

More About Resurrection

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Resurrection is not an easy thing to nail down. The majority of futurists hold that their physical bodies will be literally raised from the grave. The implications of such an idea hold insurmountable ramifications.

There are different approaches among the preterists, though, which I have thought about long and hard. I still cannot say I have it all figured out, nor do I think anyone else has either. Some have very good ideas and arguments, but when pushed far enough, seem to lose out in one area or another. I will present how I see it at this point for your consideration. I do not seem to line up completely with other preterists. Perhaps I am wrong in one or more areas and there is a good chance of that. Regardless, here it is:

What does the resurrection of the dead refer to? Yes, the Bible does speak of the resurrection of physical bodies, for instance Lazarus (John 11), also those who were raised at the resurrection of Jesus and seen in the holy city (Matt. 27:53). However, these were resurrected only to die later. But is that the main thrust of Jesus and Paul? To me these physical resurrections served two purposes. (1) They were proof that Jesus was who he said he was and (2) they were signs of what was going to occur.

Lets now take a closer look at the resurrection of Jesus. Most view the resurrection of Jesus to be a transformation of his physical body to a spiritual body. Why a spiritual body? Basically, because after his resurrection he was able to alter his appearance, disappear and reappear, etc. So, I ask the question, does this constitute a spiritual body? I feel it does not.

First, what is a spiritual body? We have a great tendency to visualize a humanoid body with a kind of magical see-through existence that can walk through walls and such. We do this simply because we cannot understand a body other than the physical body that we are accustomed to. We perceive with our physical senses and beyond that we are ignorant. Try to imagine a sixth sense, one other than those which we possess. You cannot. It is impossible.

You may say that we cannot because there are no additional senses. Well, tell that to any man who was born blind. He has only four senses. Can he imagine what the sense of sight is? Absolutely not! We can describe it to him until we are blue in the face, but he will

never understand what sight is. If such a man were to subsequently receive sight, only then would he understand. Think about it. It seems to me we are all in the same boat when it comes to physical versus spiritual. We cannot imagine it until we finally experience it. I would be so bold as to say that this occurs at physical death.

This is why Jesus had to come to us in the flesh. He then taught us about the spiritual qualities through physical metaphors and parables to give us an inkling concerning this spiritual realm which is so illusive to the physically alive. After God came to us in the flesh via his Son, Jesus, he came to us in the spirit, via the Holy Spirit. First the physical, then the spiritual.

First off, Jesus was God and shared the full Shekinah glory of the Father. He then came to dwell with his people in full fleshly form. This meant leaving his full glory behind while in human form. No man at any time has seen God (1 John 4:12) for man cannot look upon God and live (Ex. 33:20) who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). The exception being of course while Jesus was incarnate and without his original glory.

Now let's get back to the resurrection itself. Was Jesus' resurrection physical or spiritual? Both. Here is where I differ from many preterists. I believe the body seen and touched by the disciples and many other people between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, was in fact physical. Why? Let me explain.

Just because Jesus could appear and disappear, or hide his identity, or enter a locked room at will, does not by any means indicate that his body was a spiritual body. He had been performing miracles all along. Why couldn't these have been miracles also? In John 6:15-25 Jesus miraculously appeared walking on the sea when the disciples had rowed out only 3 or 4 miles, and when they let him in the boat they were instantly on the opposite shore of the sea. None had spiritual bodies. Phillip, after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch was snatched away instantly, but nobody disputes the fact that he had a physical body.

The point I'm trying to make is that the miracle of Jesus being raised from the dead physically proved that his spirit had been indeed resurrected out of hades. This was the sign of Jonah (Mat. 12: 38-41). Jesus could have been resurrected out of hades without physical resurrection but there had to be proof for the Jews. The physical resurrection was not to happen to anyone but Jesus; everyone else was resurrected out of hades spiritually, but Jesus experienced both, his spirit from hades and his body from the grave. It was prophesied that his body would not see corruption,

and it didn't. It was prophesied that his soul would not be abandoned in hades, and it was not.

Jesus said "see my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). They thought they were seeing a spirit; but Jesus assured them they were not. Paul tells us that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. So if Jesus was still in the flesh how could he enter into heaven? Well, I firmly believe that he was changed into his glory that he had with the Father before the world was made (referred to in John 17:5) at his ascension recorded in Acts chapter 1:9, "And after he said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight". This was a theophany. Jesus received his original glory forever. Like in the Old Testament accounts where God was manifest in a cloud or fire, the men could not look upon him and live. A cloud prevented them from seeing him.

The apostle John most definitely saw the body Jesus rose with, yet he states that "*it has not appeared yet what we will be. We know that when he appears, we will be like him, because we will see him as he is*" (1 John 3:2). Why would John say such a thing if he was expecting to have a body like the one Jesus rose with which he had personally seen. It appears that John had a different concept. Jesus' body had the scars of his crucifixion. If that was his eternal, spiritual body, that means that any imperfection that we die with, we will retain in the "afterlife". So if you have a missing leg, a burned face, when you die, you will retain such. Nonsense, I say! These are physical attributes and pertain to a physical body. God is spirit and we will be also. The body as we know it is baggage that we leave behind at physical death.

We need to stop thinking about a body with hands, feet, face and abdomen. I don't believe God has these kinds of features. Does God have a need for eyes? I seriously doubt it. God sees all at once, hears all at once and not with senses as we know it. He is also everywhere at once. These things we can't comprehend so we must stop materializing God as having tangible features similar to the only ones we know -- ours. It will all make sense when we pass out of this world and into our eternal realm.

Why would a spiritual body be a glorified physical body? Paul's analogy of the wheat and kernel seem to me to suggest a vast difference between the two bodies. The seed is planted, and does not become a super-seed, but rather a plant that is totally different from the seed.

Some preterists say that we are resurrected when we believe, synonymous with being born again. This sounds good and makes sense, but it has a fatal flaw. Why? Well, we all know that the wicked are not considered to be born again, yet we find that there was to be a resurrection of both the wicked and the righteous (John 5:29 and Acts 15:24). From this we must conclude that being born of the spirit and resurrection are not one and the same.

What's more is the resurrection was for those up till AD70. They were spiritually dead awaiting the resurrection. It was their hope. After AD70, believers never die (John 11:26) and therefore, no resurrection is either necessary nor possible. One must be dead in order to be resurrected. The resurrection had to do with the end of the old covenant. The score had to be settled, and the slates wiped clean. Then the new era began in which God deals in a different way with mankind. The righteous and wicked alike awaited judgment in hades. The righteous were resurrected to life and the wicked resurrected into a condemning judgment, and then destroyed, the second death. Resurrection had to do with those in hades. What exactly was this hades? That is a controversy of its own and I will not get into that at this point. This is long enough as it is.

(Thanks to Greg Rasaka for his penetrating observations. These thoughts were not written as an essay but as part of a discussion exchange. You can appreciate his honesty in study, his clear logic, and his concise, simple manner of statement. Ron McRay, of Hawkins, Texas has been editing a publication, "*Eschatology Review*," setting forth preterist fulfillment of prophecy. Due to health problems and in recognition of Greg's qualities, Ron has persuaded Greg to continue that publication to his 500 subscribers. A good choice! It is free, and you may get on the mailing list by contacting Greg: Greg Rasaka, 32080 NE Corral Creek Road, Newberg, OR 97132, or <gjr@viclink.com >. It costs much more than the 37 cents postage to publish such a monthly mailout. You will find it worth your generous donation. -Cecil Hook, December 2002.)