

DEATH AND AFTER

The Resurrected Body and Death

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Christianity gives a future hope for the eternal existence of one's body after death. Man is body and soul (material and immaterial) and Christianity alone gives a prominent place to the body in life and after death (I Cor. 6:13-14; Rom. 8:23). The Bible promises that all true believers in Jesus Christ shall have a redeemed body that will be free from the presence of sin (Rom. 13:11; I Pet. 1:3-5; Heb. 9:28). NOTE: God has created the believer's body for Himself and He will not be satisfied until He makes that body perfect and suited for His presence.
- B. The Christian's anticipation of his resurrected body is part of his "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). It is this hope of a new body that comforts the Christian as he lives this present life with a decaying body.

II. THE RESURRECTED BODY IN LIGHT OF I CORINTHIANS 15:35-50

- A. The Similarities Between the Present Body and the Resurrected Body (I Cor. 15:35-38): In this comparison of the grain of wheat and the future body, it is clearly stated that each Christian is to have his own body. This raises many questions. Will the new bodies contain every particle of the old bodies? Will it be the identical body as the one laid away in the grave? Will these bodies bear personally the characteristics they had while alive here on earth? What kind of a body will a child have who died in infancy?
 - 1. Same Substance Theory: Some have said that the future body will be the exact sameness of substance as the present body. Augustine thought that all the matter that composed the human body would be raised. Justin Martyr taught that cripples would rise as cripples but would in a moment be made perfect. OBJECTIONS: The decaying body in the grave soon vanishes and the atoms that composed this body pass into other forms of matter. Over a period of years, atoms that composed one body, passing from substance to substance, may find themselves a part of another human being. These atoms could not be a part of two or more resurrection bodies, because this would require one atom to be two places at once. Also, if exactness of particles is required for identity, then cripples must rise cripples and the aged as aged and children as children, etc. This would destroy the whole concept of the "blessed hope" for a Christian looks for a day when he will have a perfect body. Furthermore, to have exact identity would be nearly impossible if one was created. NOTE: The exact identity theory has caused some Christians to think that burial in the ground is the only form of disposing of the body.
 - 2. Fundamental Principle Theory: Identity does not necessarily depend upon the possession of the same material. For example, we know that even in this present life our bodies are constantly changing. Scientists tell us that every seven years every particle of a man's body undergoes complete change. The man of sixty does not have one particle of the substance of his body he had when he was twenty years old. Yet, it would be unthinkable to deny that this

man was a different individual. In his new body, whatever particles it is composed of, the believer will not lose his identity, individuality or personality. NOTE: We definitely will be able to recognize one another in our resurrected bodies, and even children who died in infancy will have new bodies but they will be known through their individuality and personality. NOTE: This view would say that it does not make any difference how the body is disposed of, whether by burial in the earth or at sea or by cremation. The body will be of a different substance.

B. The Difference Between the Present Body and the Resurrected Body (I Cor. 15:42-50)

1. The Future Body is to be Incorruptible: The natural body is subject and liable now to disease and is in a continuous state of decay. However, the future body is to be incorruptible, relieved from pain and sickness, and no more a slave to decomposition.
2. The Future Body is to be Raised in Glory: The natural body is sown in dishonor, indicating its lowliness befitting its residence on earth. However, it will be raised with a beautiful appearance and will be glorified.
3. The Future Body is to be Raised in Power: The natural body is weak. It is feeble in structure, easily worn out, a victim of continued waste, in frequent need of medical care, unpredictable and limited in knowledge. However, the new body will have enlarged powers and be incapable of fatigue. The body will have soundness of health, activity and will no longer be hampered by the limitation of time and space. NOTE: One of the major powers of this present body to be enlarged will be the intellect. Because of the increased mental capacities the Christian will, undoubtedly, be able to recognize his loved ones in heaven; he will be able to comprehend to a greater degree God's mind and many things that he is uncertain about now will become clear.
4. The Future Body is to be Raised a Spiritual Body: The resurrected body will be a spirit-like body. It will not be all material nor will it be all spirit, but will be a body fitted to and dominated by the spirit. Furthermore, it will be perfectly adapted to the new order of nature in which it is to live.
5. The Future Body is to be a Heavenly Body: The new body is to be heavenly in nature in contrast to this earthly body. The believer looks forward to the day when he shall receive his heavenly body, suited for a heavenly existence.

III. THE RESURRECTED BODY IN LIGHT OF PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

- A. This verse tells us that the believer's new body will be changed into the very likeness of Christ's glorious body. The believer's present body of humiliation limits intellectual development, spiritual growth and enjoyment; it is readily fatigued, prone to pain and in a continuous state of putrefaction. However, the Bible tells us that the believer's body is a body with a destiny; it is to be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.
- B. Christ's body possesses glory. His body occupies the highest position in the universe. This was the body that was accepted by the Father to be in His presence. Therefore, we may assume because the Christian's body is to be like Christ's body, it is set for the highest of all destinies.

IV. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTED BODY

- A. Introduction: Christ's present body is the pattern of the believer's body. All the facts concerning Christ's resurrected body may be applied to the believer's future body. NOTE: However, it must be remembered that Christ's body was not yet fully glorified; it was in the transition between resurrection and ascension. Though there is no scriptural basis for it, it may well be that Christ's resurrected body took on many more wonderful characteristics in its completed, glorified state.
- B. Similarities Between Christ's Resurrected Body and Earthly Body
1. A Recognizable Body: Christ was easily recognized by the disciples (John 20:25; 21:1). Thomas felt the wounds of Christ (John 20:25-29). Also, Christ's voice was recognizable by Mary (John 20:16).
 2. A Body That Retained Some Functions of the Human Body: Christ could eat but this does not mean that His body was dependent upon food for nourishment (Luke 24:42-43). So it will be with the believer's future body; he may abstain from or indulge in eating, depending upon his desires. It is also stated that Christ breathed (John 20:22). However, it will not be necessary to breathe as we know it. In the present body, breathing supplies oxygen to the blood and the blood takes oxygen to the cells. The new body will not have blood for the Bible states that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:15). If there is no blood, there will be no need for the breathing process.
 3. A Body of Material Substance: Christ Himself said that His resurrected body was composed of "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39-40). It must have been a different kind of flesh than human flesh but this does indicate that His body had a physical structure. His bodily frame was apparently covered with some type of flesh; yet this fleshy covering will not be like corruptible human flesh. Thomas felt Christ's wounds; therefore, we know Christ's new body was corporeal.
- C. Differences Between Christ's Resurrected Body and Earthly Body
1. Possessed Spiritual Qualities: Our Lord, in His resurrected state, was able to pass through material objects with ease, for we know he entered into a closed room without passing through doors (John 20:19; Luke 24:36), and He passed through the grave-clothes, which were laden with heavy spices, for they lay as the body had withdrawn from them (John 20:6-7). Because He was able to pass through walls doesn't mean that He was spirit only, for it was clearly shown that His body was composed of material substance. It was a corporeal body but not the same material substance as that of His human body. NOTE: Science states that if the molecular make-up of the human body could be changed it could easily pass through walls.
 2. Adjustable: In His resurrected state, Christ fellowshiped and intimately associated with the disciples. There were no apparent difficulties in the intermingling of Christ's resurrected body with the bodies of earthly men (John 21:12-13). NOTE: This is a strong argument against those who claim that resurrected saints and people of the earth will not be able to associate in the Millennium.
 3. Unfatiguable: There is no record that Christ's body was tired after His resurrection. He traveled great distances without fatigue. There is also no mention of Christ sleeping after His resurrection. NOTE: Think of the time

that will be saved if we will not have to sleep. We will have more time to worship and serve Christ in eternity.

4. Not Limited by Time and Space: After His resurrection, Christ's body could appear or disappear at will. Christ also readily ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9; Luke 24:51), which shows He was not bound by time or space or by the physical laws of nature. NOTE: So, too, the believer's new body will not be hampered by the natural laws here on earth, but will be able to rise above the laws of time and space, and traveling great distances will be a normal activity, even into heavenly places.