

## 9. It's Alive!

(Our bodies after death)

Venomous reanimated corpses threaten to infect everyone and take over our planet. We must arm ourselves for this apocalypse. Rather, that's what popular zombie movies portray for public consumption. Resurrecting the dead, along with what constitutes death, is still misunderstood. Instead, many scientists and theologians have good insight. So let's examine their viewpoints.

### Near Death Experiences

The phenomenon of near death experiences involve "clinically dead" people who usually see tunnels of light and have other pleasurable experiences in a place supposedly representing Heaven. Yet centrifuge testing for fighter pilots involved a mechanical device that spun them around, creating increasing levels of accelerated gravitational force to test the threshold of potential pilots' ability to maintain consciousness. After losing consciousness from blood draining from their head into their lower extremities, many underwent experiences identical to "near death experiences." All neuroscientists understand that lacking oxygen causes this phenomenon in brains which still retain electrical activity.

According to historic Christianity, *everyone's* spirit departs their body upon death. Yet most people who were "clinically dead" had no recollection whatsoever of any out of body experience. This also bespeaks against the notion of near death experiences, since we would expect *everyone* to have those experiences.

Although some non-Christians saw Jesus, and people from other religions did not see their religious leaders such as Mohammed or Buddha, this is easily explained. Millions of non-Christians are surrounded by Christian culture and imagery, and are thereby subconsciously influenced. And while Christians view Jesus as Almighty God, human leaders from other religions are not considered as important. As for Islam, it's impermissible to make a physical depiction of Mohammed, which explains why Mohammedans don't see his image. Also, if supposed experiences of Jesus and Christian angels giving people accolades were true, we would expect a counterpart to this: a superabundance of experiences where Jesus or angels admonish non-Christians (who have no Christian background) to embrace Christianity.

Furthermore, within the first day of death, blood pools in the body, some body parts becoming dark red, other parts completely paling. Living cells function aerobically and anaerobically; after death, cells only function anaerobically (without oxygen). This facilitates lactic acid production, which gels with myosin, causing rigor mortis, an extreme bodily stiffening. Without these conditions, death hasn't occurred. Scripture texts about coming back from the dead have Jesus and his apostles reviving people who were dead from one to four days and raising them physically whole and healthy. Jesus Christ promised a general resurrection for all humanity, and that raising the dead comes from God's power.

So so-called "near death experiences" not only distort what arising from the dead entails, it's a dangerous idea. Christ taught that most people are lost; "near death experiences" provide the illusion of most people being saved.

### If There Was No Afterlife.....

Many people would be far better off as lower animals, especially me. I would then like to unzip my body, enter my toy poodle, and become her. She's constantly wagging her tail; apparently happy all the time. The enormous amount of heartbreak and emotional pain, having toiled for years at unfulfilling jobs, endless personal responsibilities, inevitable deterioration that accompanies old age, and constant

awareness of death, would render life worse than never having been born. And by the time we gain plenteous knowledge, death closely follows. This gaining of knowledge would be a huge waste if our brains are to be discarded.

Instead of advancing or being evolved higher creatures, billions would have degenerated into something worse: the ultimate fools. We'd be better off being worms. Yet we instinctively know that is untrue; we have attained something higher. Therefore **only a perpetual existence gives our lives meaning.** Animals might also have afterlives. However, I expect that we who have dealt with overwhelming problems and responsibilities will have additional compensation in the hereafter. That's the only thing that makes life meaningful and logical. The inspiration for this insight comes from **sixteenth century theologian Martin Luther**, who **declared that without an afterlife, he would rather be a pig than an emperor.**<sup>1</sup>

### Christ's Bodily Resurrection

JESUS' incarnation, atoning death, and bodily resurrection are Christianity's cornerstone. Quoting pastor Richard Rosinski: "Anything less is non-Christian. Many things [theological non-essentials] are debatable, which is okay and makes us human, but the core essentials can't be debated" [by faithful Christians].<sup>2</sup>

Surprisingly, some lackadaisical believers claim Jesus only revived spiritually. Quoting an account of Christ post-death (Luke 24:36-43): "Behold my hands and feet, it is I myself, handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as I have." Jesus declared His mission: "I am the resurrection" (John 11:25).

Jesus Christ's bodily resurrection would sufficiently demonstrate that Christianity is the exclusive Way, Truth, and pathway to Life. Contrarily, if Christ didn't rise from the dead, Christianity shouldn't exist, being founded on a stupendously false claim. Christ's body was never found, moreover, no serious claim of finding His smallest remnant was ever promulgated. In Christ's day, the masses vehemently opposed Christianity as they have in every subsequent century. If Christ's body or remnants thereof existed, they surely would've been discovered by those attempting to refute Christianity. They had two thousand years to do so. Secondly, from the Church's infancy, Christians believed in the resurrection, not giving adequate time for legends or elaborations to develop.

### Universal Bodily Resurrection

Surprisingly, most American Christian believers denied that our bodies would be physically resurrected. Perhaps that's from the popular belief that when everyone dies, they immediately become glorified in Heaven or damned to Hell, thereby excluding the physical body. Besides the denial of universal bodily resurrection, some consider it false teaching, hence my elaboration. Corinthians 15:50 is emphasized, where "Flesh and blood cannot inherit God's Kingdom." Although flesh and blood cannot inherit God's Kingdom by itself, with the quickening Spirit, it's inherited. The bridegroom (Christ Jesus) comes and takes her. Human bodies, no longer flesh and blood, are transformed. Other lines of reasoning are as follows:

In Corinthians chapter 15, the corruptible must put on immortality, and corruption must put on incorruption, not be discarded with only the natural part left. It also likens bodies to planted seeds.

Resurrection in Corinthians 15 was translated from the Greek *anastasis*, meaning a standing up again. Something can't stand again unless it fell asleep or collapsed. Spirits, according to historic Christianity, depart bodies at death, not sleep in them. The word dead was translated from the Greek *nekros*, having only one meaning, namely, dead body. This word spawned such English words as *necrophobia* and *necrosis*.

Other analogies to resurrection abound, such as night into day, the changing seasons, and caterpillars into butterflies. And Corinthians chapter 1 states that God's glory shines forth and is perfected in weakness. Since spirits have no weakness or baseness, that leaves the human body. Also, deniers of universal bodily resurrection rob man's entirety of salvation, made in God's Trinitarian image: body, soul, and spirit, created very good.

Jesus Christ, the Great Physician, healed flesh and raised dead bodies. If the Resurrection is only spiritual, it would be requisite that after raising the dead, bodies should be shown lying by themselves and their spirits living separately. And why not indulge every possible fleshly desire, if our bodies are only temporary shells? Rather, the flesh is regulated and guarded with bodily discipline, since it possesses a hope of salvation.

Paul declared "He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken (make alive) also your mortal bodies.....(Rom.8:11), "He's the savior of the body"(Eph.5:23), and "We're members of His body, flesh, and bones (Eph.5:30). And in Acts chapter 17, the ancient Greeks mocked Paul for proclaiming the resurrection. They wouldn't be mocking the immortality of people's spirits since the Greeks embraced that concept. Paul must have been proclaiming bodily resurrection, which the Greeks denied.

Historic Judeo-Christian theology teaches that God formed man's body prior to his soul. God then gave man's body the breath of life, making man a living being, instead of creating human spirits, which then inhabited bodies. Besides, the preexistence of our spirits to our present bodies was condemned as heresy at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in AD 553 (*Anat-emas Against Origin Article I*).

Scripture says God IS a spirit but that people HAVE spirits. So something other than a person's spirit is truly them. By process of elimination, their body IS them. Also, fully manifest spirits (ghosts) have been known to bear the human body's image, highlighting its importance, never resembling sheets with eyeballs or blobs of vomit in juvenile movies.

Before mankind's fall from grace, people were supposed to live forever. If people didn't either die or get transfigured bodily into Heaven, Earth would be packed tighter than sardines before long. Bodily redemption and transference solves this conundrum.

Here's an excellent analogy: mollusks do not live independently of their shells, which are an integral part of and a natural outcropping of the creature. Mollusks can symbolize the human body and spirit, empty shells can represent dead bodies. This analogy doesn't fit perfectly, since shells and soft parts are both physical, but it's illustrative. No analogy which must rely on physical symbols can adequately represent spirituality because the spiritual realm is currently beyond our comprehension.

Ezekiel 37:1-13 illustrates universal bodily resurrection in explicit and dramatic fashion. God speaks to piles of dry bones, which subsequently come together, followed by human tissue accumulating until there are complete human bodies. God breathes life into the bodies which reanimates them.

If we believe that God created life ex nihilo (everything from nothing), why be incredulous about reanimation of pre-existent matter, since its raw materials already exist? Besides, Scripture refers to death as falling asleep, a temporary state. Since spirits have no need of physical sleep, and Christ literally woke dead bodies, falling asleep refers to the body, which shall ultimately be awakened.

Scripture has three distinct terms for a person's essence: body, spirit, and soul. The spirit is the "ghost" without the body; the soul is the body animated by the spirit. Although several difficult passages seem to confuse the terms, over hundreds of passages, the meaning of each term is clarified. Using a simple illustration, tires represent bodies, compressed air represents spirits, and car tires filled with air are souls. Scripture clearly teaches that the soul, the whole person, is to be redeemed.

**Arguments for denying the body's physical resurrection were known and declared serious heresy by early Church fathers** such as Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Tertullian, father of Latin Christianity and disciple of St. John's disciple Polycarp. So those professing Christianity should be consistent with their own religion. Recommended reading: *Irenæus Against Heresies Book V chapters 3-15* (AD 180) and Tertullian's *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* (AD 210). They make their position overwhelm-

ingly clear. Universal bodily resurrection is inextricably connected with the Christian religion, a consistent belief for two millennia. Another misunderstanding of Christianity is supposing that the resurrection will only be physical. 8.Ghosts? deals with human spirits.

### Implications of Denying Bodily Resurrection

Unless the body should be saved and continue as part of the person, Christ being incarnate in a body would be nonsensical. And if our natural state cannot be restored, then sin has not been overcome. Some who believe that the body shall be discarded conclude that their physical actions or what they allow their bodies to experience is inconsequential.

Reincarnation, which the Church rejected long ago as heresy, has spirits supposedly hopping from various bodies. That's confusion. For example, a father dies, releasing his spirit, which reenters life through a newborn son, so the father becomes his wife's son, and his wife becomes his mother. Spirits allegedly transfer between male and female bodies, potentially obliterating gender roles. Certainly spirits transferring between human and animal bodies is confusing. With every spirit having its own designated body, everyone's role is fixed and unconfused.

Imagine one unborn embryo telling his twin brother embryo in the womb "Our present reality is all that exists, so don't give me any of your born into a world nonsense." So let's have faith, although we cannot presently comprehend how God could reassemble and breathe life into disordered and disjointed molecules with our current understanding. If God could only do what we could understand, He would not be God. Rather, His ability to do what is inexplicable to others makes Him God, as many things we do are inexplicable to ants.

In Mark 5:38-42 Jesus came to the synagogue ruler's house, seeing people weeping and wailing greatly over a young woman's death. Jesus said "The damsel isn't dead, but sleeps." ("Death is the twin of sleep"-Anonymous) They laughed him to scorn. Yet He took the damsel's hand, saying "Damsel, arise." Straightway the damsel arose and walked, causing them great astonishment.

### Unbeliever's Repudiation?

Paraphrasing atheist Bertrand Russell: Ignorant theologians thought that one's body was definitive; it seemingly lasted from day to day and would continually exist throughout eternity by being resurrected. That's definitely false. We now know that bodily matter continually changes through ongoing cell death and birth of completely new cells. We're not even the same person we were several years ago. We also know that atoms themselves have no continuous existence; it's pointless to say that any one atom is the same one that existed moments ago. Therefore continuity of the body is an illusion.

Not so fast. Consider Mr. Russell's denial that human spirits exist and his denial that any part of our body is definitively us. So what's left?; nothing. Essentially, we don't exist. Would Mr. Russell contend that if someone committed a crime years ago, he's not guilty today, since it was somebody else? Would he contend that if a couple made love on their wedding night, they are committing adultery with a stranger if they are still married five years later? And why is there a gravesite to memorialize Bertrand Russell, since that essentially says that here lies a particular person? So this contention is simply a clever device to attack Christianity. Apparently, God will decide which atoms and molecules represent us, and transform them for His purpose. Not fully understanding it humbles us, encouraging us to trust God. So, "Is death the last sleep? No, it is the last and final awakening." (Walter Scott)<sup>3</sup>



