

31. Our future heavenly bodies

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Since many atheists love to put Christians on the defensive with their shallow “Show-me-the-evidence-of-God-now” tactics, assuming that the Christians can’t answer their questions. I love to ask them thought-provoking and soul-stirring questions as well. Here is one: “Do you really believe that there is no life after death? Show me the evidence of it now.” Most atheists prefer not to discuss death, since they don’t know.

But those who have faith in Jesus Christ have an assurance of the life after death through the Word of God that has the track record of total accuracy archaeologically, historically, prophetically, and scientifically.

Being spoiled westerners that we are, we would like to know what kind of resurrected heavenly bodies we are going to have? Do we have to keep these sagging faces and bodies? Do we need to exercise and diet to keep in shape in heaven, too? If we have to, that ain’t fun, right?

When it comes to the resurrection of our bodies, it seems that we have more questions than we do answers. Questions that nag, questions that boggle our minds.

Most of our questions stem from a lack of knowledge about the resurrection. Because we can’t comprehend the supernatural, we try to cram it into the tiny box of our understanding, which leaves us with a limited view of His power, and His ways.

The apostle Paul addresses these issues in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, answering two questions the believers at Corinth had raised. Although his replies don’t give us all the specific answers, they do give us general principles about our future bodies and a deeper understanding of the value of our present ones.

A. HOW CAN THE DEAD POSSIBLY BE RAISED?

1 Corinthians 15:35-36 But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” 36 Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.

The loaded two questions were fired at Paul’s direction. Without even a single twitch in his eyes, Paul responded to them. And his response is anything but subtle, and he takes the Corinthians to nature for the answer. By the way, v36 “Foolish one” by Paul reminds me of what Mr. T used to say to others.

Listen, we can’t have a plant unless we have a seed, and seeds have to be buried in the ground and dead. Every time a seed sprouts life, nature testifies to the fact that life can come from death. In the same way, you can’t be resurrected without dying first. Death isn’t the enemy of eternal life, but it’s the channel. Through death, God gives new life.

B. WITH WHAT KIND OF BODY WILL THE DEAD BE RAISED?

Paul paints three word pictures that illustrate what our future bodies will be like:

1) Seeds

1 Corinthians 15:37-38 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

Although totally different from what it produces, a seed represents the life it will grow. When you plant wheat, you get wheat, not watermelons.

There is a continuity of life shared between the seed and its fruit. And, likewise, our heavenly bodies will be continuations of the life with which God seeded the earth's soil.

Listen, resurrection is not reconstruction. Nowhere does the Bible teach that, at the resurrection, God will "put together the pieces" and return to us our former bodies. Yes, there is continuity, because it is our body. But there is not identity, because it is not the same kind of body.

2) Flesh

1 Corinthians 15:39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds.

In creation, God has carefully marked each species with distinctions all its own. And we, too, will continue to bear some of the marks of our present bodies, at least for the purpose of identity.

One of the questions people would often ask about heaven is, "Will we be able to recognize our loved one who went to heaven before us?" This v39 is the answer. How can I be sure? According to John 20:19-20, Jesus' disciples were able to recognize Him in His resurrected body, so we will be recognizable and able to identify our loved ones. I don't know how, but we will.

We will definitely recognize Moses, when we see him in heaven. Because he would have a flat face. According to the Book of Exodus, whenever the Lord God spoke to him, he fell flat on his face.

3) Planets

1 Corinthians 15:40-41 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

41 There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

Our future bodies will be different, not only from our present ones, but from those of others.

Interestingly, the Greek word of "celestial" is "epouranios" and it means "existing in heaven." And the Greek word of "terrestrial" is "epigeios" and it means "existing on earth." You've all heard "E.T. – Extraterrestrial" which means other planet people.

C. THE CONTRASTS

Methodically Paul gives 4 great comparisons between the earthly body and heavenly body differences:

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1) Corruptible vs. Incorruptible:

Long ago I was watching a debate between a University of Arizona professor who was an unbeliever and a Christian scientist. The Christian scientist was all over the professor from the U of A throughout the entire debate. In his desperation, this pro-

fessor asked a young lady who was in the audience this question to counter the Christian scientist, "Are you smarter than when you were a baby, are you not?" The young lady was caught off guard and she answered, "I guess." She should have said, "Yes, I am smarter than when I was a baby, but I am decaying."

No matter how much money we have, or how famous we are, or how many times we have done nip and tuck cosmetic surgeries, we cannot deny our age. Our body function is going downhill ever since we came out of our mother's wombs. But the born-again Christians will have heavenly bodies that no longer decay like the ones we have now.

If you were disabled on earth, you won't be disabled in heaven. If your body on earth was broken by the ravages of age or disease, that won't be the case in your heavenly Father's house.

The Bible says that our resurrection bodies will resemble the resurrection body of Christ. Think of it!

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

What were the differences between the resurrection body of Jesus and the body that was put to death on the cross? When Jesus walked among us on this earth, He voluntarily exposed Himself to the limitations of humanity. Just like everyone else, He got sleepy, thirsty, tired, and hungry. In His resurrected body there were similarities to the old body, but major differences, too. He could do things He never did in His old body. He would suddenly appear in a room without using a door. And we also know that Jesus ascended through the air, higher and higher, until He disappeared from sight into the clouds without any help of airplane or hot air balloon.

2) Dishonor vs. Glory:

As long as we live in these bodies, we sin against God due to our natural born sinful nature, but once we have heavenly bodies, we will no longer have any of the sinful nature which means no more sin.

Our present bodies are not only perishable, they're dishonorable; but our future bodies, will not only be imperishable but glorious.

3) Weakness vs. Power:

It doesn't matter how strong you are, you still weak to compare with the bodies we will receive when we get to heaven. With heavenly bodies, we'll no longer be ruled by gravity or time, nor limited by our physical capability.

4) Natural vs. Spiritual:

In our natural bodies, we're dominated by the desires of our natural man, desires we must constantly fight against. But in our future, spiritual bodies, we will be dominated by the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore live as Christ lives – in complete holiness and submission to the Father, just like Jesus. I cannot wait to be like that, don't you?

D. ADAM AND CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spir-

itual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Paul wraps up his reply to the Corinthians with a quick comparison / contrast of Adam and Christ.

Adam and Christ have at least two things in common: their beginnings were both unique and sinless. But what they accomplished was altogether different. Formed from the dust of the ground, Adam gave natural life and death through damnation due to his disobedience to God to the entire human race. But, conceived by the Spirit, Jesus is able to give spiritual life to all who believe.

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The Bible, according to Hebrews 7, declares that Levi was in the loins of Abraham, when Melchizedek met him. It is a certain truth that the believer was in the loins of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, when in eternity the covenant of grace was made sure forever.

Colossians 2:9-13 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses

Whatever Christ has done, He has accomplished for the whole body of His Church. We were crucified with Him and buried with Him, and to make it still more wonderful, we are risen with Him and even ascended with Him to the seats on high.

Adam's righteousness was ours so long as he maintained it, and his sin was ours the moment that he committed it; and in the same way, all that the Second Adam is or does is ours as well as His because He is our representative.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) God designed your body for you, so accept it as it is for His glory.

2) God planned the distinctions between you and others, so don't compare yourself to anyone else.

Playing the comparison game – with jobs, intelligence, looks, gifts, or wealth – is a no-win situation. It is a great way to have ego or depression. Be content with how He's made you. Be grateful that He loves you enough to choose you as His child.

3) God predicted that your body would have certain limitations while we are here, so stop condemning yourself.