



John 11:25-26

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

John 5:28-29

New International version of the Holy Bible

I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out . . . ”

John 5:28

A seminary professor used to speak of the newspaper as the “*daily disappointment*.” It still is. It reports on the activities of a sick and dying world. The headlines feature inflation, abortion, rape, mental illness, drunkenness, crime, war and rumors of war. Some young married couples have become so pessimistic that they see no future for themselves or their children. To many, life is nothing except an exercise in futility.

We, who are God’s people, feel quite differently. You see, we read not just the newspaper but we also read the Bible. That’s why we can see a great future ahead for all who believe in Christ as Savior. Some people are near-sighted. They don’t see beyond this world with all its disappointments and perplexities. We are farsighted. We know we will have tribulations but we can see beyond death into a new world. Like Abraham, we look for a city whose Maker and Builder is God.

This brings us to the second to the last sentence in the Apostles’ Creed. Every Sunday around the world as Christians confess the Apostles’ Creed they join us, and we join them in saying: **I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.**

I. Why We Believe in the Resurrection of the Body

Much of the pessimism in our time can be traced to the fact that people generally no longer believe in the resurrection of the body. I have heard people say that they wished that they could believe what we believe. They wish that they could believe that Jesus came and died for sinners, that there is a resurrection and life everlasting made possible by the forgiveness of sins earned and won by Jesus.

Do you believe in the resurrection of the body? The unbelievers chide us and ask cynically: *“How do you know what’s beyond the grave? Have you been there?”* No, we haven’t been there but we know someone very intimately who has. The Bible says: **“No one has ever seen God, but God, the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” John 1:18** Jesus is our beloved Savior who lived in heaven and came here on earth for the express purpose of revealing to us what lies beyond the grave. It is he who says in our text: **“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out...” John 5:28-29**

Note that Jesus says all the dead will hear God’s voice. In other words, God is going to speak and when God speaks things happen. In the beginning he said: **“Let there be light,” and there was light.** Genesis 1:3 **“Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds,”** and it was so. Genesis 1:11 **“Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of sky.”** So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. Genesis 1:20, 21

Whenever Christ, who is God, speaks things happen. The disciples were on the Sea of Galilee. A storm blew up. The waves beat against the ship, the disciples cried for help. Jesus spoke: **“Quiet! Be still!” Mark 4:39** and both the wind and the waves were still. There was a ruler of the synagogue named Jairus in the eighth chapter of Luke. When his 12 year old daughter became seriously ill, he went to find Christ. He asked him to come and heal his child. While he was yet speaking someone from his house came and informed him that his daughter had died. Jesus told Jairus not to fear, all would be well. When they reached the house of Jairus, all the people were crying. He asked all to leave the room, took the girl by the hand, and spoke the simple words: **“My child, get up!” Luke 8:54** and she did. When God speaks, things happen. On the last day, according to Christ, God will speak and all that are in the grave will hear his voice and come forth. That’s why we believe in the resurrection of the body.

In spite of what some theologians of today say about the Old Testament, it is obvious that some of the people of God in the Old Testament times believed in the resurrection of the body. Job, for example, declares: **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I, and not another.” Job 19:25-26** While the New Testament lays great stress on Christ’s suffering and death, it gives almost equal space to his resurrection. For example: St. Paul, writing to the Christians in Thessalonica, encourages them to comfort one another with the resurrection: **“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still**

alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” Thessalonians 4:13-16

That’s why we believe in the resurrection of the body. According to the word of Christ in the text: “ . . . **all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out . . .**” **John 5:28**

Not all want to come forth. There was a queen in Africa that had her tomb sealed in solid concrete in the hope that God couldn’t raise her from the dead. An atheist in our own country stipulated in his will that his body be burned to ashes and scattered upon the seas, in the hope that the fish might carry his ashes to all parts of the world so that if there is a God, he wouldn’t be able to bring him back together again. Obviously they knew neither God nor his almighty power. The queen in Africa, the United States atheist, the baby which died in before birth or in infancy, the mother who died in her old age – believers and unbelievers – ALL will hear his voice and shall come forth. We believe in the resurrection of the body.

II. With What Body Will They Come?

St. Paul in I Corinthians 15, that great chapter on the resurrection, asks: “*With what body will they come?*” Even though both believers and unbelievers will be raised there will be a big difference in their bodies after the resurrection. Speaking of the unbelievers, the Bible says: “**And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.**” **Isaiah 66:24** “*They will be loathsome to all mankind*” means no one will want to be near them. Ugliness, shame, and pain will fill the bodies of the unbelievers. Our bodies and the bodies of all believers will be altogether different.

Our bodies will not only differ from the shameful bodies of the unbelievers, they will also differ from the bodies we have now. Speaking of the believer's resurrection St. Paul assures us: **"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."** **Philippians 3:20-21** Our sinful body which has become weak, pain-filled, or deformed because of sin will be made perfect again. A teenage girl who was cross-eyed wrote to her doctor how embarrassed she feels when people look at her and wondered whether she would ever outgrow it. In the resurrection of believers there will be no crossed eyes, pimples, sores, arthritis, or deformities which make a person ashamed. Our bodies will be changed and made like the glorious body of Christ. In the seventeenth chapter of Matthew, Christ was transfigured before Peter, James and John. When the four of them had ascended the mountain, Christ was changed. His face shone like the sun and his garments were as white as light. So that same body we have now will be raised but it will be made pure, holy, clean, and perfect in all its parts like unto Christ's glorious body.

Faraday, the English physicist, was the first to invent the electric motor and generator. One day a young man working in his laboratory accidentally knocked a golden goblet off a shelf into a vat of acid. Before it could be retrieved, it disintegrated in the acid. When the young man reported this to Dr. Faraday, the scientist told him not to feel too badly. When some chemicals were added to the acid, all the gold settled on the bottom. Out of this purified gold Dr. Faraday made another golden goblet which was even more beautiful than the former because all the impurities and dirt had been taken out in the process.

The resurrection of the body is like that of the perfect golden goblet. Like that goblet disintegrated in the vat of acid, so our bodies will disintegrate in the grave. When Christ raises our bodies from the dead all

sin, uncleanness and impurities will be replaced with holiness, purity, beauty, and an endless life. St. Paul puts it this way: **“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The Body that is sown imperishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body . . . For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” I Corinthians 15:42, 43, 53**

And then some people try to tell us there is no future for us and our children!

III. That Glorious Day Will Come

Yes, that glorious day will come, but when will it come? I don't know. No one knows. If some preacher tries to give you a date or a time you know immediately that he is a false prophet for the Bible says: **“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Matthew 24:36** God alone knows the time of the final resurrection. He has set a date. **“For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17:31**

When that date arrives God will speak and all will hear his voice and come forth. **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by the fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” II Peter 3:10**

Christ himself told his followers: **“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” Matthew 24:27**

If God is going to do this great thing for his people, what's he waiting for? Why doesn't he come? He waits because he is merciful. Shortly before his crucifixion, the Savior took his disciples up the Mount of Olives. It must have been a lovely evening as they sat together on the mountain overlooking the city of Jerusalem. Jesus spoke to them of many things, including the destruction of Jerusalem which lay before them with all its beauty and splendor. It was then that the disciples asked him: **"Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"** **Matthew 24:3** Christ makes no mention of a millennium or of any universal peace among men on this earth. Instead, he warns them against false prophets, deceivers within the church, hatred and persecutions, wars and rumors of wars, the love of iniquity and a great defection from the church. Then he added significantly: **"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."** **Matthew 24:14**

All shall be given an opportunity for salvation. Every nation in the world must first hear the Good News that sinners need not perish; that Jesus Christ, died for the sins of all; that believing in him they can have everlasting life. God waits because he knows there are still some who will come into his kingdom. Maybe he is waiting for someone here, some relative, some acquaintance, someone in Africa, China, or Russia. It's because he is merciful and doesn't want anyone to perish that the end has not yet happened. He wants everyone to have every opportunity to come to the knowledge of the truth.

But, praise the Lord, he will come and at the appointed time he will speak. All of those that are in the grave will hear his voice and come forth! We have a great future.

When someone laments: *“Everything is going wrong”* - tell him to look beyond this world and beyond death. When you become tired and life seems to have no purpose, look ahead to the great future which God has prepared for all who believe in his Son, Jesus Christ.

Lift up your heads, for your redemption is near. Live and hope and walk as becometh God’s people. When someone asks you how you can be so optimistic in the decaying world, tell him: *“I’m farsighted - I look beyond this world. I believe in the resurrection of the body.”*

