

KEEP THE EYES OF HIS PEOPLE UPON HIM - GET THEM IN THE HEAVENLIES ACCORDING TO HIS PROMISES

Most people today, Christians included, settle for a far-less glorious future hope than what is promised in the resurrection of the body. An example of this settling for less glory is found in this very popular poem, which you will probably recognize. It was written in 1932.

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.
-Mary Elizabeth Frye

The very idea that the body is to be raised up is still non-sense, or at least unnecessary, to most modern people. This poem has been requested at funerals which I have done. I rejected it. Why? Because it is not only nonsense, nor merely because it is heretically so (which it is), but rather because it settles for far too little in comparison to what God has actually done and promised in Christ Jesus. While it sounds hopeful and comforting, it has as its background an impersonal existence through sappy pseudo-poetic experiences, *but which have no personal relational intimacy*. It posits existence after death, but what a pitiful existence. Pseudo-therapy through delusion.

This should not surprise us too much. Therapy through delusion has always been around. And there have always been objections to the resurrection of the body. The Sadducees had clever arguments with the Pharisees over it. In Corinth, the Greek philosophies of Pythagoras and Epicurus and the dualists argued against it. To much of the Greek world it was foolish to have a body at all. It was merely a cage from which to be freed. Why would one even posit such entrapment in eternity?

So, Paul begins an argument here with a fictional, or at least unnamed, opponent. This is called a dialectic argument, a rhetorical teaching tool which posits a discussion, or dialogue (dialect), between two or more opposing views for the purpose of showing the truth through questions and answers. He uses this argument to answer the doubters and deniers of the resurrection of the body. Thus, Paul adopts the rhetoric style of his day to get the Corinthians to doubt their doubts and to show them there is a far greater glory in the resurrection of the body than they understood.

1. “Jesus, King of the Zombies?”

- a. “What sort of body with the raised dead have?”
- b. The question is a question of quality, i.e. 'what sort of body would a person raised from the dead have?'
 - i. It's a straw man argument to object to the doctrine of resurrection.
 - ii. For example, "Who would believe in people being brought back from the dead? Do they all have rotting flesh still clinging to their bones?! What foolishness!"
 1. What about people who were eaten by cannibals, and the atoms which made up their bodies were shared by two people?! (an actual argument used by 17th century philosopher Robert Boyle)
 2. “Zombie Jesus” is used the same way with the same type of mockery
- c. So, we see that this question by this fictional opponent is not a genuine question, but an accusation of foolishness for believing in the resurrection
- d. This helps us understand why Paul responds to such a question with such power and intensity
 - i. There is something to be said about answering a fool gently, when he is genuinely a fool
 - ii. There is also something to be said about answering a hard-hearted accusatory and obstinate fool with a rhetorical (not physical) fist
- e. Paul responds to such a question with a very strong derogatory term: "You fool!"
 - i. Literally, “Foolish!”
 - ii. The term is indicative of someone who comes to a firm conclusion without evaluating the evidence – a lack of common sense
 1. Obstinate and ignorant
 - iii. It is a word often used to describe those who value the wrong things and draw conclusions about life based upon ignorance of the evidence
 1. Jesus uses the term of the Pharisees in Luke 11:40
 2. Jesus uses the term of God speaking in his parable of the rich fool who treasured and labored to store up earthly possessions as his security
 3. Paul uses numerous times (Rom 2:20; 2 Cor 11:16,19; 12:6,11; Eph 5:17) always in a negative sense.
 4. Peter uses it to tell us that we ought to silence "the ignorance of foolish men" "by doing right, for such is the will of God" (1 Pet 2:15)
- f. What makes the question foolish is not because it is an actual question which seeks to understand the nature of the resurrection body, but because it is being used as a straw man argument against the resurrection.
 - i. A ‘straw man’ is an argument made by an opposing person who presents your view poorly, or makes an argument for your position that you would never make
 - ii. For example, when Joe argues that he would like to spend more on health and education, Bill responds by saying how ridiculous it is that Bill hates our country and wants to leave it defenseless and without a military.

2. The Dead are Raised Up According to its “Kind” – evidence from Genesis 1

- a. So, his answer is that it has always been true, even before the fall, that a seed must be planted before it flourishes
 - i. He then applies that to the resurrection: death must precede the glory of growth like a seed which must be planted before it is 'made to live'.
- b. The seed analogy is drawn directly from Genesis 1, the Creation account, in which God created the seed, the varying 'kinds' of vegetation which seeded and yielded fruit *before he made the sun, stars, fish, birds, animals, and man.*
 - i. Genesis 1:11-12
- c. A seed does not look like the fullness of the plant, the beauty of the flower, or the productivity of the fruit.
 - i. A seed is tiny, ignoble, a nothing in comparison
- d. A seed is something that you must plant into the ground to die so that it may become something far 'greater'

3. The Resurrection Body is Planned and Formed by God for the Glory of Christ Jesus

- a. "God gave it a body as He desired"
- b. If you believe that God created all things, then you must also conclude that He made things however He wanted to make them
 - i. it is God who chooses the *kind* of 'body' which is produced by the seed
 - ii. God is the Creator, not only at the beginning, but at the re-creation, the flourishing of the seeds into the productive beauty and maturity of the fullness of life
 - iii. It is no wonder that the denial of the resurrection of the body flourished in the worldviews which denied the beginnings of the Universe as proceeding from the Non-Created God
- c. Paul actually follows the Genesis account in his ordering of the types of 'body', but he goes backwards, towards the original 'seed' analogy
 - i. human (Gen 1:26-28)
 - ii. animals (Gen 1:24-25)
 - iii. birds (Gen 1:20b)
 - iv. fish (Gen 1:20a)
 - v. 'bodies' of the heavens (Gen 1:14-19)
 1. I think he is referring to stars first, which don't affect the 'earth' in day/night lighting
 - vi. 'bodies' of the earth
 1. I think he referring here to the sun and moon, which affect the day/night cycle of the earth/land
 - vii. Their glories differ, for they are of different 'bodies'
 1. sun, moon - the 'greater lights' which divide the days from nights
 2. stars - the 'lesser' lights of varying brightness
- d. The "glory" of the future resurrection body is both related to our current body (as a seed) and different (glory of the flourishing plant compared to the seed)
 - i. Thus, we will still be 'us', even if glorified
 - ii. Yet, we will be far greater than 'us' because of incorruptibility
 - iii. Many people ask me, particularly when a loved one dies, "Will I recognize him/her when I get to heaven?"
 1. Yes.
 2. The apostles recognized Jesus after he was raised from the dead, even though it took Mary a minute. ☺
- e. It may also be true that our glorified body will retain aspects of our story, for Jesus retained his scars from the crucifixion, although they were not weaknesses
 - i. It may also be that only He retains such evidence because of the significance of His death for us
 - ii. Yet, it seems consistent to me that our sufferings, too, are glorified *through* this 'sharing in His sufferings'
 1. 2 Corinthians 4:17 – these 'light and momentary afflictions are producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.'
 - a. These afflictions which we bear up now, and are seen to be considered 'light' and 'momentary' in comparison to what is yet to come, are PRODUCTIVE for our glory
 - b. In other words, the sufferings of this present time are *making* the glory which will be revealed on that future day of resurrection
 - c. They are connected causally, somehow
 2. Romans 8:16-18
 - a. Our sufferings are shared with Christ, or rather His are shared with us, and they are connected to His glory AND our glory
 - b. They are unworthy to be compared to the glory yet to be revealed in us
 3. 1 Peter 1:3-7
 - a. Our hope is in the resurrection from the dead, having been born again (to a New Humanity)

- b. As part of a New Family, we will receive an inheritance reserved now in the heavenlies by the power of God
 - c. We rejoice even in the midst of various trials now, *so that the proof our genuine faith in Him* might result in praise honor and glory at His return
 - 4. 1 Peter 4:13
 - a. Our joy at His return is tied to our present sufferings with Him
 - 5. Philippians 3:10
 - a. Knowing Him, the power of His resurrection is closely tied to fellowshiping with Him in His sufferings
 - b. ‘being conformed to his death’ is the precursor of knowing the power of his resurrection
 - 6. 2 Tim 2:12
 - a. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him
- iii. The biblical argument is that our sufferings are shapers of our glory, redeemed by our glory, drunk down and used to cause our flourishing like a heavenly fertilizer makes the flourishing of the plant reach its greatest fullness
 - 1. This is why we are told to rejoice in trials, sufferings, squeezings
 - 2. Not because the sufferings are beautiful in themselves, anymore than chicken manure is beautiful, but rather because they are being productive to attain the maximum flourishing and life of what we were made, by God, to be on that day: the Bride of Christ Jesus and His Reward

4. The Resurrection of Our Bodies Was *Always* God’s Plan for His Glory and Our Flourishing
- a. What Paul is doing is “reversing the Creation account” to show how the glory of the resurrection will be even greater than the original Creation
 - b. The resurrection of our bodies will be like Christ’s body, not like Adam’s original body
 - i. Think about this!
 - ii. There is far greater glory to come in our resurrected body than a mere return to Eden
 - 1. We bore the ‘image of the first man’, the ‘image of dust’
 - 2. We will bear the ‘image of the second man’, the ‘image of the heavenly’
 - 3. “First” and “Second” and “old” and “new” are not merely chronological terms, but existential terms relating to *kinds* or *types* of ages.
 - a. Thus the “first resurrection” is the raising up of the things of this current age, of the type of this age (Rev 20:6)
 - b. The “second death” is different in its kind, it’s a type of the next age, the eternal age, the things which cannot be shaken
 - c. Thus, the “first” or “old” things is always related to this current age, the one ‘passing away’ (2 Cor 4:17)
 - d. The “second” or “new” things are always related to the coming age, the one which is ‘eternal’
 - i. Revelation 20:6 – the first resurrection fits one for the new life
 - ii. 2 Cor 5:17 – a new creature fit for the coming age, not this age
 - c. This was planned by God from the beginning, which is why the seed motif is mentioned first in Genesis, before the Fall
 - i. Seeds went into the ground and ‘died’ before Nature was ever cursed by God because of our sin
 - ii. The redemption by Christ Jesus was always the plan of God to exalt His great name by raising up cursed enemies and making them inheriting sons for all of eternity “to the praise of His glorious grace.” (Eph 1)

5. The Contrast of Glories – God Will Make Our Bodies Fit for Eternity

- a. The analogy of the ‘fleshes’ of the heavens
 - i. Just as the Sun is brighter and thus ‘more glorious’ than the moon, so will the resurrection body outshine this body
 - ii. Just as each star has a differing glory from another, so also there is differing glories between this body and the resurrection body

- b. “So it is with the resurrection of the dead”
 - i. It is sown in corruption; it is raised up in incorruption
 - 1. Sown in decomposition, raised up in wholeness
 - ii. It is sown in shame; it is raised up in glory
 - iii. It is sown in weakness; it is raised up in strength
 - 1. Disability vs. Capability
 - iv. It is sown an ‘earthly’ flesh; it is raised up a ‘spiritual’ flesh
 - 1. We typically think of “spiritual” as *immaterial*, and ‘earthly’ or ‘natural’ as *material*, but Paul is not saying this at all!
 - 2. Earthly is the word for the sphere pertaining to life without the Spirit of God, pertaining to worldly desires and disintegration
 - a. Jud 1:19
 - b. 1 Cor 2:14-15
 - c. James 3:15-16
 - 3. Spiritual is the term fit by the Spirit of God, made fit for presence of God, not opposed to God but reconciled and desirous of the things of God
 - a. 1 Cor 2:13; 3:1
 - b. James 3:17
 - c. Jud 1:20-21
 - d. ‘spirituals’ or ‘spiritual gifts’ are those empowering of the Holy Spirit which produce the life of the ‘spiritual’ age, what will be for all eternity under the reign and rule of Christ

6. How Do We Know That This is All True?

- a. It has happened once before!
 - i. The resurrection of the ‘heavenly man’ gives us evidence and credence for the resurrection of the body
- b. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead in glorious resurrection power, *so also shall we be raised up in the same way*
 - i. It is Jesus who gives life (life-giving spirit), while Adam only received it (became a living being)
 - ii. He will raise us up on that day (John 6:44,54) with bodies like unto that which Paul has been describing

7. So What? Why is the Resurrection of the Body Important?

- a. It acknowledges our utter dependence upon God
 - i. It is He who created and resurrects
 - ii. Our death continues to proclaim such dependence and hope in Him to raise what is absolutely unknown and which we are powerless to obtain
- b. It connects this age to the next age
 - i. We have reason to value our bodies here and now, to care for Creation, to be Christian ecologists, because we believe that this world has value and is to be redeemed and transformed in flourishing
 - ii. Martin Luther was once asked what he would do if he knew that Jesus was returning tomorrow. His reply? “I would plant a tree.”
- c. It redeems our experiences in this age as well
 - i. Because of the resurrection of our bodies, then our experiences here on earth *matter*.
 - ii. Your life here and now, both existentially and morally, bears true and utter consequence in the age to come.
 - iii. Therefore, the resurrection of the body grants significance and meaning to your experiences here and now, yet to be redeemed, for sure, and raised without corruption, but still meaningful
- d. It glorifies Christ Jesus as the Firstborn among many brothers
 - i. Romans 8:29 – predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that he might be the first-born among many siblings

When God made Adam we are told that he ‘walked in the cool of the day’ with him. This intimate relationship between Creator and created is compelling. Yet, the resurrection of the body implies a far greater union, a far deeper relationship of not merely walking ‘in the cool of the day’, but of living in the very household of God. It is a future of incorruptibility, where our desires and actions will find their fullness of joy in love for the One who made us, in flourishing relationships of love with one another, and in the holiness which is fit for glory. Never to suffer, for sure, but even greater, never to work for that which causes suffering but rather to desire rightly, to value rightly, to honor rightly, to be anchored in the delight of the Lord. On that day we will see Him and be made like Him, to forever and always relate to the Almighty and to one another in intimate perfection of personal ‘knowing’ and ‘being known’. This is a far greater glory.