

The Resurrection

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” — 1 Corinthians 15:20

Welcome to the age of rage, in which seemingly normal, everyday people emotionally “flip out,” “go wild” and do the unthinkable, only to quickly regret their words and actions—sometimes after a life has been taken.

What is behind such rash behavior and thirst for quick revenge? According the *Psychology Today* it is called the IED syndrome — “intermittent explosive disorder.” It is a label given with no real answer to the problem.

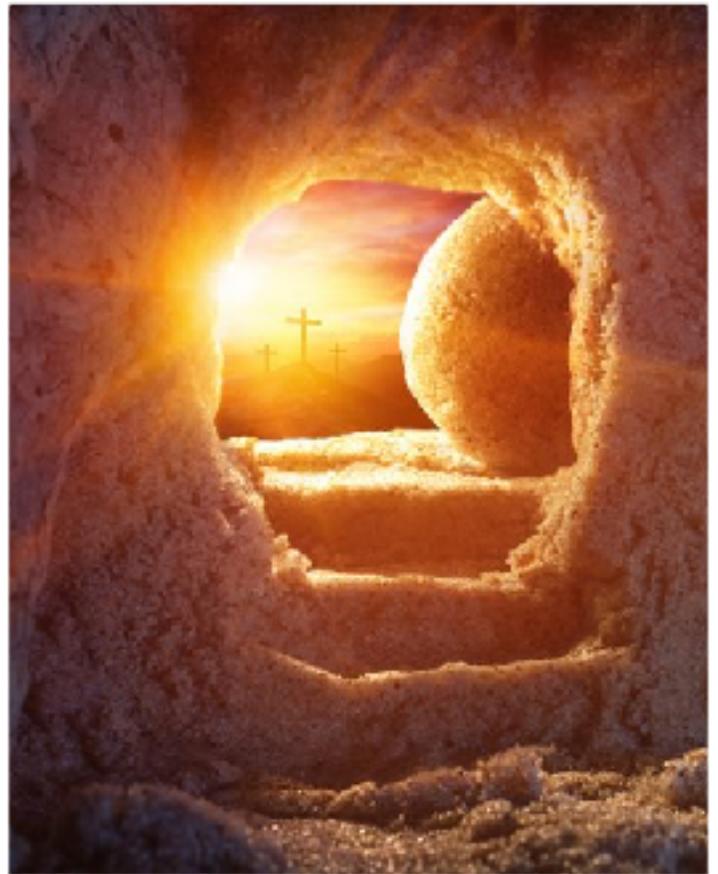
However, the Scriptures speak of this problem and provides a solution. That’s why the biblical message is called good news! 1 Corinthians 15:22, declares the problem,

“For as in Adam all die.”

We live in a dying world. Not only will we one day die, but the world as we know it is on a path that will ultimately end in destruction. The Bible declares the reason. Humanity has a sinful nature and has turned away from God. Romans 1:21 says,

“When they (mankind) knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

It is sometimes called depravity. We all have it. We inherited it from Adam and were born with it. We all have the ability to plunge to the darkest



recesses of sin and wickedness. The Bible continues to describe our plight.

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ¹³ Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

¹⁴ Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: ¹⁵ Their feet are swift to shed blood: ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their ways: ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known: ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes” — Romans 3:10-18

This is not a very pretty picture. It is hard to admit that that is what we look like in our natural state, but it is a true account. However, the good news is, God has provided the solution for our problem. He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. In doing so, all those who place their trust in Christ are given a new nature. They are regenerated (made new), justified before God because of Christ’s work. They are sanctified

(made clean) through His Spirit and ultimately glorified.

1 Corinthians 15:22 summarizes man’s condition and God’s solution

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

The resurrection is proof that this new life is possible.

This lesson will examine the five proofs given in our passage of the resurrection. We will then study what awaits the Christian after death. We will end this lesson with a few thoughts about our great transformation and triumph over the grave.

1. What is the first proof that Paul cites for the resurrection? — 1 Corinthians 15:1-2.

ANSWER:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

This is an implied testimony. That is, the entire early Church believed in the bodily resurrection. This was their original message. This was the truth that was preached by the Apostles.

Verse 2 contains a key phrase, “if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you.” Literally, “If you hold fast” to what I preached unto you. This is a statement for the Christians to hold fast and stand firm in the orthodox truths of the gospel. The church universally preached the vital doctrine of the resurrection of Christ.

2. What is the second proof given for the resurrection? — 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

ANSWER:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: ⁵ And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve”

Note, the phrase in verse 3: “According to the Scriptures.” Christ died, was buried and rose again **according to the Scriptures**. Paul is stating that the truth of the resurrection is testified of in the Scriptures.

Abraham believed in the bodily resurrection (Gen. 22:8, 14). Hebrews 11:17-19 attests to this fact when it says, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be

called: ¹⁹ Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

King David believed in the bodily resurrection (Psalm 16:8-11; 22). Acts 2:27 quotes Psalm 16 and attests that David believed in the resurrection.

“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. . . .³⁰ Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; ³¹ He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

We can also read Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19, 53; Daniel 12:1-2; Hosea 6:2 and many other verses in Scriptures speaking of the resurrection.

3. What is the third proof given of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:5-7?

ANSWER:

“And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: ⁶ After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. ⁷ After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.”

After Jesus appeared to the women at the grave we find that Jesus appeared to Peter (v. 5a), then to the twelve (v. 5b) and then to 500 people at one time (v. 6).

This is significant because it rules out a vision, hallucinations, and is verified by independent eyewitnesses apart from the twelve apostles. This event would be impossible to plot.

Then Jesus’ appearance to James (v. 7). James was Jesus’ half-brother. This must have been convicting, because Jesus’ brothers were skeptical.

4. What is the fourth proof given of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:8-10?

ANSWER:

The Testimony of a Special Eye Witness – 1 Cor. 15:8-10

“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

This was Paul. He experienced Jesus’s appearance after He ascended into heaven, making it even more unique. Paul calls himself “one born out of due time” (v. 8). He may mean, he was too late to become one of the twelve, or perhaps he saw his life as a type that will occur at the end of the tribulation. At that time many Jews will turn to the Lord in faith (Romans 11:26; Zechariah 12:10). Whatever he meant, Jesus appeared to him and he never ceased to be amazed. Of all the people in the world, Jesus selected him (v. 10).

5. What is the fifth proof given for the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:11; John 6:39-40.

ANSWER:

The final proof is the testimony of the common message.

“Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.”

Every true prophet, apostle, evangelist and pastor preaches this same message. I have copies of books written over 500 and 1000 years ago with the same message. The resurrection is the best documented truth of all history. It is impossible to refute. One may deny it, but they cannot disprove it.

The evidence of Paul’s testimony, the testimony of the church, and the testimony of Scripture and of eyewitnesses, and of special witnesses, and the continual common message of the saints over the ages, points to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each testimony should strengthen our faith. Yes, one day, we too will be raised again with an incorruptible body.

“The Resurrection of Debbie” (from *The Case For Christ* – Strobel, Pg.325)

Gary Habermas is an American historian, New Testament scholar, philosopher of religion, and Christian Apologist who frequently writes and lectures on the Resurrection of Jesus. Lee Strobel, had interviewed Gary when writing his book “*The Case for Christ*.” When the subject turned to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Lee Strobel found Gary contenance change. While rubbing his graying beard. He became very candid on his faith in Christ. His quick-fire cadence and debater’s edge to his voice was gone.

No more quoting of scholars, no more citing of Scripture, no more building a case. Gary Habermas decided to take a risk by harkening back to 1995, when his wife, Debbie, slowly died of stomach cancer. Lee wrote, he was caught off guard by the tenderness of the moment.

He said, “all I could do was listen.”

“I sat on our porch,” he began, looking off to the side at nothing in particular. He sighed deeply, then went on. “My wife was upstairs dying. Except for a few weeks, she was home through it all. It was an awful time. This was the worst thing that could possibly happen.”

Lee said, he turned and looked straight at me.

“But do you know what was amazing? My students would call me—not just one but several of them—and say, ‘At a time like this, aren’t you glad about the Resurrection?’

As sobering as those circumstances were, I had to smile for two reasons. First, my students were trying to cheer me up with my own teaching. And second, it worked.” “As I would sit there, I’d picture Job, who went through all that terrible stuff and asked questions of God, but then God turned the tables and asked him a few questions.

“I knew if God were to come to me, I’d ask only one question: **‘Lord, why is Debbie up ‘there in bed?’** And I think God would respond by asking gently, **‘Gary, did I raise my Son from the dead?’**

“I’d say, ‘Come on, Lord, I’ve written seven books on that topic! Of course, he was raised from the dead. But I want to know about Debbie!’

“I think he’d keep coming back to the same question—‘Did I raise my Son from the dead?’ ‘Did I raise my Son from the dead?’—until I got his point: the Resurrection says that if Jesus was raised two thousand years ago, there’s an answer to Debbie’s death in 1995. And do you know what? It worked for me while I was sitting on the porch, and it still works today.”

“It was a horribly emotional time for me, but I couldn’t get around the fact that the Resurrection is the answer for suffering. I still worried; I still wondered what I’d do raising four kids alone. But there wasn’t a time when that truth didn’t comfort me.”

“Losing my wife was the most painful experience I’ve ever had to face, but if the Resurrection could get me through that, it can get me through anything. It was good for 30 A.D., it’s good for 1995, it’s good for 2018, and it’s good beyond that.”

Gary locked eyes with Lee and said. “That’s not some sermon,” he said quietly. “I believe that with all my heart. If there’s a resurrection, there’s a heaven. If Jesus was raised, Debbie was raised. And I will be someday, too.”

“Then I’ll see them both.” I know this to be true.

Jesus said,

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should **raise** it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will **raise** him up at the last day.” — John 6:39-40.

6. In 1 Corinthians 15:35 Paul addresses two questions. What are the questions?

How are the dead raise up?

With what body do they come?

a. The first question is answered in 1 Corinthians 15:36-38? Discuss Paul’s answer.

ANSWER:

First, the new body is real but it does not raise until after death

•Death Is Necessary for Resurrection. (v. 36)

“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:”

This verse says that the body is “sown” — “sown” here means “buried.” It seems obvious that there is no need for a resurrection unless one is dead.

• The new body is connected in some way to the old (vv. 37-38)

“And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: ³⁸ But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”

Paul uses the illustration of a seed to explain what he means about the relationship between the old you and the new you. He says the seed doesn’t look like the fruit it will produce. When you plant a pumpkin seed, the seed does not look like the pumpkin. Although the pumpkin seed does not look like the pumpkin, you can’t get the fruit from the seed until you plant it.

Likewise, the resurrected body is a brand new you. It will not be you as you were but a brand new you. I do not want to push this illustration too far. There is so much that we do not understand but we can say with certainty that in some supernatural way there is a continuity between our earthly bodies and our heavenly bodies.

Joni Eareckson Tada, was paralyzed in a diving accident, explains it well when she said, "Somewhere in my broken paralyzed body is the seed of what I shall become. The paralysis makes what I am to become all the more grand when you contrast atrophied, useless legs against splendid resurrected legs. I'm convinced that if there are mirrors in heaven (and why not?), the image I'll see will be unmistakably 'Joni,' although a much better, brighter Joni." [Joni Eareckson Tada. *Heaven Your Real Home*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) p. 39]

Perhaps this analogy will help. At the age of twenty-five I was saved. When I was saved I became a new person, yet I was still the person that I had always been. Hopefully those around me saw a lot of change but not to the point that they would say, "that's not Craig." I was still Craig Scott although a substantially changed Craig Scott.

This same Craig will undergo another change at death and at the resurrection. But through all these changes I will continue to be who I was and always will be." [Adapted Randy Alcorn's *personal analogy as a model. Heaven. p. 112*]

- b. The second question, "and with what body do they come?" (v. 35b) is answered in verses 42-50. Discuss what kind of body we will have after the resurrection.**

ANSWER:

In verse forty-two Paul begins answering that question by drawing a series of contrast.

1) The New Body Will Be Indestructible.

(v. 42) "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is **raised in incorruption**"

The first thing that Paul tells us is that our new resurrected bodies will be indestructible. Our new bodies are not like our old bodies. Our current bodies wear out. We get old; we begin to notice that everything does not work like it used to. We begin to understand the old saying, "What does not hurt does not work!"

We discover that no matter what the infomercials promise we can't stop the aging process. At best we can slow it down somewhat or camouflage it, but we can't stop it. Our new bodies will be made to last forever. Our resurrection bodies will not be subject to disease or decay or aging. Our resurrected bodies will literally out-live the stars.

2) The New Body Will Be Glorious (v 43a)

"It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory."

The word "glory" **means brilliance** and our new bodies will be glorious like that of the risen Christ.

In Philippians 3:21 Paul states,

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

3) The New Body Will Be Powerful (v. 43b)

"...It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power."

We will possess a new body with abilities beyond our wildest imaginations. When Jesus was with His disciples, He had the power to come and go as he pleased, neither walls nor distance were an obstacle.

According to John 20:25 Jesus came into the room without having to open the door.

But as Randy Alcorn points out, “though we know that Christ could do these things (like pass through closed doors), we are not explicitly told that we’ll be able to. It may be that some aspects of His resurrected body are unique because of His divine nature.” [Randy Alcorn. Heaven. (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House, 2004) p. 116]

We may or may not share those special abilities that Jesus possessed, but whatever abilities we do have , we will be able to do more than we ever dreamed of.

4) The New Body Will Be Infinite (v. 44a)

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body....”

To say that we will have a “spiritual body” does not mean that we will just be spirits. Somehow many Christians have come to the conclusion that life in eternity is going to be lived out in a spirit or ghost like form. I want to dispel that myth. Jesus reassured His disciples by saying,

“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” (Luke 24:39)

R. A. Torrey writes, “We will not be disembodied spirits in the world to come, but redeemed spirits, in redeemed bodies, in a redeemed universe.” We will be raised with a body suitable for our new life!

7. In verses (vv. 51-52) Paul answers the question “Who will be resurrected and When?”

ANSWER:

Paul answers the question “Who will be resurrected and when?”

1 Cor. 15:51-52 -- “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

The dead in Christ will rise first and be given new glorified bodies. Living believers will follow and their bodies will be transformed.

Paul further explains the sequence of events in

1 Thess. 4:16-17, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord..”

Conclusion

I love the epitaph that Benjamin Franklin wrote for himself while still a young man. It wonderfully catches the spirit of Paul’s words in 1 Cor.15.

“The body of B. Franklin, printer, (like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding) lies here, food for worms. But the work shall not be lost; for it will appear once more, in a new and more elegant edition, revised and corrected by the Author.”

Appendix: It is possible that someone in the class may ask if cremation is biblical. If it is not, then what about those who have been vaporized, eaten alive by wild beasts or burned alive?

The first answer is clear. The bible does not command us either way. The reason may be simply. God is able to bring us back together whether we are partially intact 6 feet under or particles in the wind. Many of the saints of the past had little choice how their interment was handled. Poverty, war, disaster, accidents and so much more may have dictated cremation over burial.

The second part of the question should be which is preferable. Many have argued that burial is preferable. I offer my and other thoughts on this matter.

The dignity of the human body.

Scripture seems to lead away from *burning* toward *burying*.

Our blood-bought worth.

In this life Paul says, “The body is . . . for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13). He goes on to say even more amazing things about the body.

Four stunning facts: 1) Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. 2) Christ died to purchase us, including the purchase of our bodies, for himself. 3) Therefore our bodies do not belong to us to use as we please, but rather as *he* pleases. 4) Therefore, we should use our bodies to put the glory of God on display. Our body is God’s dwelling place. Our body is God’s purchase. Our body is God’s possession and our body, God’s glory. Paul said he hoped to magnify Christ “*in my body*, whether by life or *by death*” (Philippians 1:20). Glorifying God is what the body is for — in life and in death.

A Symbol for Sowing and Sleeping

All of this leads to a view of burial controlled by symbols which are true to the glory of the human body. Paul’s understanding of burial is that this was a picture of being “sown” in the ground like a seed that will sprout with wildly superior beauty at the resurrection, when the graves are opened at the coming of Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:37, 42–44)

Burial — sowing the seed of the body — is the biblical picture of belief in the resurrection of the body. Christians also have seen burial as the laying to rest of the body as though it is *sleeping*, waiting for the waking of the resurrection. The double symbolism of *sowing seed*, as though ready to sprout, and *laying to rest*, as though ready to waken, was the main reason Christians have buried their dead and provided burial for those who could not afford it.

The Dreadfulness of Fire

The other focus of Scripture that leads away from burning toward burying (besides the importance of the human body) is *the meaning of fire* as it relates to the human body now and in the life to come.

“In relation to the human body, fire is a dreadful thing.” The use of fire to consume the human body on earth was seen as a sign of contempt. It was not a glorious treatment of the body but a contemptuous one. This is the meaning of Achan’s cremation. He had betrayed Israel and so was not only stoned with his family, but deprived of an ordinary burial by being burned.

To be sure, fire is a great gift from God. It warms, and brightens, and guides, and cooks, and refines. But in relation to the human *body*, it is a dreadful thing. It wounds and tortures and kills and destroys.

This is most prominent in relation to the body after death. As a Christian who believes in the judgment of God after death (Hebrews 9:27), is the *last* symbol we want to use, in connection with death, fire? Hell (*gehenna*) is a place of fire (Matthew 5:22; James 3:6).

In summary, then, the two biblical focuses that point away from burning to burying are 1) the preciousness of the human body as God's purchase and possession, now and forever, and 2) the dreadfulness of fire as it relates to the human body, especially after death.

A little trivia. "The first cremation in America took place in 1876, accompanied by readings from Charles Darwin and the Hindu scriptures. For many years, relatively few persons (mostly liberals and freethinkers) chose cremation."

Final thoughts: Is it wrong or sinful to choose cremation? NO. If it were, the scriptures would have declared it. However, if you have a choice and can afford it, which is best. Hands down, the symbolism associated with burial over cremation can be used by a wise pastor and family member to describe the dignity of the body, its blood bought worth, and its future hope of the resurrection.