an illustration borrowed from Christ's own teaching. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

The apostle applies the same imagery to our bodily resurrection: "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain" (1 Corinthians 15:36–37). When you plant a seed, the first thing a seed does is die. It goes into the ground, begins the process of fermentation and decomposition, and that is what triggers the new life. Similarly our bodies will die, be placed in a grave, and then be raised, just as a seed dies and produces a plant that is far more glorious than the seed.

Also, the seed contains the pattern for the plant that grows. All the genetic code for an entire oak tree is contained inside the kernel of the acorn. Likewise, our resurrection bodies will bear a resemblance to the body that is buried—but with a far greater glory. We will be ourselves, only perfect. And the decomposition of the earthly will only facilitate the remaking of a glorified resurrection body—with none of the flaws of the old, but with all that is necessary for a perfect existence in heaven.

That answers the question "How are the dead raised?" (1 Corinthians 15:35). Paul employs a second illustration to reply to the doubter's second challenge, "With what kind of body do they come?" The scoffer's question suggests that it is absurd to think normal human flesh would be fit for life in heaven. Paul's reply points out that it is absurd to think of the resurrection body as "normal" human flesh.

After all, even in our limited earthly knowledge, "not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish" (1 Corinthians 15:39). The resurrected body will no doubt be a different variety of flesh than we know from earthly experience. It will be literal human flesh, but gloriously and perfectly so. It will be as different from our earthly flesh as fish flesh is from bird flesh.

Making another comparison, Paul says, "There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory" (1 Corinthians 15:40–41). Since God made everything from the tiniest microscopic creature to a

massive galaxy full of star systems, He can make any kind of body He wants. God's creation is rich with infinite variety. Why question His ability to create human flesh that is fit for heaven?

Tying all these illustrations together, Paul concludes:

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:42–44)

All of that to say, in heaven we will have real bodies that are permanently and eternally perfect. You will never look in a mirror and notice wrinkles or a receding hairline. You will never have a day of sickness. You won't be susceptible to injury, disease, or allergies. There will be none of those things in heaven. There will only be absolute, imperishable perfection.

We will no doubt have otherworldly abilities in heaven. Remember that the heavenly city is fifteen hundred miles high. Don't think you'll be waiting for elevators to get you to the top. You'll no doubt have the ability to take flight—or, if you desire, simply be transported there in an instant—in the same way that Christ's resurrection body could seemingly disappear and reappear in another place at will.

Above all, we will be *Christlike*. Paul writes,

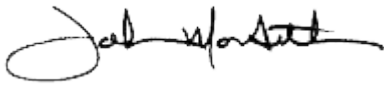
Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:45–48)

In that passage Paul contrasts the heads of two families. Adam is our father according to the flesh, meaning that he is the head of the human race. Christ is our spiritual head, and the first among the redeemed race. Just as our earthly bodies are descended from Adam's so that we resemble him, so in heaven we will be like Jesus Christ, who is incorruptible, eternal, glorified, powerful, and spiritual. According to Philippians 3:21, God "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body."

So the best picture of what we'll be like in heaven is the resurrection body of Jesus Christ. We will have a body fit for the full life of God to indwell and express itself forever. We'll be able to eat but won't need to. We will have bodies that can move at will through space and matter. Our bodies will be ageless and incorruptible; we will know nothing of pain, tears, sorrow, sickness, or death.

Our resurrection bodies will be brilliant in their splendor. Christ's glorified body is described as shining like the sun in its strength (Revelation 1:16). In an Old Testament promise, Scripture compares our glorified bodies to the shining of the moon and stars: "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

Do you see why it is irrational to seek our highest joy and comfort in this life? God's plan, to make us like Christ, is infinitely better.



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

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