

What about the Dead in Christ Now? (part 3)

“In the late 1990’s a group of scholars assembled to evaluate whether Jesus actually said the things attributed to him by the Gospel writers. Although they employed remarkable subjective criteria in their evaluation of Scripture, members of the self-appointed ‘Jesus Seminar’ were widely quoted by the media as authorities on the Christian faith.

Marcus Borg, a Jesus Seminar leader, said this of Christ’s resurrection: ‘As a child, I took it for granted that Easter meant that Jesus literally rose from the dead. I now see Easter very differently. For me, it is irrelevant whether or not the tomb was empty. Whether Easter involved something remarkable happening to the physical body of Jesus is irrelevant.’” (Heaven, Alcorn p. 111)

“Of Americans who believe in a resurrection of the dead, two-thirds believe they will not have bodies after the resurrection.” (Heaven, Alcorn p. 112).

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

1. All people will **receive a new body**, which is required to enter eternity, 1 Corinthians 15.
 - 1.1. 15:12—This primary questions reveals the Corinthian struggle: Some among them were contradicting that the dead raise. Most likely, they were teaching that the dead **do not raise bodily** (see 15:35).
 - 1.1.1. Paul began his teaching that he preached a bodily resurrection: Jesus was buried, rose on the third day, according to the scriptures, and was seen by Cephas, the twelve and later over five hundred (see 15:4-6).
 - 1.1.2. Paul, in his teaching about resurrection, mentions the **baptism of the dead**, 15:29.
 - 1.1.2.1. No one knows what Paul was talking about. There is no historical or biblical evidence to explain or support the baptism for the dead (See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, page 763-767. All that is certain is that Paul saw the practice as a contradiction between no post-death resurrection and yet acting as if there were.
 - 1.2. 15:42—The current body is “**corruptible**.” **φθορά**, : to rot or decay, in reference to organic matter.¹
 - 1.3. 15:42—The new body is characterized as one that does **not decay or have weakness**.

¹Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (1:276). New York: United Bible societies.

2. 15:49—Paul indicates that we should understand the new body in **relationship to Jesus' body**.
- 2.1. εἰκόν: (translated image) that which has the same form as something else—‘same form, likeness.
1 Cor. 15:49 ‘just as we have the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will have the likeness of the Man from heaven.’²
- 2.2. Jesus told His followers that He was the same being following His resurrection, which included body and spirit/soul.
- 2.2.1. **See Luke 24:39**—“It is I *Myself*,” NKJV Jesus was not someone new or different. This is why the reference to His “hands and feet.”
- 2.2.2. **See John 2:19**—Jesus body was “destroyed” yet He said it would rise again.
- 2.3. **1 John 3:2**--John said when Jesus comes again, we would be like him.
- 2.4. **Matthew 28:9**—Jesus new body has substance, see also John 20:17.
- 2.5. **Luke 24:16-31**—Jesus new body lacks limitations to the material world. He could be in someone’s presence and unrecognizable. He could immediately vanish from sight, see also John 20:14.
- 2.6. **Luke 24:36-43**—Jesus new body had “flesh and bones” and could eat. At the same time His body was different enough His disciples thought that He was a ghost.
- 2.7. **John 20:19,26**—It seem that Jesus was able to move through closed doors.
- 2.8. **John 20:20**—Jesus body has the appearance of His former body.

²Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (1:588-589). New York: United Bible societies.

3. 15:52—There is a distinct **connection between the present body and the future body.**

“We are to believe that at the last day there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust: [Acts 24:15] when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the selfsame bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ [1 Corinthians 15:51-53].” (Westminster Larger Catechism with Proof Texts, question 87 @ http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc_w_proofs/index.html?mainframe=/documents/wlc_w_proofs/index_wlc_fs.html&main=/documents/wlc_w_proofs/WLC_Intro.html)

“The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. II. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever,” The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) CHAPTER XXXII, *Of the State of Man After Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead.* @ http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html

3.1. Somehow the current dead are connected to their new bodies in current existence.

3.1.1. This gives assurance that God’s final plans include a body.

3.1.2. This bodily connection, along with Jesus new bodily appearance, is strong evidence we will know others in heaven.

3.1.2.1. As Jesus’ new body has characteristics from His first body so shall it be for the Christian.

3.1.2.2. The text says, “the dead will be raised incorruptible.”

3.1.2.2.1. I may push these words farther than Paul intended. The language indicates that some dead will come from their unique grave. If I am correct, this again supports the connection between the current body and the new body.

3.1.2.2.2. I am fully aware that all the dead are not in graves, but some are. The language implies some will “raise” from their original grave.