



Resurrection – Both His and Ours
1 Corinthians 15:35-58

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RESURRECTION – BOTH HIS AND OURS
1 Corinthians 15:35-58

We don't like to talk about it. We dread it and we try to ignore it. But death is inevitable. It's inevitable for us and for those we love. And when it happens, losing a loved one knocks the breath out of us. It shocks and stuns us. And it's never the right time. That's why the Bible says that death stings.¹ All of us will face the death of someone we love. And, one day, all of us are going to die.

Whether you are a Christian or not, spiritual or secular in your thinking, everyone wonders what happens when we die?

There are a lot of opinions out there. I Googled the phrase "what happens when we die" and got 410,000 results. There are thousands of opinions on the internet about what happens when we die. Different celebrities have an opinion. Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists have an opinion. Atheists have an opinion. Christians and Jews have an opinion. Throughout history, every generation, every culture, and every person has had an opinion.

So who's right? What happens when we die?

- When am I going to die? How am I going to die? What will it feel like to die?
- Is there really life after death, or do we just cease to exist?
- Is there really a place like hell? How could a loving God send anyone to such a terrifying place?
- Is heaven for real?
- What will we do in heaven? Will we just sit on a cloud and play the harp all day?
- Will we be married in heaven?
- Will there be sex in heaven?
- How old will we be in heaven?
- What language will we speak?
- Will some people have better seats than other people?
- Will animals be in heaven? Will they talk like the animals in Narnia?
- Will we fly around with wings like angels?
- What if my loved ones are not in heaven? How can I enjoy heaven if my loved ones are in hell?

There are a lot of opinions and questions about what happens when we die?

Phil Zuckerman gave his opinion about death in his book *Living the Secular Life*. "Everything dies. Everything. That's just how it works ... When I'm dead, I'm dead ... But for now I'm here ... you have to live life to the fullest ... Because there is no other life."²

In response to secular thoughts about death, pastor-author Tim Keller, who has had hundreds of conversations with atheists and skeptics, says a human being must bury hope to believe like that. Keller believes that the thing distinguishes us from other animal life is hope, looking to the future, and living with expectation. We long for what's next. But if the secular view is right, then secularism and atheism is the death of hope. Can we really live with such hopelessness? Do we have to, or is there an alternative? That's why Christianity is worth considering, because it offers hope. It promises life after death.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus supernaturally rose from dead proving to be the Son of God and proving that everything He said is true. And furthermore, we believe in the resurrection promise, that as the Bible says, "God has not only raised up Jesus, He will also raise us up from the dead by His power" (1 Corinthians 6:14).

When we talk about resurrection, we're not just talking about His resurrection. We're also talking about our resurrection, because His resurrection is the promise of our resurrection. ***God has promised to raise us from the dead just like He raised Jesus from the dead, and promised that we will live forever with Him in heaven, in a place called Paradise.***

THE PROMISES

The Bible is filled with promises of life after death, of heaven, of eternal life, of being with Jesus forever. The promise includes our physical, bodily, supernatural resurrection from the dead just like Jesus. Listen to these promises.

- "God has not only raised up Jesus, He will also raise us up from the dead by His power" (1 Corinthians 6:14).
- "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20, NAS). First fruits referred to the first cut of wheat, to the first harvest, the early harvest. And the first fruit harvest was a promise of more to come. Jesus' resurrection is called the "first fruits," because His resurrection is the promise of our resurrection.
- "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11, NAS).
- "If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5, NAS).
- "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Philippians 3:20-21, NAS).

These promises are overwhelming. The resurrection of Jesus is the promise of our resurrection. When Jesus returns, our bodies will rise the grave, our souls will rejoin our bodies, and we will be more alive than we have ever been!

OUR BODIES

The church in Corinth experienced a lot of turmoil. There was division in the church. There was theological confusion in the church. Some were even doubting the resurrection. It had been 30 years since Jesus' resurrection, and some were doubting that actually happened. Their family and friends were still dying, people were still being buried, and there was no resurrection. Even those who still believed in the resurrection were debating what a resurrected body would like. After several years in a tomb, it wouldn't be a pretty sight.

So Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15 to explain the resurrection; first, to explain the importance of the resurrection as the foundation of the gospel, and second, to explain what our resurrected bodies would be like.

“Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God – I say this to your shame. Some will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’ How foolish!” (1 Corinthians 15:34-36, NIV). I think that's a valid question, but Paul called it “foolish.” Why such a harsh response to an honest question? The Corinthians were thinking about how decayed the body would be, how bad it would smell, and were not sure they wanted to see grandma after she had been in the grave for 20 years. Their thinking was foolish because when God breathes new life into our dead bodies, the body that went into the grave will not be the same as the body that comes out of the grave. It will be brand new.

“How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body” (1 Corinthians 15:36-38, NIV).

Paul used the analogy of a seed to illustrate what the resurrection will be like. The seed buried in the ground looks nothing like the plant that grows out of the ground. A tiny black seed becomes a beautiful bouquet of flowers. A tiny black seed becomes a bush with dozens of tomatoes. A tiny kernel of seed becomes an eight-foot-tall stalk with ears of corn. A tiny acorn becomes a towering oak tree, for generations.

Nature gives us countless examples of resurrection. A seed is buried. It dies. It germinates and then pushes new life through the dirt into a flowering plant. Nature is a picture of resurrection. And the plant that grows out of the ground – whether a flower, a fruit, or a tree – is far more amazing than the seed that went into the ground. The seed looks nothing like the plant. The seed is mundane, but the plant is glorious, the flower is colorful, and the tree is majestic. Thus Paul said, “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:42, NIV).

One of my favorite authors is Joni Eareckson Tada, and she writes this commenting on Paul's analogy from nature. “If you were to tell the tiny acorn that one day it would be as tall as a building, with heavy branches and thick, green leaves, a tree so great it would house many squirrels, that nut would say you were crazy. A gigantic oak tree bears absolutely no resemblance to an acorn ... Yet, somehow, within that acorn is the promise and pattern of the tree it will become. And somehow, within you, is the pattern of the heavenly person you will become.”³

Verse 39, “All flesh is not the same: men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There 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. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:39-42, NIV).

Animals, birds, and fish have different types of bodies. The sun, the moon, and the stars have different kinds of glory. There is variety in the universe, and there will be variety in the resurrection. When we are resurrected, we will not be cookie-cutter clones. More than variety, Paul is saying that if God can create all kinds of earthly bodies and all kinds of heavenly bodies in the universe, then surely He can create a resurrected body that will be glorious and that will live forever.

Verse 42, “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:42-45, 49, NIV).

Notice the contrasts of the body that goes into the grave to the body that comes out of the grave.

- The body that goes into the grave is perishable, subject to aging and disease, decay, and death. The body that comes out of the grave will be imperishable, no longer subject to aging, disease, decay, or death, but immortal and eternally alive.⁴
- The body that goes into the grave is one of dishonor, carrying the marks of sin, and death the sentence of our sin. The body that comes out of the grave is one of glory, no longer carrying the marks of sin, but a body radiating righteousness and all that pleases God.
- The body goes into the grave in weakness, with limitations, subject to fatigue and weariness, but the body comes out of the grave in power.
- The body that goes into the grave is natural. The body that comes out of the grave is spiritual.
- The body that goes into the grave is earthly. The body that comes out of the grave is heavenly.
- The body that does into the grave is mortal. The body that comes out of the grave is immortal.

What does all this mean? That all the effects of sin will be left in the grave! What an amazing reality. When we rise from the dead, we will no longer carry the effects of our sin. Romans 8:11 declares, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

It also means that on that resurrection day, all the cemeteries in the world will become resurrection fields and bear a gloriously harvest.⁵ Imagine what that day will be like. We will be there. We will see that day!

The theology of resurrection includes sameness and difference, continuity and discontinuity.

How will our resurrected bodies be the same? Personhood and identity will be the same. The same you that went into the grave will come out of the grave. It will still be you. You will have the same face. Jesus was recognized by His followers; He had the same face. Sorry, but I don't know if you will be any better looking or if the resurrection will fix your nose. I don't know if tall people will still be tall, or if fat people will still be fat, or if bald people will suddenly have hair. Jesus still had scars in His hands, so perhaps we will still bear our scars. My dad had a deformed leg, so I've always thought that God would fix that leg when he comes back to life. Our bodies will be bodies. We won't be spirits or ghosts. We will still be male and female. There will be race in heaven, but no racism. There will be people of every color in heaven, but no prejudice. The resurrection is physical, bodily, supernatural event. It seems we will still have our five senses, and be able to see, feel, taste, touch, and smell. The new earth will be a physical world and we will experience it fully.

What will be different? The same body that went into the grave will come out of the grave. The same you that went into the grave will come out of the grave. But so much better. Verse 49 declares that "we shall bear the likeness of the man from heaven." We will be like Jesus, like He was in His resurrected body. Verse 51 says, "We will all be changed." As verses 42-49 declare, we will be transformed from perishable to imperishable, from dishonor to glory, from weakness to power, from natural to spiritual, from earthly to heavenly, from mortal to immortal.

THE HOPE OF A NEW BODY

As Christians, we believe in the physical, bodily, supernatural resurrection of Jesus. We also believe in our resurrection. That when we come out of the grave, God will breathe new life into our dead bodies and we will be made brand new.

I want to introduce a man who longs for the resurrection, who longs for a new body. Dee Elliott is a graduate of the Naval Academy and a career naval officer. He served in Vietnam and at the Pentagon in military intelligence. Listen to Dee tell his story and why he looks forward to the resurrection. [\[VIDEO\]](#)

ALS has crippled a once robust man, who now longs for a new body. The resurrection hope is obvious for Dee. But even if a person dies when they are young, with a strong, healthy body, the resurrected body will still be so much better. The relevance for us is that the resurrection promise overcomes our fear of death. It overcomes the dread of aging and disease and dying. It overcomes all of our suffering and pain and sadness. The resurrection will rescue us from all of that.

THE VICTORY

That's why we can almost hear Paul shout the next verses in 1 Corinthians 15. "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 Corinthians 15:54-55, NIV).

The last event in every person's life is death. We dread it and we wonder what's going to happen after we die. But Paul mocked death. He used the word "victory" when he talked about death. Resurrection hope allows us to walk with a spiritual swagger, because God promises to overcome the thing we fear and dread most – death.

Yes, people we love still die, and it hurts when they do. Death shocks and stuns us. The timing is never convenient. That's why the Bible says that death stings.⁶ Death is called the "last enemy" because it snatches life away.⁷ It kidnaps those we love. All of us will face the death of someone we love. So, how are we supposed to feel when it happens? Shock? Yes. Sadness? Yes. Angry? Yes. Grief? Of course. But mingled with those feelings can also be hope. When death knocks the breath out of us, hope gives us our next breath.

One famous pastor once said, "Death, in the presence of Jesus, is no longer death ... it loses its sting; the grave loses its victory. Death, in the hands of Jesus, is robbed of its terror." Because of Jesus, "death can no longer be death."⁸ Because His resurrection is the promise of our resurrection. That's why Paul shouted it. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57, NAS)

CONCLUSION

So, what happens when people die? Here is what God's Word says. "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11-12, NIV). ***What happens when we die is determined by what we believe about Jesus.***

While He was on earth, Jesus said that those who believe will enter "eternal life," but those who did not believe will enter "eternal punishment" (Matthew 25:46, NAS). And the Bible says that "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27, ESV). When we die, we will stand before Jesus and He will ask us what we believe.

What happens when we die is determined by what we believe about Jesus. "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11-12, NIV).

[We concluded the worship service singing "One Day" by Matt Redman. Go online to listen to this beautiful song.]

NOTES

¹ See 1 Corinthians 15:55.

² Phil Zuckerman, *Living the Secular Life: New Answers to Old Questions* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), page 168.

³ Joni Eareckson Tada, *Heaven, Your Real Home* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995, 2018), pages 54-55.

⁴ See 1 Peter 1:4.

⁵ See John MacArthur, Jr., *1 Corinthians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984), page 440, quoting Erich Sauer.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:55.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:26.

⁸ Ray C. Steadman, “The Answer to Death,” (Palo Alto, CA: Discovery Publishing, 1995), online sermon from Steadman’s library from Peninsula Bible Church, delivered April 14, 1974. In the 1500s, Puritan John Owen coined the phrase “the death of death.” Steadman entitled a sermon with the phrase “The Death of Death.” See also Romans 6:8-11, on the phrase “death is no longer master.” Paul also said, “The last enemy that will be abolished is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). And he also explained, “He destroyed death, and through the Good News he showed us the way to have life that cannot be destroyed” (2 Timothy 1:10, CEV).