WILL I STILL BE “ME”?

Catechism Two, Lesson 26

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:35–50

1. What Is Resurrection?

Resurrection is a rising to life again after death, but it is more than that. It is also the beginning of glorification, or the changing of the physical body to share in the glorious redemption provided for the whole man by Christ. The most common Greek word for resurrection is anastasis (a-na-sta-sis), which simply means “to make to stand or rise up.” Several aspects of resurrection must be emphasized if we are to distinguish this truth from the subtle errors which would substitute some watered-down idea.

A. Resurrection is the personal restoration of the individual to life.

After the body and the soul and spirit have been separated by death—even if the body has already decomposed—God reunites these. The person’s own identity is restored, including memory, recognition, the ability to communicate, etc.

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me (Job 19:25–27).

B. Resurrection involves the reinfusion of life into a real corpse, resulting in the raising up to life of a literal body.

We are not talking about reviving someone we supposed to be dead, but was only unconscious. We are not talking about the renewal of someone in suspended animation. We are declaring that people who were unmistakably dead can experience the reversal of the processes of corruption, and by God’s intervention be raised from the dead.

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).

C. Resurrection is the redemption of our bodies; God changes our bodies to correspond with the nature of our redeemed spirit and soul.

While the body we receive in the resurrection will be unmistakably our own, it will not be the same frail frame we buried. It will have been changed by the power of God and fashioned like His own. The limitations which cramped our spirits and souls will be removed; our bodies will appropriately express the person we have become.

Who [Christ] shall change our vile body [body of humiliation], 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 (Phil. 3:21).

2. What Will Our Resurrection Bodies Be Like?

The Bible provides two basic sources for information regarding our resurrection bodies: (1) the example of Jesus’ resurrection body described in the Gospels and Acts; (2) the descriptions by analogy in the Apostle Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. By combining this information, we derive a good picture of what we can expect:

A. Jesus’ resurrection body was both the same and yet different from His mortal body.

(1) Jesus’ resurrection body was without the limitations of His mortal body: He could appear at will, He could pass through walls, etc.

(2) Jesus’ facial appearance was sufficiently changed that His closest friends did not immediately recognize Him, but other personal characteristics identified Him as the same person.

(3) Jesus’ body was not ethereal, but tangible and visible. People touched Him, saw Him, heard Him. He ate with them.

(4) Jesus continued where He had left off in His teaching. He had remembered what His promise was and what He had and had not accomplished in the instructing of His disciples. He met them in Galilee as He had promised before His death. Evidently memory was not impaired.

B. Paul’s analogies from natural things also help us to see the simplicity and naturalness of the transitional processes involved in resurrection.

(1) Paul describes the body as like a seed which is planted and must die in order to bring forth a new form of life. It is the same seed, but its life is different in manifestation. We cannot trace the continuity of its life as we can with the seed, but the Scriptures tell us that “so also is the resurrection of the dead.” The green shoot coming forth from the ground may bear no resemblance to the seed that was planted. Neither may the new body physically resemble the one we now have, but it will be the continuity of our inward life in its resurrected material manifestation. (See 1 Cor. 15:35–42; Mark 4:26–28.)

(2) Paul pictures our mortal body as a very temporary tent-dwelling. A tent is very easily taken down, folded up, and moved to another place. In direct contrast, our resurrection body will be our permanent house (2 Cor. 5:1–4).

(3) Paul describes the body in terms of external clothing we take off and put on. When we die, we are separated from this outward covering, but God goes not leave us disembodied or naked; He provides an immortal covering (2 Cor. 5:4).

3. Will Our Resurrection Bodies Be An Improvement On Our Present Ones?

Yes. God will give us brand new bodies which will be far better than our present, mortal bodies. They will more appropriately express the spiritual treasure within. Paul gave us some important contrasts in 1 Corinthians 15:35–53:

A. Our new body will be incorruptible (vv. 42, 53).

Sickness and age weaken the mortal body until it collapses, or death may come suddenly. But the resurrection body will be free from the trend to deterioration.

B. Our new body will be powerful (v. 43).

We are sown in weakness, and we spend our whole lifetime aware of our human limitations. Our bodies are not equal to our minds. But in resurrection they will be.

C. Our new body will be spiritual (44).

This does not mean that our new body will be ghostly or intangible. It will be a suitable medium for expressing our finest aspirations and spiritual qualities. It will be perfectly adapted to its new environment. The spirit will once more be in control over the soul and body, as was the case before the fall of Adam.

D. Our new body will be heavenly (vv. 49, 50).

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom. Jesus’ resurrection body had flesh and bone, but not blood. In this mortal life, the life is in the blood. In the resurrection body, the spirit will contain the life.

4. How Can We Be Sure God Will Give Us A Resurrection Body?

If we are “In Christ,” we have received a guarantee. God has already given us the “earnest” or down payment of His Holy Spirit which guarantees that the rest of the inheritance will follow. The earnest (Greek arrabon) is the initial down payment which guarantees both that the complete inheritance will be given and that the remainder will be of the same good quality as the down payment. The redemption of our body is clearly a part of our inheritance (Rom. 8:23).

Paul elaborated the function of the Holy Spirit as our earnest or guarantee in his letter to the Ephesians, where he wrote:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).

In this passage, the Holy Spirit is pictured both as a seal and as an earnest, doubly emphasizing His work in giving us security and a guarantee. Barclay aptly says:

The Spirit of Christ is a first installment of the life to come.

5. Will We Know One Another After Death And Resurrection?

This is probably the deepest question within each of our hearts. We are not concerned about theory; we want to know what is going to happen to us. Will we still be the same persons we are now? Will we

remember what happened to us in this life, and continue after death? Will the friendships we build in

this life continue through eternity. What we are really asking is: does resurrection mean that we will continue to have personal identity? Will personality survive the grave? Thank God, the Bible gives us an emphatic “yes” in answer to these questions. Many evidences are provided throughout Scripture for the continuity of our individual identity:

A. Jesus Christ has always been the same person though in different bodily form.

Jesus Christ has always been the Son of God with His unique personality. He was the pre-incarnate Word with the Father before creation and until He came to earth as a baby (John 1:1–14). He lived among us in a limited human body for 33 years. Then He was crucified, died, buried, and was raised from the dead with a new body. Resurrection had made some changes, but He was still the same Jesus they had known. He picked up with His disciples where He had left off and continued His preparation of them to be His witnesses. Jesus remained the same person through all His changes, and so shall we.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and far ever (Heb. 13:8).

(Note: the Greek word for “same” means “one’s very self, unchangeable.”)

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (Rev. 1:18).

B. Job asked and answered his own question about the continuance of personality.

Personality means being a real person—being yourself and not somebody else. You have individual existence with unique personal characteristics. The total combination of characteristics which mark you as you and distinguish you from anybody else is your personality. Now listen to Job’s question and answer:

If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time mill I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands (Job 14:14, 15, bold type mine).

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me (Job 19:25–27, bold type mine).

What could be clearer! Job would be himself. Note, too, that the Hebrews considered “the reins” (kidneys) as the seat of personhood, especially in our ability to make choices? Job has clearly prophesied the continuance of his ability to respond in personal ways, to recognize others, and to make decisions.

C. Jesus compared resurrection life to that of the angels.

Angels are individual spirit beings. They have definite identity and are not confused with one another. A few of them have names recorded in Scripture: Gabriel, Michael, Lucifer, etc. They have personality, but

their activities and relationships are different. Marriage is an earthly picture of the union between Christ and His Church. The need for this picture will be past once we are with Christ.

Jesus answered and said unto them. Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven

(Matt. 22:29, 30).

D. Paul stated that our resurrection bodies will have different glories.

The same God who created us with different bodies and personalities in the first place, will give us a new body as it pleases Him—one that fits our own personality. The God who makes every single snowflake different and every blade of grass different, will not suddenly decide to make us all alike in resurrection bodies. Paul said:

But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differ eth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption (1 Cor. 15:38–42, bold type mine).

These are only a few of the many Scriptures which teach the continuity of personality. We will not only know each other as we did here, but more so. Paul says we will know as we are known—with perfect knowledge (1 Cor. 13:12).

Home Study: Lesson 26

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is resurrection?

a. Resurrection is a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_after death.

b. Resurrection is the beginning of\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

c. Resurrection is the\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of the individual to life.

d. Resurrection is the\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_into a real corpse.

e. Resurrection is the\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of our bodies.

2. In what two places do we find information about the resurrection body?

a.

b.

3. List four adjectives which describe the resurrection body.

a.

b.

c.

d.

4. What does personality mean?

5. Will we recognize each other after death? Give reasons for your answer.