

What if Jesus Had Not Risen From the Dead?

Today, we are concluding our four-part series about the biblical belief in the immortality of the soul and the body—in a glorified, *resurrected* form.

Christians reaffirm this unique doctrine of the Resurrection every Easter season. This short series is drawn from the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians.

Implications of No Resurrection (15:29-34)

Before Paul explores the nature of the resurrected body, he spends a few verses pointing out some implications which must be faced if there were no resurrection. He said that life after death is widely believed as a general hope among the culture. Some people even baptized others for those who had already died. It is a puzzling verse since Paul does not seem to commend or condemn the practice; he merely observed it, which affirmed a secular hope of life after death.

If we do not have confidence in a coming resurrection, then we might as well “party all night, for tomorrow we die,” as the Passion paraphrase puts it in verse 32.

Then Paul challenged them with words that sound like modern-day infectious disease experts. He bluntly told them to stop fooling themselves with any deception concerning the certainty of death and the promise of our future resurrection. Earthly companions can “infect” us with negativity and moral evils that will corrupt our qualifying character and commendable living (v. 33).

Basically, we must “self-isolate” and “socially distance” ourselves from what and who are wrong and corrupt in our society and genuinely repent of any sinful ways (v. 34).

Instead, professing believers in Christ must exhibit a faith that evidences a transformed mindset and obedient lifestyle (Rom. 12:1-2), living with our glorious hope of resurrection and eternity in view!

The Nature of the Resurrected Body (15:35-58)

A study of resurrection realities would be incomplete if we did not answer some very reasonable and practical questions about the nature of the resurrected body, which God has planned and promised to those who are faithful to the end.

What kind of body will this resurrected and transformed heavenly body be? Will it be similar or distinct from our earthly body? Will we be able to recognize loved ones in their resurrected form? Will we look young or old? Will I be bald or have a full head of hair?

We may not have specific answers on all these natural questions, but in 1 Corinthians 15:39-41, Paul suggests the new spiritual body is superior to the old natural body. Both are wonderfully made by our Creator-God, but the inference is that the heavenly bodies far outweigh the earthly bodies in grandeur. Our new heavenly bodies and their abilities will be super amazing if compared to our earthly bodies.

Although our Lord ate with His disciples after His resurrection, our spiritual bodies are thought to be without the need of natural nourishment; not subject to decay, not liable to sickness, pain or death. 1 Peter 1:4 indicates our inheritance in heaven is immortal; it cannot perish nor spoil or fade away.

Dr. Jack Hayford has noted that "Christ's resurrected body may reveal something of what kind of bodies we may anticipate. During the 40 days of post-resurrection appearances, Jesus could pass for an ordinary man. He still had nail prints and He ate food, yet He could also materialize at will and pass through locked doors (see John 20, Luke 24). He had complete

command over creation, as evidenced by His dominion over the fish (John 21:6-11).” [*Spirit-Filled Life Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), page 1745, note on 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.]

Millions of living believers will someday reach heaven without dying.

The final focus of this last section of Chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians is on the *promise*, the *purpose* and the *power* of the Lord’s Resurrection and final victory.

Verses 50-53 reveal the mystery of the promised rapture of the church. The bodies of these living believers will be miraculously transformed into glorified ones as they are instantly transferred from earth to the presence of the Lord (see 1 Thess. 4:16-18). This was a divine secret (“mystery,” v. 51) previously unrevealed to God’s people.

The *purpose* of this Resurrection is given in verses 53-57. The Law was given to weak and sinful people. Their failure to keep their moral values entrenched the principle of sin even more. However, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ brings “victory” for each believer, because being “in Him” we can now experience victory over sin, the Law and death itself!

The *power* of the Resurrection is its practical equipping of believers for service in the “work of the Lord” (v. 58). As we eagerly await our Lord’s return, we can now see beyond the limitations of this world and death to the realities of heaven and eternal life. Our “labor is not in vain in the Lord” (v. 58). It produces personal fulfillment in the present and eternal rewards for the future.

He Has Risen!

Yes, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of Christianity. By this miracle, we can receive forgiveness for our sins, a purpose for living and power for

service to others.

Christian believers celebrate this mysterious Resurrection reality again next Sunday—Resurrection Sunday—and humbly share this Good News with others: He has risen! He is risen, indeed! Hallelujah! {eoa}

*Ordained to the ministry in 1969, **Gary Curtis** is a graduate of LIFE Bible College at Los Angeles (soon to become Life Pacific University at San Dimas, California). He has taken graduate courses at Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois, and Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. Gary served as part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the First Foursquare Church of Van Nuys, California, for 27 years (1988-2015); and served for the last 13 years as the vice president of Life on The Way Communications Inc., the church's not-for-profit media outreach. Now retired, Gary and his wife have been married for 50 years and live in Southern California. They have two married daughters and five grandchildren.*

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