

Physical Resurrection: Preterist

Jerry Bernard.

(Editor's Note: Although many of his fellow-Baptists hold premillennial views, Jerry Bernard, of Montrose, CA is a preterist. He has studied fulfilled prophecy extensively and conducts a "Bible Study Group" including input from the readers of his daily emails. You are welcomed to subscribe, to ask questions, and to offer input. Diverse opinions are expressed in the true spirit of learning even as is seen in this excerpt from his mailout of August 22, 2002. For personal contact with Jerry: <jerry@jerrybernard.com>. To subscribe: <BibleStudy@jerrybernard.com>. Interesting questions and viewpoints concerning the resurrection follow. -CH)

Question by (withhold name): This is a heavy subject and will upset many people so I ask the question with my name withheld. Here is the question: Was Jesus physically raised from the dead and will our resurrection be like His? In other words, will I be raised up with the scar on my shoulder (like the scars in His hands)? I was badly bruised in a car accident. Will God fix my shoulder in the resurrection? It seems to me that Jesus was raised with the marks of the cross still on His body. Tertullian (AD 190) says: Tertullian is speaking for the Bishops in the organized Church and defines the orthodox position as Christ rose bodily from the grave, so every believer should anticipate the resurrection of the flesh. The reason for this outburst from Tertullian is that at that time many Christians, without denying the resurrection rejected his literal interpretation.

Jerry (AD 2002) says: Let's look at some scriptures. They all do not exactly agree with the Church Fathers.

1. Luke tells us how Jesus appears to his disciples in the form they know from his earthly life; he eats with them and invites them to touch him, to prove that he is not a ghost.
2. John tells a similar story: Thomas declares that he will not believe that Jesus had actually risen from the grave unless he personally can see and touch him. When Jesus appears, he tells Thomas, "*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.*"
3. Luke and Mark both relate that Jesus appeared "*in another form*" --not his former earthly form-- to two disciples as they walked on the road to Emmaus. Luke says that the disciples, deeply troubled about Jesus' death, talked with the stranger, apparently for several hours. They invited him to dinner; when he sat

down with them to bless the bread, suddenly they recognized him as Jesus. At that moment *"he vanished out of their sight."*

4. John also places directly before the story of "doubting Thomas" another of a very different kind: Mary Magdalene, mourning for Jesus near his grave, sees a man she takes to be the gardener. When he speaks her name, suddenly she recognizes the presence of Jesus-- but he orders her not to be holding him. (There would be plenty of time for that later. -CH)

5. Many saw Jesus after His resurrection. Paul's experience can be read this way: As he traveled on the Damascus road, intent on arresting Christians, *"suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground,"* hearing the voice of Jesus rebuking him for the intended persecution.

6. Another version of this story says, *"The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one";*

7. Another says the opposite (as Luke tells it). Paul said that *"those who were with me saw the light, but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me."* Paul defended the teaching on resurrection as fundamental to Christian faith and says, *"I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable (mortal body) inherit the imperishable."* Paul describes the resurrection as "a mystery," the transformation from physical to spiritual existence.

A point to consider: His physical body was not there (in the tomb) after the resurrection. This gives the idea that resurrection is not an exit from the body. It is a change from the physical to the spiritual. After His resurrection, His presence was no longer a physical body. It was a spiritual body with the ability to transform. This is one of the strengths of the Preterist position in the scriptures. Christ did not have to transform into a physical body in order to appear at His Parousia in AD 70. In this same light, Paul told the Philippians that he was pressured out of two things, living and dying, into a third thing, *"to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better (than the other two)."* (Philippians 1:12-23). Here, Paul is desiring the Resurrection in opposition to living and dying in the flesh.

Philippians was written around the time that Hebrews was written and that was several years before "the departure." Paul connects the "departure" with the "appearing" in 2nd Timothy 4:6-8, *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."*

Another point to consider: The Resurrection (Harvest) only happened once. There was "the first fruits" (Christ's resurrection in AD 30); then, the Resurrection (AD 66-70); and then there were the "gleanings" (after the Harvest). Another proof that only Christ was raised from the dead is fact that in the resurrection one puts on immortality. It is Paul that tells Timothy that "*I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in His times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and lord of lords; Who ONLY hath immortality, dwelling in the light...*" (1 Timothy 6:13-16). Jesus Christ, at the time Paul wrote to Timothy, was the only one who had resurrection immortality. Many had been raised from the dead without immortality (like Lazarus). Paul tells the Corinthians that "*though we (his generation) have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more (that way).*" In other words, Christ will never again be known as a man in the flesh. He is no longer the humble Carpenter's son from Nazareth. He is the exalted Lord of lords.

Comment by one who also wants his name withheld: If Christ is the "First Fruits" of the resurrection... then the Harvest and Gleanings must be just like His. The resurrection in AD 66-70 would not be physical bodies rising up from the tombs. It says, "the dead," not dead bodies. All, who looked for Him, the dead and living were changed into spiritual beings. There is never going to be another Resurrection (event). Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. They experienced the Resurrection in the first century ... we experience His Life in the remaining ages called "the ages to come." What is so amazing is that the greatest event on earth was the Resurrection of Jesus from the tomb and no one witnessed that Resurrection. Could this have been because many who witnessed the events of Jesus' life remained blind to their meaning? The disciples themselves often misunderstood what Jesus said: those who announced that their dead master had come back to life mistook a spiritual truth for an actual event.

But the true disciple may never have seen the earthly Jesus, having been born at the wrong time, as Paul said of himself. You see, this physical disability may become a spiritual advantage: such persons, like Paul, may encounter Christ first on the level of inner experience. A text from the Nag Hammadi site: Around AD 200... in "Treatise on Resurrection" (a letter to Rheginos) the author/teacher explains that ordinary human existence is spiritual death. But the resurrection is the moment of enlightenment: "It is... the revealing of what truly exists... and a migration (metabole--change, transition) into newness." Whoever grasps this becomes spiritually alive. This means, he declares, that you can be "resurrected from the dead" right now: "Are you---the real you---mere corruption? ... Why do you not examine your own self, and see that you have arisen?"

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