

# Resurrection: Cornerstone of Redemption – 1 Cor 15:17-20

**Introduction** – The actual, physical, historical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of our redemption and the redemption of the cosmos. Without the resurrection, there is no Christianity for there is no Christ. And if there is no Christ, there is no hope. *“But now Christ is risen from the dead...”* and therefore there is much cause for hope. Let us consider the hope which the doctrine of the resurrection brings (HT to Randy Alcorn’s book, *“Heaven”* for many thoughts here).

**Our Redemption Includes a Physical Resurrection** – Paul is arguing against the notion that we will not experience a physical resurrection (v12). He says if we are not going to be raised from the dead, then Christ must not have been raised from the dead – these two things are connected (v13). And ultimately then, all preaching is vain and useless (vv14-15). But how important do we think the doctrine of the resurrection of the body (our body) is? Many Christians believe they will not have a body after the resurrection. Far Side comics have taught us more modern theology than we realize. But if we don’t have bodies, then we aren’t resurrected – by definition.

**We Are Body and Soul** - Gen 2:7 says, *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”* Your body is not simply a house for the real you. The essence of humanity is not just spirit, but spirit joined with body. Adam was not a full human being until he had both material and immaterial components. Therefore, a redemption of a man must be a redemption of the whole man. Corinth was immersed in the Greek philosophies of Platonism and dualism (Gnostic philosophies that still affect the western mind), which perceived a dichotomy between the spiritual (usually considered good) and the material (usually considered bad).

**Our Redemption Includes the Reversal of All Death** - The major historic Christian creeds affirm, *“I believe in the resurrection of the body,”* but modern Christians tend to deny the essential meaning of this: a complete and permanent return to a physical existence in a physical universe. Death is abnormal, a result of the Fall, and it tears apart what God created and joined together. Resurrection theology also denies the possibility of reincarnation or transmigration of a soul. Along with our bodies, even creation itself groans under the curse awaiting the final redemption (Rom 8:19-22). Resurrected bodies will not float in space; they will reside on a resurrected earth enjoying and glorifying God perfectly. It is good and proper to groan for this final state.

**The Resurrection Proves the Continuity of Ourselves** – Paul says that *“if Christ is not risen...you are still in your sins!”* (1 Cor 15:17). The resurrection is connected to your salvation, and explicitly, the justification of your life (Rom 4:25, 5:18). But remember, your life is not only an immaterial thing. The resurrection is the “setting to rights” your whole person, body and soul. This helps us understand something of what it means to be a new creation and what to expect of the consummated New Earth. When you came to Christ, you were made a new person, but that resurrection life did not change who you were in one sense. It is *you* who were changed – and here *you* are. Job said, *“...in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another”* (Job 19:26-27). When Jesus was raised from the dead, He was Jesus, not somebody else. And in the resurrection, you will be you and not somebody else. This also places you now, as a Christian, on a path to who you are becoming. Looking to Him this way is a means of ongoing purification (1 John 3:2-3). And it means that the work we are doing now, before the resurrection, is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58).

**The Continuity of Seed and Flower** – Sometimes there is a sense of disappointment in the fact that I am going to have my body back – the same one. But Paul’s example sets this concern aside. *“...with what body do they come?...and what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain...But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.”* (1 Cor 15:35-38). Imagine never knowing the connection between a seed and a glorious flower or a giant oak. That is what the difference is between a body “sown in dishonor” and raised “in glory” (v44). God is at work; I am pretty sure we will not be disappointed. This also motivates the Christian life now. Jesus uses this same illustration to motivate us to bury ourselves, lose ourselves, like seed planted into the ground (John 12:24-26). Go ahead – lose your life – only to find you have gained it.

**Finally, A Particular Hope for the Miscarried, the Aged, the Disfigured and Disabled** – No one who will one day be caught up in the glorious resurrection will ever be able to say they never had a chance to live with bodies that worked. The half-truth of the immortality of the soul leaves little hope for someone to expect to experience a real, fully functioning body and mind one day. But the doctrine of the resurrection promises that something far greater is going to happen with that body of yours, that body now wracked with pain or inability, mentally or physically. All of that will be justified/vindicated as well. And there will be a New Heavens and a New Earth in which to enjoy it all to the glory of God.