

## The Creed Part 7 The Resurrection of the Body

One of the most persistent questions people have asked throughout history is whether or not there is life after death. The Smithsonian Institute reports that the oldest known discovery of intentional human burial dates back about 100,000 years and was found in a cave in Qafzeh, Israel. Most of the oldest human remains are found in the Holy Land near Nazareth and Skhul Cave. The Egyptians believed that their leaders survived death anticipating life to come as they built pyramids as tombs for their kings, the Babylonians buried household goods in the graves of their loved ones to take along to their new life, and the Hebrew prophets and psalmists hinted at a shadowy life in an underworld they called Sheol. Even today, there are competing ideas about what exactly happens to a person when they die.

What we believe about death affects both how we face our death and how we grieve the loss of those we love. However, the Apostles' Creed boldly proclaims, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." What do we mean when we affirm this phrase in the Creed? In consideration of this affirmation of faith, there are three matters to consider: the bodies we have, the death we will die, and the resurrection Christians of faith will enjoy. Let's pray.

Lord, we praise you for the resurrection that instills hope in us. Teach us to recognize the profound impact of salvation on the world. Forgive us if we have shied away from sharing the gospel due to feelings of inadequacy or discomfort. We are reminded of the immense power of resurrection and inspired by the unwavering truth of the gospel. This truth, this promise of resurrection, is not just a comforting thought but a powerful reality that ignites and fortifies our faith. It is our anchor in times of uncertainty and fear. Amen.

I think we all might have some love/hate relationship with our bodies, and yet we feed and pamper our bodies, cook foods we like to eat and spend money on clothes to wear. Maybe we do things to get into shape or to keep our weight down. We invest money in taking care of our bodies, and yet, on the other hand, we can often become disappointed in the way we look or feel, which can usually sadden our moods. We might think that we are too short or too tall, too thin or overweight, or that some part of our body grows weirdly out of shape. Some of us are challenged without hair, and so it becomes easy to understand how a person can be unsatisfied with their body. But in the midst of these challenges, we find comfort in the promise of resurrection, a promise that transcends our physical imperfections and offers us a new, perfect body in the life to come.

I always wanted to be taller so that I could quickly dunk a basketball or rise above all others on the volleyball court in order to spike the ball straight down over the opposing players. When I was younger, I longed for a full head of hair, but I am confident that I was not alone in my moments of dissatisfaction. We see supermodels on television who complain about their bodies taking drastic measures to lose weight through some magic pill or potion while finding themselves unattractive in some small measure. There is no doubt that as we age, our bodies let us down. We come to experience a sense of loss when our bodies can no longer do the things they once did. As I have gotten older, my previous sports injuries have made it more difficult to heal. But our bodies are more than just physical, for we have spirits and a soul, and there is an

interrelatedness to these things that is simply a mystery. But we all know that one day, our bodies will become mere shells of what they once were, going from pink to gray.

The Bible clearly teaches that God created our bodies, and they are fearfully and wonderfully made. But the Bible also says that through the sin of Adam and Eve, death and decay entered the world, and now we suffer from the effects of humanity's fall from grace. Our bodies and all of creation have been affected, and the frustration we experience over the flaws, limitations, and eventual death of our physical bodies is evidence of that Fall.

When Billy Graham was presented with the Congressional Gold Medal in May of 1996, he addressed a gathering of dignitaries in the Rotunda of the Capital in Washington, DC. In his acceptance speech, he thanked everyone for their kindness and generosity, for their gracious words, and for the great honor they had bestowed upon him. But he also went on to say, "I notice as I look around the halls of this great building the statues of the amazing people who helped shape this country's history. I have even studied the lives of many of them and have read their biographies, and I have noticed that they all have one thing in common. The one thing that they all have in common is that they are all now dead. And the fact of the matter is that all of us in this room will also one day die. And the question is, 'Are you ready to meet God when that time comes?'" Even at an awards ceremony, Billy never missed an opportunity to share the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

There is one certainty in life that we all must face, and that is eventually, our bodies will give out, ceasing to function, and you and I will die. Most people are uncomfortable with the idea of death. We see people trying to avoid the matter at all costs all the time. Many people live in denial, yet the Bible suggests a better way of dealing with death, and our faith as believers offers hope. Scripture says that death is an enemy. We read from Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:26-27 that "The last enemy is to be destroyed death. For the Scriptures say God has put all things under his authority." Friends, this is not the way God intended it to be in the beginning.

The Bible also says that death does not have the last word. Paul also writes, "When 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.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (1 Cor. 15:54,55). As believers, this world is not all there is to our existence, for it is only a dress rehearsal for a better world yet to come. Scripture also promises that after we die, we will receive new bodies fit for heaven in a new world, and that is why the Apostles Creed says, ending on a positive note of hope, "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

That statement of hope says that one day, we will stand in the presence of that same God, which affirms that the common hope rests on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Death is a fundamental human problem because if death is really final, then nothing in this life is worthwhile. We might as well eat, drink, be merry, and pursue self-indulgence. Of all the religions in the world, Christianity alone views death as something that has been conquered and a gateway to a better world and that one day we will have bodies like that of the resurrected Lord Jesus. Let's look at four things the apostle Paul says about a future promise of new life.

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**First**, our resurrected body will not be the same as the one laid in the grave. The bodies we have now are suited for life here on earth, but the bodies we will receive will be ideally suited for the new heaven and the new earth. God created us out of dust, and He can recreate us by the power of His Spirit. **Second**, the resurrected body will not be made of flesh and blood. We read in verses 50-51, “I declare to you that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.” Paul is saying that there will be a structure and form somehow, not purely in spirit, but how this will happen is a mystery. **Third**, Paul says that the resurrected body will not be subject to decay or corruption. Listen as I read, “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, but it will be raised imperishable.” Each day, we look at ourselves in the mirror and become aware of the aging process. We have all witnessed loved ones grow old and die. But God assures us that in the resurrection our new bodies will not grow old. **Lastly, our bodies will be glorious and raised in magnificence and glory!**

Now, does that mean that in the resurrection, I will have a full head of hair and be able to dunk a basketball? I do not know. But it does mean that the most physically handsome and athletic man on earth will not have anything on me. I will be just slightly more attractive than I am now! It is because Jesus rose again from the dead and gave us His promise that you and I can say, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” Our belief is a conviction of the mind and heart that this world is not all there is to this life here and that God has a good plan for each one of us in the future, which is called eternity. We should take comfort in the statement of the Apostle’s Creed in the resurrection of the body, which serves as an encouragement not to fear death, for it will not have the final word.

Friends, the world will not continue as it is forever. Ultimately, the defeat of evil, suffering, and death will come to an end on the day Christ returns. What will heaven be like? Paul reminds us that “God has prepared things for those who love him that no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or that have not crossed the mind of any human being” (1 Cor. 2:9). In the books of Isaiah and Revelation, Jesus sums up heaven as a wedding reception. I can only imagine similar ideas written by Isaiah in a feast of fine food, music, well-aged wines, and dancing, with celebrations lasting all night long with our children, family, and friends.

I’ll close here with the author of Revelation, who wrote that in the eternal Jerusalem, the heavenly kingdom, “God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Then, the one seated on the throne said, “Look! I am making all things new.” The Creed helps us to remember God’s answers to what is true and gives us hope to face death with courage. Is life after death wishful thinking? In the end, we choose to believe or not to believe. My invitation to you is to believe. You do not need to have it all figured out. You can have your questions and doubts. If you trust that God exists, that God came to us in Jesus, and that, by means of the Holy Spirit, then we join with countless believers throughout the world and through the ages, daring to live as those who can genuinely **declare in saying together now, the words found in your bulletin, the Apostle’s Creed.**