

THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

Job 19:25-27; Mt 11:29-32, 51-52; I Cor 15:51-52

I. BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

- A. OT: Job 19:25-27; Is 26:19; Dan 12:2; Ez 37:12-14
- B. NT: Mt 22:29-32; Jn 5:25-29; I Cor 15:51-52; I Thess 4:13-16

II. BODILY REALITY AFFIRMED

- A. Essential doctrine: His Resurrection and ours conjoined—"Christ rising again is the univocal cause of our resurrection (Aquinas, ST, Q76.2)
- B. By nature man not solely soul (*a la* Gnostics)—Ro 8:11; Phil 3:21-21
 - 1. Body highly honored in Judaism & Christianity, unlike many world religions (e.g. Hinduism)
 - a. Christ the Word "became flesh"
 - b. Jesus offered up his body on the Cross
 - c. Paul declared the body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit"
 - 2. Word "resurrection" (*anastasis*) necessarily points to physical dimension—re-union of body & soul
 - 3. Body intrinsically part of human being—cannot be fully human if disembodied
 - 4. Death an abnormality—God's initial intent & remedial work: eternal life includes body & sin's curse reversed
 - 5. Cyril of Jerusalem: "God created us out of nothing: why should he not be able to reawaken that which is destroyed?"
 - 6. Excludes Platonism, reincarnation, transmigration of souls
- C. Accompanying Crucifixion & Resurrection, Jerusalem graves opened & saints resurrected (Mt 27:51-53)
 - 1. Temple veil rent—ending separation between Jews & Christians (cf. He 10:19-22)
 - 2. Earthquake, rocks rent suggest ultimate judgment
 - 3. Graves opened—a few forerunners of resurrection of flesh
 - 4. Risen appear (after Jesus' Resurrection) demonstrating final days
- D. Jesus' Resurrected Body revealing—Lk 24:38-39; Jn 20:27;
 - 1. Transfiguration (Mt 17:2) illuminating—preview of His glorified condition
 - 2. Descriptive, post-resurrection details: wounds, clothes, walking, talking, teaching (e.g. Emmaus road, Lk 24:13-35), eating; "touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Lk 24:39)
 - 3. Promised blessing: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn 11:25-26)
 - 4. Promised status: "we shall be like Him" (I Jn 3:2)

III. RESURRECTED HUMAN BODIES

- A. Persisting identity—my person (just as Jesus said "It is I myself" (Lk 24:39); Westminster Confession: "All the dead shall be raised up, with the self-same bodies, and none other.")
- B. Supernaturally transformed/transfigured "spiritual body" preserves important earthly capacities but indicates significant, new differences (or perfections)—I Cor 15:42-44; Aquinas: "man's ultimate perfection demands the reunion of soul and body"
 - 1. Earthly Body sown: a perishable body; in dishonor; in weakness; a natural body
 - 2. Resurrection Body raised: an imperishable body; in glory; in power; a spiritual body enjoying:
 - a. Fineness/subtlety—perfectly formed, functioning, "spiritual" nature
 - b. Agility—free from space limitations, light-footed (e.g. Jesus walking on waves); body quickly obeys soul
 - c. Radiance/clarity—reflecting God's glory, light-giving, beautiful (e.g. Transfiguration); cf Mt 13:43
 - d. Impassibility/incorruptibility—"no sorrow there" so impervious to death & sufferings ubiquitous on earth

Joni Eareckson Tada: "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."

ANCIENT CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE re RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

Pseudo-Clement of Rome, ca 170 A.D.: “And let no one of you say that this very flesh will not be judged or rise again. Consider then in what state you were saved, in what circumstances you received sight, if not while you were in this flesh. We must therefore preserve the flesh as the temple of God. For as you were called in the flesh, you will also come to be judged in the flesh. As Christ the Lord who saved us, though he was first a Spirit became flesh and thus called us, so will we also receive the reward in this flesh” (2 *Clement* 9).

Justin Martyr, ca 150 A.D.: “But, in truth, he has even called the flesh to the resurrection and promises to it everlasting life. For where he promises to save human beings, there he gives the promise to the flesh. For what is a human being but the reasonable animal composed of body and soul? Is the soul by itself a human being? No. But it is a soul of a human being. Would the body be called a human being? No, but it is called the body of a human being. If, then, neither of these is by itself a human being, but that which is made up of the two together is called a human being, and God has called human beings to life and resurrection, he has called not a part but the whole, which is the soul and the body” (*Fragments on the Resurrection* 8).

Athenagoras, ca 175 A.D.: “The same human beings must be formed anew, since the law of nature ordains the end not absolutely, nor as the end of any human beings whatsoever, but of the same human beings who passed through the previous life. But it is impossible for the same human beings to be reconstituted unless the same bodies are restored to the same souls” (*On the Resurrection* 25).

Tertullian, ca 200 A.D.: “And so the flesh will rise again—all of it in every person, in its own identity, in its absolute integrity” (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 63).

Aphrahat, ca 340 A.D.: “You never sow wheat and yet reap barley. You never plant a vine and yet have it produce figs. Everything grows according to its nature. Thus, the body that was laid in the earth is also the one that will rise again. And concerning the fact that the body is corrupted and wastes away, you ought to be instructed by the parable of the seed. When the seed is cast into the earth, it decays and is corrupted, and from its decay it produces and buds and bears fruit. For the land that is plowed into which seed is not cast, produces no fruit, even if that land drinks in all the rain. In the same way, the grave in which the dead are not buried will not produce people when the quickening of the dead occurs, and although the full voice of the trumpet should sound within it. And if, as they say, the spirit of the just will ascend into heaven and put on a heavenly body, they are in heaven. And who raises the dead lives in heaven” (*Demonstrations* 8.3).

Cyril of Jerusalem, ca 350 A.D.: “Faith in the resurrection of the dead is a central precept and teaching of the holy catholic church. It is both central and essential” (*Catechetical Lecture* 18.1).

Augustine, ca 400 A.D.: “One thing is certain, namely, that Christ rose with the same stature he had when he died. We are left, therefore, with one conclusion, namely that each of us will have that size we had in our maturity, even though we die in extreme old age; or we will have that size we would have had in our maturity, in case we died earlier” (*City of God*, 22.15).

Augustine: “In the resurrection, the blemishes of the body will be gone, but the nature of the body will remain” (*City of God* 22.17).

Augustine: “God, then, who made us man and woman will raise us up as man and woman” (*City of God*, 22.17).

John of Damascus, ca 725 A.D.: “We believe also in the resurrection of the dead. For there will be, in truth, a resurrection of the dead—and by resurrection we mean the resurrection of bodies. For resurrection is the second state of that which has fallen. For the souls are immortal, so how can they rise again? For if they define death as the separation of soul and body, resurrection surely is the reunion of soul and body and the second state of the living creature that has suffered dissolution and downfall. It is, then, this very body, which is corruptible and liable to dissolution, that will rise again incorruptible. For he who made it in the beginning of the sand of the earth does not lack the power to raise it up again after it has been dissolved and returned to the earth from which it was taken, in accordance with the reversal of the Creator’s judgment.

“For if there is no resurrection, let us eat and drink. Let us pursue a life of pleasure and enjoyment. If there is no resurrection, how we differ from the irrational brutes? If there is no resurrection, let us hold the wild beasts of the field happy who have a life free from sorrow. If there is no resurrection, neither is there any God or Providence, but all things are driven and borne along of themselves” (*Orthodox Faith* 4.27).