



What Christians Believe
The Apostles Creed
(13) I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body
1 Corinthians 15
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Resuscitation is not Resurrection!

When I was training to be a pastor, I had to preach regularly in a hospital ward. On one visit I went to talk to an elderly lady who I recognised from the previous week. She was looking very downhearted so I asked her why. She said, "I died last week. They resuscitated me, but I didn't want to be resuscitated. My body is worn out, I am weary and it was my time to go. I don't want to be here anymore." (So sad!)

Putting aside the whys and wherefores of resuscitation, death is what will happen to all of us: little by little the joy of living will decline as the body wears out. King Solomon described the winter of life as the years when folk say: "I find no pleasure in them," the years when "*the light and the moon and stars grow dark*" (eyesight), and "*the grinders cease because they are few*" (teeth), and folk are "*afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets*" (mental frailty).

Solomon lists the declining faculties of old age in Ecclesiastes chapter 12, as a wake up call to young people, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth" he says, before those days come, while you can, while you have mind & health.

But let us suppose, for a moment, that the medical staff had offered to that elderly lady, not *resuscitation*, but *resurrection*! Suppose she had been offered a brand new body: not the worn out jalopy of her past life, but a new never-die Rolls Royce body! And suppose she had been told that this new life would take place in a brand new world, far better than this one— a world without death or pain! I believe she would have accepted resurrection and received it with open arms, as would all of us. And that is what the Good News of Jesus Christ offers! Jesus offers to everyone who will believe in Him, a brand new body in a brand new eternal and glorious world!

In our long series of sermons on the Apostle's Creed, we've arrived at the second to last line: "*I believe in the resurrection of the body.*" Just as Jesus himself rose from the dead, never to die again, so everyone who believes in him will also one day rise from the dead never to die again, and this is the Christian's great hope! "*We groan (we sigh!, says Paul) longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.*" (2 Cor 5:2) "*we... who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved.*" (Romans 8:23-24)

Sometimes my wife Yvonne will say to me, "Why did you just sigh?" And I don't know why! Sometimes I think it may be because I've just heard some sad news in the church, but other times I think it is the Holy Spirit within me sighing for the better world to come.

The great hope held out in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that one day when Jesus Christ returns in power and majesty, he will renew the heavens and the earth, raise all who believe in him from the dead with new resurrection bodies, and they will live forever on a renewed earth where *“God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.”* (Rev 21:3-4)

Reasons for the loss of this hope

We must ask ourselves, if this is our grand future hope, why it does not burn very brightly in our minds and hearts today; I am thinking, especially in our western churches. Why aren't we brimming full with future hope?

(1) Perhaps our present lives are so comfortable, we are so wealthy, healthy and happy with material possessions that we've got heaven here and now! No need for a future heaven!

*(2) Perhaps we fear we'll be mocked by some scientists, so we just say nothing? If that is so, we should remember that in every age Christian hope has been mocked. In the first few centuries of Christianity, people mocked the resurrection of the body because Greeks despised the body and only prized the mind. “Why would anyone want to live forever in a *body*?!” And let's always make the distinction between what some scientists say and what science itself says, for not a single line in the wonderful world of science contradicts the resurrection of the body. We need to pray for greater courage!! Who cares if folk mock us? It is nothing new!*

*(3) Perhaps we have lost this great hope because of the liberal Gospel. Liberal churches preach that what matters most is *making this world a better place*, not preparing people for *the world to come*. Feed the poor, save the planet, work for justice—these should be the priorities of the church, not saving souls for some future paradise. Perhaps we've been seduced by the lie of the social Gospel. And it is a lie because Jesus always put eternity above time: *“What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world (money, health, justice..) but loses his soul (goes to hell)?”* (Mark 8:36) Saving souls which live forever is more important than healing the body which dies. It's not that material needs are unimportant, but the best way of caring for those needs is to preach the Gospel, which transforms lives and communities for the good! (PAUSE) For whatever reasons, we are too silent about resurrection hope, so let's hope and pray that this line of the apostle's Creed will help us to renew that hope!*

Let me say three wonderful things about our new bodies, and then conclude with three ways this truth should shape our lives here and now!

(1) We will live forever in a new resurrection body!

The first thing to say is that in heaven we will have real bodies. We won't live as spirits without bodies, but we will possess a real renewed human body. And that is because by definition a human being is a body as well as a soul.

You and I are made up of a body and a soul, a material part of us and a non-material part. The material part of us is easy to identify, eyes, head, hands, and so on.

The invisible part is the grand combination of invisible mind, soul, spirit, emotions, self, and so on. And when God made Adam he took *matter* (which became the visible body) and *breathed life* into him (the invisible self) so Adam, we read *“became A living being..”* Although Adam was made out of matter and spirit the finished product was a fusion of the two, so that he was not two different parts bolted together but one single living entity body and spirit. A psycho-somatic unity! Our bodies affect our souls

and our souls affect our bodies, both of them are totally connected to the other, and both of them are just as important as the other. The inner self, expresses itself through the body. Both body and soul fused together make us the one person we are.

This unity of body and soul explains why all of us are so concerned about our looks, our bodies!

This is embarrassing to admit but when we are filming these sermons, I sometimes say to my son who is behind the cameras, "Luke don't let the near camera zoom in too close otherwise it will show up all the imperfections on my face! Vain or what!

If we were to spend eternity only as a spirit, that would not be us! No, the real me, the real you is body and spirit combined, and that is what we will possess in heaven. We will have bodies in heaven! Body and Soul.

(2) Our new Body will be like this one...

What will those new bodies be like? Well they will be quite similar to our present bodies, that's the second truth to share. How do we know that? Because they will be like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ... "*...When Jesus appears we will be like him, for we shall see him as he is...*" (1 John 3:2) ...and the resurrected body of Jesus was much like his pre-resurrected body: that's how the disciples were convinced Jesus had risen from the dead, the Jesus before and after looked much the same!

So consider your present body! You have hands and feet, eyes, and so on; our new resurrection bodies will be much like these ones.....but I hear someone saying, "Oh dear! I'm not sure I want a body like the one I now have!" I came across a cartoon, of a woman praying: "*Lord, not necessarily a Miss World body but something a little better than the one I've got!!*" (*Miss World*, yes I know it's not PC, but you get the point!) And all of us can identify with the sentiment, can't we? We're all unhappy about different aspects of our bodies? So the third truth we need to know is that our new bodies will be far more glorious than our present bodies!

(3) ..our new bodies will be far more glorious than our today bodies

The body of Jesus. It seems clear that Jesus' resurrected body had new powers. He could appear in locked rooms, he could transport long distances; perhaps he was not always recognised because his body was gloriously new.

In I Corinthians 15, Paul describes our wonderful new bodies by using the analogy of a seed and the plant that then emerges from the plant: When you look at a humble sunflower seed, you'd never imagine it could produce the glorious sunflower that emerges! And in exactly the same way, says Paul, the new glorious bodies that emerge on the day of resurrection will be so much more wonderful than the body that was placed into the ground. For example, says Paul, our new bodies won't perish, they will never age and never die. For example, says Paul, our new bodies will be glorious, compared with our not so glorious bodies here below—filled with imperfections and ravaged by disease and the march of the years. No wrinkles in heaven! For example, says Paul, our bodies in heaven will be powerful, compared to these weak bodies which so easily tire and grow weary. For example, says Paul, our bodies in heaven will be spiritual bodies—we don't know exactly what that means—but they will be made fit for that new and eternal world to come. So glorious will those bodies be, says Paul in Romans 8, that all of creation is waiting to see them! Like the congregation at a wedding who are waiting to see the beauty of the bride, creation is waiting to see what the renewed children of God will be like! "Creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." (19)

So brothers and sisters when we affirm, “I believe in the resurrection of the body” we are saying that we sincerely believe these things:

- that we will live forever in a body
- that our new bodies will be like our present bodies...
- ..but far more glorious!

And if we really believe these wonderful truths, then we should surely respond in at least three ways:

How should we respond?

(1) Let's not be over - concerned about our present bodies. We live in an image-obsessed world, and the visual internet and social media has only increased our obsession—and anxiety—with how we look. Women, UK, spend an average of £872 on beauty products every year and men, not far behind, an average of £760. I believe that a Christian will be different in the way they spend their money on beauty products. Our bodies are important, but these ones are not all that important because we are getting new ones! In the second place...

(2) Let's eagerly and thoughtfully look forward to our new heavenly bodies. Do you remember the friend I mentioned last week, whose mind had been so wired by decades of alcohol abuse that all he could think of was where he would get his next pint? In heaven we get new brains which will be free not only of all the congenital defects we were born with, but of the damaged wiring caused by years of sin.

Richard Wurmbrand, tortured by the communists, writes, “They carved me in a dozen places and burned and cut 18 holes in my body,.” I make that 30 injuries at least. All healed in heaven!

One of the tortures he suffered was being put in a refrigerator until he almost died – a doctor peered through the porthole and commanded the guards to bring him out just before he died – then after he had been thawed he was put back there. This had wired his brain to fear all refrigerators. In later years he would sometimes panic when he opened a fridge at home. In heaven, a new brain, new wiring, fears gone.

If past sin has wired your brain for one temptation or another, you should look forward to the day when you will be made brand new “in the twinkling of an eye” writes Paul.

We should look forward to that our new bodies! And finally,

(3) Let's make sure we include the resurrection of the body in every Gospel presentation! Because it belongs there! In the book of Acts we find the apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus more than we do! Not only because the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that he is God but also because his resurrection is the proof that we too will one day be raised! Proof of our future hope! We should be saying to people, that after this short life is over, if they will believe in Jesus Christ, they'll be given glorious new bodies and live forever in a new world. That's the Gospel!

What about you? Do you know that you are going to have a new body in heaven? I know I am, I am convinced of that! And you too can have that hope if you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and your Lord. Here is the promise of Jesus to everyone: “For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day..” John 6:40