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August 7th, 2016

3rd Article of the Apostle's Creed

"I believe in the Resurrection of the Body"

Christianity is the happiest message in the world. The message of Christianity is "We're going to live." Imagine if you had some dreaded disease and the doctor comes in and tells you, "You don't have the disease anymore, you're going to live." Wouldn't that be happy news! The message of Christianity says, "You're going to live!" And it's not just that our souls will go to heaven we die. It's certainly true that our souls will go heaven and it will be glorious, but we will not spend eternity as disembodied spirits. Our bodies will also be raised from the dead. So we will live in the fullest sense body and soul together. That's why we say in the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the Resurrection of the Body."¹

When a believer dies, his soul and his body separate. His body goes into the ground. His soul goes to heaven to be with Jesus. Paul says, "**I desire to depart and be with Christ.**" (Phil 1:23) Paul knew that when he died his soul would go to heaven to be with Jesus. Now when our souls go to heaven it will be wonderful and glorious. We will be in the presence of God and we will be in the bliss of heaven. But God meant body and soul to be together. And so on the Last Day when Jesus returns, he will raise our bodies and reunite our souls back together with our bodies. In our Gospel today Jesus said, "**All who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out.**" (John 5:28-29)

We need to remember that "**nothing is impossible with God**" (Luke 1:37). You might think, what about people who died thousands of years ago and their bodies have long since become part of the ground? God's power is unlimited! Even if a person died four thousand years ago, God can keep track of the particles and elements that made up their body and refashion those particles into a glorious resurrection body. The prophet Daniel said: "**Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake**" (Daniel 12:2) Jesus once said to some people who doubted the resurrection of the body: "**You don't know the power of God.**" (Matthew 22:29)

Or you might wonder, what about people who are lost at sea. Describing the Last Day, the Bible says, "**the sea gave up the dead that were in it**" (Rev 20:13).

Or sometime believers wonder, "What if I am cremated? Will God still raise my body from the dead?" Yes, he will raise your body from the dead if you are cremated. Think about how God created the first man, Adam. It says in Genesis 2:7, "**Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.**" If God made the first man from the dust of the ground, he can certainly take cremated ashes and form a resurrection body.

Now, what will your resurrection body be like? Well, it will be your same body that you have now. Remember that Jesus' body was not in the tomb because the same body that was laid in the tomb was raised from the dead. So your resurrection body will be the same body you have now, but it will be transformed and glorified. Our first lesson today said, "**The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable**" (1 Cor 15:42) Right now our bodies wear down after a while. A person who plays basketball for his entire life realizes: "There are things that I could do when I was 20 that I can't do anymore now that I'm 50." Our bodies wear down after a while. Our resurrection bodies will be imperishable. They will never diminish in power or in appearance.

¹ A book in our church library has a very clear and helpful chapter on the resurrection of the body. Thomas Nass, *End Times: Jesus is Coming Soon* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011), pp. 125-141.

Next the passage says, **“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory” (1 Cor 15:43)**. I don’t know exactly what our resurrection bodies will look like. For example the Bible does not tell us what age our resurrection bodies will look like. Will we all look like we are 20 years old? 30 years old? 40 years old? The Bible just does not tell us. I do know that our resurrection bodies will be glorious. The Bible gives the impression that our bodies will shine with splendor. The prophet Daniel says, **“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (12:3)**. You see our bodies will need to fit in with our surroundings in heaven. God made every single one of his creatures in such a way that they would fit into their surroundings. Fish are equipped to live underwater. They have gills. Polar bears are equipped to survive on ice. The way our bodies are right now, they are not equipped for heaven. The Bible even says, **“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” (1 Cor 15:50)** Our bodies as they are right now would not survive the glory and holiness of heaven. But God will transform our bodies so they fit our heavenly surroundings.

Next 1 Cor 15 says, **“It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.” (1 Cor 15:43)**. For many elderly people, it takes all the power they have just to stand up. The Olympics started on Friday. Many powerful and impressive athletes. When those elderly Christians are raised from the dead with their new resurrection bodies, they will make the Rio Olympians look like slow pokes. Those elderly Christians will be raised in power.

Finally the 1 Cor 15 says, **“it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (15:44)**. Spiritual body does not mean a non-physical body. **“Spiritual body”** means that we will have a body that is completely directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Since our bodies will be completely directed by the Holy Spirit we will never sin. Right now we have the Holy Spirit living in our bodies, but we also have our old sinful nature. In the resurrection we will be 100% controlled and directed by the Spirit so that we never ever sin.

All of this is because of the resurrection of Jesus. When God first created Adam and Eve, everything was very good. But then Adam and Eve rebelled against God and God said that life in the body would be much harder now, **“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you ... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3:16-19)** That explains all the difficulties we have with life in this body. Because our bodies are descended from Adam, our bodies feel weak sometimes. Because our bodies are descended from Adam, our bodies wear down after a while and eventually we die. But God sent a second Adam. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus shared our weak and lowly existence and he died on the cross. But then three days later his body was gloriously raised from the dead. We who believe in Jesus, our bodies will also be gloriously raised from the dead. Just like our bodies now are weak because we are patterned after Adam. Our bodies in the resurrection will be glorious because they will be patterned after Christ. In the Bible it says, **“Just as we have borne the image of the earthly man (Adam), so also shall we bear the image of the man from heaven.” (1 Cor 15:49)** Our passage says, **“He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:21)**. Doesn’t that just take your breath away? In the resurrection God will remake our bodies to be like the glorious resurrection body of Jesus.

The happy message of Christianity is “You’re gonna live!” So whenever your knee hurts or your back aches, think of your glorious resurrection body. Or whenever you feel afraid, think to yourself, “I will be safe forever in the resurrection.” Because of Jesus, we’re going to live. And so we joyfully confess in the Apostle’s Creed: “I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, Amen.”