

3. The Resurrection Body

Insights into Eternity

Going Home

There is something special about coming home to what is familiar after being away for some time, whether for vacation, work, or some other reason. There are sounds, smells, and visual reminders when we walk back into our everyday surroundings. It is a very comforting feeling to be at home. We even say about some relationships, that we feel "at home" with a particular person. What we mean is, that person makes us feel like we can kick back and be ourselves, like when we are at home. Everyone should have a place of rest, a place to call their home. Before He left this world, Jesus promised us that He would prepare such a place for us. A place where we will dwell with Him, a home like no other. The house we have known in this life, no matter how humble or grand, will pale compared to what He has prepared for those who are His.

When I was just a teenager, I worked as a dishwasher on the Avalon cruise liner. The ship traveled from England to North Africa, visiting Tangiers and Casablanca in Morocco, Gibraltar, and Spain. The temperature was in the upper 90's, and there was no air conditioning on the vessel, and we worked very long hours. The worst part was working in the kitchen/galley, which was much hotter than on the deck. We had to take salt tablets every day because of excessive sweating. I worked long, hard hours for two weeks, but it felt much longer due to the hard work. I remember weeping when the ship finally passed the White Cliffs of Dover, England; home was just an hour away! It was an emotional moment.

1) What is your favorite story of returning home? Share a time that sticks in your mind; what was it that made returning home feel so good?

There is the story of an old missionary couple, the Morrison's, who finally returned to America after serving Christ as missionaries in Africa for 40 years. On the same ship was Teddy Roosevelt, the American president at the time, who was returning from an African Safari. Bands and parades were going on in New York as everybody turned up at the dock to welcome Teddy as his transatlantic liner came alongside the quay. The crowds and press were waiting to catch a glimpse of Teddy finally returning home. The Morrison's were sad as they left the port that day as they had little money and only enough for a small apartment. Henry was quite low as he saw the welcome that Teddy Roosevelt received. He told his wife that something had to be wrong, as they had given 40 years of their lives in Christian missionary work, and no one cared enough even to come to the dock to welcome them home. His wise wife told him to go to the Lord in prayer about it. A little while later, he returned, with a beaming smile on his face, having been reminded by the Lord, "You are not home yet, Henry."

If you ever grow weary of this life, remind yourself, "You're not home yet." Likewise, if you become complacent and are living a carefree lifestyle putting all of your resources and effort into enjoying the comforts of this life, think about this: This is not all there is. If you are a believer, this sinful world is not your eternal home. This life is just for a short while, and the time will come when the Lord will take us home to be with Him. We will pull out our tent pegs and

collapse the tent (2 Corinthians 5:1-4), either at departure from the body (death) or when the Lord will return for us according to His promise.

¹"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ²"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³"If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:1-3).

In our previous study, we talked about the coming of the Lord for His Church when He will reward those possessing godly character, faithfulness, and service. In this study, we will look at the resurrection body that believers will receive at the coming of Christ. The Lord knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2:19), and He will send forth His angels and gather those who have received His gift of salvation:

And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:31).

I differ from some Bible teachers who teach that Christ has two second comings, one before the time of tribulation or persecution and one after. I believe that there is one second coming of Christ. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we told of two second comings of Christ. At the coming of Christ, the Church is raptured or caught up together with Him in the clouds:

¹³Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** ¹⁵According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with **a loud command**, with the voice of the archangel and with **the trumpet call** of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first.** ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

The passage above is the classic passage about the rapture of the Church. As we have said elsewhere in these studies, the word *rapture* is not found in the Bible. We get the English word "rapture" from the Latin word *rapere*, which translates the Greek word *Harpazo*. This word means to be *snatched up*. It is translated into English in the passage above with "caught up" (v. 17). This event will be preceded by a loud shout from the Lord Jesus Himself. I wonder what words will issue from His lips in a loud command. Those on earth will also hear a loud trumpet call. All believers in Christ who have died/slept in Christ will be brought with Jesus (v. 14) and instantly changed and reunited with their bodies. Those still alive on earth will see this happening before they are caught up together with all believer's worldwide.

2) What's the significance or purpose of receiving a new body after our spirit/soul has gone to heaven?

The Resurrection of the Body

This event that we call the rapture of the Church is the same phenomenon in a different passage of scripture that we call the resurrection. At the rapture of the Church, our bodies will be instantly changed, just as Jesus' body was when God raised Him from the dead. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth about the Day when all believers will be raised from the dead:

⁵⁰Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but **we will all be changed**, ⁵²in 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** (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

This same event is preceded by the blast of a trumpet and the dead raised, and I believe they speak of the same event, the rapture or resurrection from death. There are not two raisings of the dead; the rapture and the resurrection are the same events. Our earthly tent, this sinful body we all have in this world, will be changed instantaneously. This change occurs in "a moment" (v. 52). The Greek word used is *atomō*; we get the English word "atom" from this word. It describes an atomic particle of a second—instantaneously, the Lord will change our fleshly body to be like His. Twice the word "changed" is used and only in this passage of Scripture. The Greek word is *allagēsometha*. It means to change, alter, transform. Before he tells us about this transformation, Paul the apostle introduces this event by writing about what happens to seeds. Let's try and understand what he is communicating. We need to go back a bit in the passage as he writes about the process of how we as Christians come to receive a glorified body:

³⁵But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" ³⁶How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. ³⁹All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. ⁴⁰There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. ⁴²So will it be with the resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:35-42).

Paul uses the analogy of a seed. He writes that a seed differs significantly from the plant that comes from it. He says that our physical body is but a seed that, when sown at the death of the body, will be significantly changed when this sinful age is over, and the resurrection of the body occurs. Before we talk more about the resurrection body, we have to understand how this transformation comes about.

The Life of God Sown in Our Hearts

When people give their lives to Christ, something happens within. They are regenerated or born-again by the Spirit. Jesus said that without this experience of being born again or born from above, no one could see the kingdom of God:

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3).

The apostle Peter writes, “In his great mercy he has given us **new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). A spiritual seed begins to grow in us from that point, slowly transforming us through the word of God, and our trials and life experiences, into the image of Christ:

For you have been born again, not of ***perishable seed, but of imperishable***, through the ***living*** and enduring ***word of God*** (1 Peter 1:23).

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; ***I have come that they may have life***, and have it to the full (John 10:10).

The characteristic of this living seed is spiritual life but more full, abundant, eternal, and imperishable. The Greek word translated “*life*” in the above passage of scripture is the word *zōē*. It means: “to live.” My Key Word Study Bible says of this word:

It is a somewhat metaphysical term which denotes the very life force itself, the vital principle which animates living beings. *Zōē* is used most in connection with eternal life. This life is the very life of God of which believers are made partakers.¹

I don't understand how words can be seeds, but I do not doubt the power of words. God spoke His Word and created the world. Throughout Genesis chapter one, the creation was brought about by God speaking His Word. For instance, God said, “**Let there be light,**” and there was light (Genesis 1:3). Take a look at how many times the words “And God said” are written. There is great power in the spoken word of God.

In our passage in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says that God is the One who determines what the seed will become when it grows up (v. 38). He says that there are different kinds of physical bodies on planet earth, men, animals, birds, and fish. All physical creatures born on earth come from seeds. I see Paul making two different analogies when he talks about a seed:

In some way, our resurrection body will be recognizable as us, but it will be as different as a seed is as different as the plant that comes from it. Paul writes:

When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else (1 Corinthians 15:37).

Within the seed is the DNA of the physical body. Oranges do not grow from apple seeds. There is a continuity of life shared between the seed and the body it will become. Our heavenly

¹ Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Page 1630.

resurrected bodies will be somewhat like the seed of our earthly fleshly body. I believe we will recognize one another in our resurrection bodies.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

Just as our physical life was inherited from Adam in that we became like him, in the same way, we will also be like the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, at the Resurrection. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:49).

But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Paul says that there will be varying degrees of glory between believers that occur at the time of this change. He likens it to the planetary stars and planets having differing degrees of brightness or glory. God has created our physical bodies to live in the physical realm; however, this physical body must be redeemed and changed into the spiritual and physical body that God has planned for us to put on.

The life we received from Adam is not enough for us to enter this heavenly kingdom without this addition of the life we receive from Christ—the gift of God. Just as a computer program needs an update, there is also an update from God to live in both realms of existence, the heavenly and the physical realm. I believe that God's plan for redeemed humanity, the Church of the Living God, is for the saints to be able to live in the spiritual realm as well as the physical realm, just as Christ did in the 40 days after His resurrection. Christ Jesus did not leave His body on earth somewhere; He abides in heaven with a physical and spiritual resurrected body. Isn't that true of Enoch, the man of God? God enjoyed his company so much that he took him up to heaven in his physical being: “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away” (Genesis 5:24).

A similar thing happened to Elijah who was also taken up to heaven still clothed with his physical body (2 Kings 2:11). Some say that Enoch and Elijah are the two witnesses mentioned in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:3), who testify of God's grace before being killed. Of course, three and a half days later, God raises them from the dead, much to the anger of the Antichrist's followers (Revelation 11:11).

The Transformative Death of Seeds

Spiritual life only comes at the death of the physical seed planted; the Lord Jesus Christ was that heavenly spiritual seed that gave His life for us as a seed:

²³Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single

seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life (John 12:23-25).

In our central passage about the resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:35-57), Paul wrote about Adam, the first man, being a living seed to bear all of us in his image. He then noted that the Last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving spirit (v. 45). Paul already mentioned earlier that what happened to Adam happened to us all. Adam was the representative of all of us because he was the federal head of the human race. It may not seem fair for all of his progeny to inherit his sinful nature, but the life of that seed, Adam's sinful nature, was passed to all of us. But Christ has come Himself to be the federal head for all who receive God's full pardon. In this way, the Lord brings His divine life through another seed, one that is perfect and free from sin. **"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive"** (1 Corinthians 15:22). Just as Adam gave us our physical body, and with it, our sinful nature, Christ also provides us with this seed of new life planted in our hearts. He came to give us life!

The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; **the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.** ⁴⁶The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:42-49).

3) What words or sentences stand out to you from this passage? Share your thoughts about this new body.

The body that's raised from death will be entirely different from the one sown into the ground at our physical death. God will raise our resurrection body imperishable, which means that it cannot perish. It will not wear out, grow old or ever get sick or diseased. Just as we received life in the physical realm from Adam, our forefather, Christians receive spiritual life from the last Adam, Jesus. Christ is called the Last Adam so that we should not expect another. As we have put on Adam's likeness, thanks be to God, we will also put on the image of the glory of Christ.

⁵⁰I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but **we will all be changed**— ⁵²in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and **we will be changed.** ⁵³For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

We Shall Be Changed and Transformed.

That which is on the inside, our character, will someday be revealed. It won't be the same as our old nature; Paul writes that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (v. 50). It will no longer be perishable but imperishable (v. 53). We won't all sleep; (not all Christians will be separated from their bodies); some will be transformed instantly without going through the death process. When Christ comes, in a flash, in the batting of an eye's time, God will change us from having a perishable body to being clothed with an imperishable body (vv. 51-52).

...the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will ***transform*** our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21).

The Greek word translated into English as *transform* is the word *Metaschēmatisō*. It is a construction of two Greek words. *Meta* means a change of place or condition, and *schēma* means shape or outward form. To transform, change the outward form or appearance of something, refashion, reshape.²

4) What do you think it means to have an imperishable and immortal body? (1 Corinthians 15:42). What do you think we'll be able to do that we haven't been able to do until that point?

An imperishable body means that it won't age or get sick. Our new bodies will be glorious all of the time. You will always have youthful strength and be radiantly beautiful with God's glory radiating from you. Just as Jesus walked through walls into the upper room when the door was locked for fear of the Jews (John 20:19), we also will be able to pass through walls and travel instantaneously, not bound by the physical realm. Our new bodies will not be limited to only one sphere of existence. We cannot comprehend this now due to being limited in this life to this dimension on earth. Just as a vast Redwood tree cannot be compared to the seed from which it grows, our spiritual bodies will transcend what we can imagine.

Paul says that our new body will be like Christ's glorious body (Philippians 3:20). The radiance of Christ emanating from us will be authoritative, beautiful, and will show God's transformative power. The Lord said that "***the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father***" (Matthew 13:43. *Emphasis mine*). Those who are Christ's will command respect, a respect that is born of wisdom from above. There will be kindness and joy that will be ours. It will also be a powerful body (1 Corinthians 15:43). I don't think this speaks only of strength, although that certainly will be part of it; but I believe there will be power and authority to work the miraculous just as Jesus did and still does. We will participate with Him to not only worship Him but to do His will. Our bodies will be raised, and we will see His face and be transformed into His image. The prophet Daniel also speaks of that time:

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—

² Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Page 1651.

will be delivered. ²Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:1-3).

Daniel says that this will happen during a time of distress such as never before. But at that time (v. 1), everyone whose name is written in God's book—will be delivered. I believe that what Daniel is talking about is the rapture of the saints during the tribulation or time of distress. In the second session, *Preparing for Eternity*, we said that one of the things you can take with you to heaven was other people; here in this passage, those who invest their lives to touch other lives for Christ will be like the stars forever and ever. I cannot comprehend what it would mean to shine like a star, but it sure sounds like a reward that would be wonderful, worth my effort and devotion to Christ in this life! That which God is doing on the inside of you and through you will be made known, and it will be glorious, the chrysalis of this old decaying body will put on an immortal body, just like our Lord's. It will be time to go home! Graduation day at last! Nothing in this life will hold us back any longer. When we go to a believer's funeral and look at the dead body of a loved one, we must see beyond this world to a glorious new day when together we will put on our magnificent resurrection body and reflect the glory of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for preparing a place for us. Thank you for the message of the free ticket to heaven to be with You. May all that hear and read these words not put off receiving new life for a later date but respond to your offer of complete forgiveness of sin. May your light shine in us ever brighter. Amen.

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