

## **“OUR RESURRECTION BODIES.”**

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**April 17, 2016, 6:00PM**

**Scripture Texts: John 5:25-29; I Thessalonians 4:13-18**

### **Introduction.**

The story is told of a man who wanted his family to go to the great expense of having him buried in Israel because he heard, “Israel has the highest resurrection rate of any nation in the world.”

If you want to know anything about resurrections Israel is a good place to start, especially in the time of Jesus, after all He is “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

Our text is filled with weighty truths about weighty matters. Here the doctrine of the resurrection is declared from the lips of Jesus Himself, before His resurrection. Jesus brings to light at least three revelations concerning the resurrection in our text.

### **Truth Number One: death is not the end of the body.**

Many believe that when you die you are dead for good, there is no coming back, that the grave is the end. And some believe that the soul is immortal but the body is not. So our souls live on somehow somewhere but our bodies decay and are lost forever. But those who believe that this life is all there for our bodies are gravely mistaken (pun intended). There is a great resurrection to come and there is a life beyond this one for our bodies and our souls. Physical earthly death is not the end. Immortality applies both to the body and the soul.

### **Truth Number Two: the voice of the Son of Man will raise our bodies.**

The voice of the Son of God has the power to bring all the bodies of the dead back to life. Jesus here declares Himself to be the author of the resurrection. Jesus has the same life in Him that God has, meaning Jesus is the living God. At His command, all will rise out of the tombs and graves. Just as Lazarus responded to the command of Jesus, “Lazarus, come out,” so all the dead will respond.

**I Thessalonians 4:16** The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

The resurrection of the dead is certain. Jesus has the authority, the power, the life and the keys to death and hell. The supreme sovereignty of God extends over all of creation and over all of life and death, and over all of heaven and all of hell, over all the tombs of all the dead.

It doesn't matter the means of death or burial, it doesn't matter the condition of the body or its location, at the command of Christ all who have ever died will all be physically raised back to life. Listen to what John saw in his vision in Revelation:

**Truth Number Three: all the dead will be raised, both the just and the unjust.**

Yet another startling truth is who is included in this great resurrection. The resurrection of the dead is universal. All will rise, the just and the unjust. Even all who resist Christ now and deny Him now and do not obey Him now will one day have to obey His voice and stand before the great and eternal judge.

**Revelation 20:12** I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. **13** And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

The doctrine of the resurrection makes the great distinction, the resurrection of the just and the unjust divides all of humanity into two simple classes, those who enter into the joy of eternal life and those who enter into the horror of eternal death.

The two great classes of humanity: the wheat and the chaff, the sheep and the goats, the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the unrighteous, the saved and the lost.

The Christ-event is the dividing line of history and of all of humanity. Christ is the centerpiece of all of civilization. Everything is measured by Him. What have you done with Jesus? Is He the center piece of your life? Everything begins and ends with Him. Is He your starting place and your ending place?

**Now let's answer several questions concerning the nature of our resurrected bodies.**

The word resurrection implies that that which fell will be raised up, that which died will be brought back to life. From the resurrection of Christ we know that He was raised up with the same body that was buried.

It will not be a different body, but a new, changed body (cf. Phil. 3:20-21). It will be a physical, material body like what we have now. Bone will be rejoined to bone, dust and ash will be reformed and refashioned as the very day God created Adam out of the dust of the ground. The same body that died will be the body that is raised up. This actual body in which I exist will one day again live with my soul.

So my old body will become a new body but it will still be my body. God will not start over again from scratch, or from dust. Christ was raised in the same body that He had before He died.

Christ has a *recognizable*, physical body that could be touched and which could eat. Ours will be like His. There will be a recognizable continuity between our current body and our resurrected body, but it will be much better, as the plant that grows in much better than the seed (I Corinthians 15:35-37; 51-52). Like the difference between an acorn and an oak tree. Our bodies will be better than we can imagine and we will like them more than we can imagine.

Just as the earth will not be completely different, but new and better. Nothing good or joyful or pleasureable will be lost, nothing bad or painful will remain. So it will be with our bodies.

We will retain identity (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah). There will be a permanence of the individual, with consciousness, relationships, memories, and love. We will have eternal fellowship with Christ in complete and enriched humanity in a gloriously perfect and eternal bodily garment.

We will retain our gender and racial identities. If you are a man on earth, you will be a man in heaven. If you are Caucasian or Black or Hispanic on earth that's what you will be in heaven.

**I Corinthians 15:42-44** So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 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.

Paul says our bodies will be *transformed* from being weak, perishable, unglorified, and natural to powerful, imperishable, glorified and spiritual. Never again will we be subject to tiredness, fatigue, disabilities, injury or weakness; to sickness, pain, deformities, old age or death.

*We will be spiritually and morally new.* We will be clean and pure and holy, no mixture, no dross, no besetting sins that creep up on us and catch us off guard. No wicked fleeting thoughts, no pride, greed, lust, anger, or jealousy. We will be holy inside and out. Our bodies will radiate a kind of brightness.

**Matthew 13:43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

It will be angelic or angel like (Matthew 22:30), but it will not be some airy, ethereal, ghost-like shape. We will not be spirits, but our new bodies will be spiritual.

It will be like Christ's glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21).

**Philippians 3:20-21** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

These new, glorious bodies will be capable of touch and smell and taste and hearing and seeing, but it will not need food or drink or sleep (Rev. 7:15-16).

Randy Alcorn says, “We’ll stand on the New Earth and see it, feel it, smell it, taste its fruits, and hear its sounds. Not figuratively. Literally. We know this because we’re promised resurrection bodies like Christ’s. He saw and heard and felt and, as He cooked and ate fish, He presumably smelled and tasted it. We will too.”

**Some people wonder how old we will be in heaven.** Will we be the age we are when we die? Will there be babies and children and senior citizens in heaven? Some scholars believe we will be somewhere around thirty years of age, in the prime of life. When Adam and Eve were created they were in the prime of life, not babies and not elderly. When Jesus was resurrected it was to a youthful age of about thirty years.

*St Augustine* speculates that Christ rose again of a youthful age ... about thirty years. Therefore, others also will rise again of a youthful age (cf *The City of God*, book XXII).

*St. Thomas* notes, Man will rise again without any defect of human nature, because as God founded human nature without a defect, even so will He restore it without defect. Now human nature has a twofold defect. First, because it has not yet attained to its ultimate perfection. Secondly, because it has already gone back from its ultimate perfection. The first defect is found in children, the second in the aged: and consequently in each of these human nature will be brought by the resurrection to the state of its ultimate perfection which is in the youthful age, at which the movement of growth terminates, and from which the movement of decrease begins (*Summa Theologica, Supplement, Question 81.1*).

It is speculation based on DNA studies that show we hit optimal development and maturity in our twenties or thirties and after that start to decline. It’s speculation, but an interesting thought to consider. Others suggest that before that age we could be the age we die and then in the new heaven and new earth grow up to that age or point in life.

One final question.

**Will we be naked like Adam and Eve?** If we were it wouldn’t be a problem since there will be no lust, but there is no indication anywhere in the Bible that we will be naked. All the visions of the new heaven and new earth such as in Daniel and in Revelation show people clothed.

For Adam and Eve their nakedness was a sign of their sinless purity and innocence. We have never been like them, in sinless innocence. We are redeemed, we are covered and clothed by the sacrifice of Christ. So it would seem we will be covered and clothed in the new life to come.

## **To what end or purpose will the resurrection take place?**

As with the ultimate end of all things, the resurrection of the dead will be to the glory of God. At the resurrection there will be set on display for all the world to see, all angels, all devils and all men, the glories of God's mercy and justice. On display will be the great and glorious promises of God finally and fully fulfilled in His Son Christ who will be worshipped and marveled at by all creation.

The penultimate end which will be accomplished at the resurrection will be the salvation and glorification of all the elect and the punishment and rejection of all the reprobate.

### **Application and conclusion.**

The resurrection of the dead is absolutely essential to all Christianity, to all Christian religion. It is essential to what it means to be a Christian. Without the resurrection there is no life and no hope and no forgiveness of sins. All of life is futile.

**I Corinthians 15:16-19** For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

### ***What comfort do we have in this doctrine?***

When we stand by the grave of a loved one who loved Jesus, we have the confidence and hope of seeing them again in heaven. One day their bodies will rise with Christ, their eyes will see, their ears will hear, their hands will reach out and touch, their lips will speak again.

Our bodies in the ground are just like seed sown for a great and coming harvest.

And if our bodies are to be resurrected in heaven then should we not pay more careful attention to them now. I don't mean what we eat or wear. I mean how we pollute our bodies with sin. Should eyes that will one day view glory now view immorality? Should hands that will one day be raised in praise, now do evil? Should lips that will one day sing for joy, now speak curses, gossip and lies? Should feet that will one day walk streets of gold, now lead us into temptation? Our bodies are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the temple of God, how then shall we live and act and speak?

Do not be discouraged by sickness or weakness or infirmity. Do not be distressed by the wasting away of our bodies and our health. These are only temporary. There will not be one spot or blemish or deformity. There will not be one brokenness or inadequacy.

Leah's homeliness or comeliness will be turned to great beauty. Mephiboseth will have no limp, Timothy will not be sickly with his infirmities, Paul's thorn in the flesh will be gone.

By whatever standard we use to measure beauty, by whatever ideal we judge a face or body to be beautiful, what we will see will far exceed anything we could imagine.

Calvin wrote, "Let us consider this settled that no one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection" (*Institutes*, 3.10.5).

**Philippians 1:21-23** For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

**II Corinthians 5:8-9** Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Look forward to the day. Long for the coming of Christ. Welcome every thought of that day and what it will be like. Allow yourself from time to time to contemplate what a glorious day it will be. Think about it, prepare for it, plan for it.

"Encourage one another with these words" Paul says (I Thessalonians 4:18). Encourage each other with this future and this hope. Bless each other by speaking of these true and eternal things.

And speak of it to those who do not share your hope. Share your hope. Give a reason for the hope that is in you. With fear and trembling plead with the souls of the lost. Pray for them, speak to them.

We can never fully understand why God created the world the way He did to allow it to be so filled with evil and wickedness. But we can rest in His perfect purposes and in His perfect plan to make all things new and to wipe away every tear, remove every sin and every effect of sin.

John Piper captures this in a poem:

The blind can see a bird on wing,  
The dumb can lift their voice to sing.  
The diabetic eats at will,  
The coronary runs uphill.

The lame can walk, the deaf can hear,  
The cancer-ridden bone is clear.

Arthritic joints are lithe and free,  
And every pain has ceased to be.  
And every sorrow deep within,  
And every trace of lingering sin  
Is gone. And all that's left is joy,  
And endless ages to employ  
The mind and heart, and understand,  
And love the sovereign Lord who planned  
That it should take eternity  
To lavish all his grace on me.

**Colossians 3:1-4** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**I Corinthians 2:9** What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.