

The Weight of Glory—Talks about Heaven
(3) The Glories of heaven—brand new bodies
1 Corinthians 15:35-58
January 22nd 2023
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I have a question for you. It's a little delicate, so brace yourself! Are you happy with your body? How we answer that question will of course, depend upon all sorts of factors, such age, and whether we are a man or a woman!

You may be aware of the stereotypical joke— flabby bloke looks into the mirror and sees an illusionary Ronaldo physique staring back at him! Pretty woman looks into the mirror, but alas, sees a not-so-attractive lady staring back! Those differences aside, my guess is that most people would answer our question in the negative, “No I'm not really happy with my body!” We wish we were, perhaps, a little taller, a little shorter, a little thinner, a little fatter, and so it goes on. Most of us, for one reason or another are not happy with our bodies, the dissatisfaction growing with age.

On Sunday mornings, we're considering together the believer's glorious future inheritance and today we learn that in heaven we'll be given glorious new bodies!

If holidays aren't selling, the travel company needs to talk to the advertising department: are they failing to describe to their customers, the stunning Caribbean beaches that await, or the breath-taking mountain vistas in Colorado that lie ahead? And in the same way, could it be that *one reason* Christians are not heavenly minded enough, is that our preachers have failed to describe the amazing glories of the world to come? One of the purposes of these Sunday morning sermons is to correct that deficiency! If there is a key verse to all these sermons about heaven, it's this: “*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*” (2 Cor 4:18)

This morning we shall attempt to describe the brand new resurrection bodies we shall possess in that glorious new world! I use the word “*attempt*” because it is impossible to fully describe the glories to come! “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him*” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Nevertheless, this morning we shall share from the Scriptures that...

#1 Our new bodies will be similar to this body but far more glorious!

The main chapter we're considering this morning is 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Some sceptical Christians in the city of Corinth were debating the resurrection of the body. How can a body arise from a dead rotting corpse? And if it could, what would such a body look like? (It's not wrong to ask those kinds of questions, BTW; it's only becomes faithless if we go on *to doubt the power of God* to transform present bodies into the dazzling new bodies Scripture describes).

Paul's answer to the sceptics, and the witness of all of Scripture is that our new resurrection bodies will be similar, but far more glorious than our present ones.

Paul uses the analogy of a seed and the plant that emerges from it, to help us grasp this change, *"When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives it's own body."* (verse 37-38)

Seeds look ordinary. But if you place this ordinary looking entity into the soil a most beautiful plant or flower emerges: an orchid, a tulip; hyacinth, a rose, a carnation! In the same way, our new bodies will be far more attractive and glorious than our present seed-like bodies that go down into the grave on the day of our burial!

In verses 42-44 Paul draws 4 contrasts between our present seed-like bodies and the flower-like bodies which will rise on the day of resurrection:

1. Our new bodies will not grow old! *"The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable"* (42). Our present bodies are perishable, as the years advance, they go down hill, things stop working properly, disease sets in until one day our bodies packs up. Footballers have to pack up their careers at around the relatively young age of 35, and it's even less for tennis players—more like 27 years. These bodies are dying!

A week or so ago, Lucile Randon, a French nun, died at the age of 118, the oldest known person in the world. Not many of us will reach the age of 118, because these bodies are perishable! But our new bodies will never grow old! No wrinkle will ever furrow our celestial brows, no injuries incapacitate, no disease ravage; we will remain eternally young!

Throughout history people have hunted for a potion, a they called it the elixir of “immortality” or the elixir of “eternal youth” to halt the process of aging, but all in vain!

Won't it be wonderful to have a body that never ages, a body that remains in the full bloom of eternal youth!

2. Our new bodies will be glorious! *“it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory!”*

Most of us are unhappy with our present bodies because in one way or another they are decaying, shabby, misshapen, dilapidated, in some way dishonourable. Certainly by the time we reach three-score and ten, we're not so proud of them anymore! Won't it be grand to possess a body we'll never be ashamed of but be everlastingly proud of!

3. Our new bodies will be powerful! *“sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”*

Our strength is limited! “Even youths grow tired and weary” Isaiah reminds us (chapter 40). *When we have exhausted our store of endurance, When our strength has failed before the day is half-done!* Reads one of our hymn! I don't know if you've seen the Ad “Are you tired of being tired?” Well sure enough, there's a potion to take away your tiredness! Floradix? This body is weak, it grows tired and thus we must rest and sleep, but won't it be wonderful to possess a never-tiring body?!

4. Our new bodies will be spiritual. The fourth and final contrast Paul makes between our present seed-like bodies and our new ones is this: *“it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body”*. Our new bodies will be spiritual. Paul does not mean that our new bodies won't be material like this one, but there will be something about them that is fitted for the new heavens and the new earth, we'll return to that thought in a moment. Won't it be wonderful, brothers and sisters, to have a body that never ages, a body we're always proud of, a powerful body, a body that in some dazzling new way is fitted for the new heavens and a new earth!?

Someone asks—can you be a little more specific and more concrete about this new body, please?! Well, yes, we can, and this our second point: our new bodies will be exactly like the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ!

#2 Our new bodies will be like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ

If we want to know what our new bodies will be like, then we need to read the resurrection accounts in the Gospels! Because the new bodies we shall receive are

exactly like his, not similar, not approximately, but precisely, literally, like his body: *“When he appears we will be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* (1 John 3:2), *“Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, 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)

When Jesus suddenly appeared to his disciples on one occasion, recorded in Luke 24, we read that they were startled and “frightened thinking they saw a ghost.” But Jesus wanted them to know he was not a ghost, that he had flesh and blood: *“Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see, a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”* (39) Jesus’ new resurrection body had flesh and bones, and so will ours! We shan’t have a tall blue body like in the movie Avatar, we shall look much like we presently do.

But while his resurrection body was similar to his pre-resurrection body it also was also triumphantly different: Mary mistook him for the gardener, the disciples thought he was a ghost; which is why he pointed to the scars of crucifixion: *“Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself!”* (What a solemn thought: the only person in heaven to bear the scars of this present life will be Jesus, whose hands and feet will bear eternal witness of his sacrificial love for us! Our scars will all be gone, but his are everlasting reminders: *“I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain standing in the centre of the throne...”* (Revelation 5:6)) Jesus’ new body was similar but different to his old body, and so it will be with us! Similar to this body, but gloriously other!

But perhaps the most amazing fact about the resurrected body of Jesus Christ is that it had new powers! And so will our new bodies! *“On the evening of the first day of the week (that is resurrection Sunday) when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them.”* (John 20:19) Jesus’ new body had new powers to move through locked doors! And so will our body have new powers!

And add to that, do you remember, Acts 1, the last time the disciples saw Jesus, *“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.”* (verse 9). The body of Jesus, flesh and blood, ascended upwards until a cloud hid him from view! Jesus’ new body could ascend against the natural downward pull of gravity!

Perhaps all those fictional Superman, Spiderman, Iron-man, heroes, with their extraordinary flying powers, tap into this human desire to possess a body that does not have the limitations of this present one! I'm not saying that we'll be like Superman but Jesus' resurrection body had new powers, and so will our new bodies!

#3 Our new bodies will be suited to the new heavens and earth

Our present bodies are unsuitable to the new heavens and the new earth! We need new bodies because we're going to a New Home, see 1 Corinthians 15:44-50.

These old bodies are mortal like Adam's body—every day Adam had to eat the fruit of the tree of life to keep on going for only God is immortal! This Adamic flesh and blood cannot go to heaven! And worse still, our bodies have been ravaged by the fall, they are broken, sinful, diseased, dying and weak! We need new bodies to be compatible with the new heavens and the new earth!

Trying to live in heaven with our old bodies, would be like trying to load Windows 11 onto a laptop designed for windows XP! The computer grinds on and on forever, unable to handle the weight of the new operating system. We need new bodies suited to the new world, the home of righteousness!

Have you ever thought: in heaven you will never sin, never find in your heart the struggle of Romans 7: *"in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body (this fallen body) waging war against the law of my mind making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (22-25)

New bodies! So what?

May I return to my opening question: you happy with your body? You say, no! But this morning we have been reminded that one day, soon, if we believe in Jesus Christ, we'll be given a new body that is similar but gloriously different from this one, a new body that is just like the resurrection body of Jesus, except for his scars! A new body that is suited to that new world. May I suggest that if we really believe what God's Word teaches, we should respond in two ways:

(1) Let's not spend too much money prettying up this old body, this dying shell! I'm not talking about medical essentials, I'm talking about the remarkable statistic that the average person in the UK spends over £3000 a year on their appearance, with men, spending more than women! The world is clearly obsessed with their present bodies! But if you and I are really looking forward to a new body, won't we be counter-cultural and spend that £3000 in different ways?

(2) Let us look forward to our glorious new bodies with hope! Romans 8:22-25. It's right and proper to feel frustrated by the limitations, the tiredness, the pain, the weakness of these present bodies, but let's learn to turn these sighs into reminders of glory to come, and wait patiently for heaven!