

We Believe Part 19

We've been at this for a while now, examining the Apostles' Creed. I hope you have a better sense of what we believe as Christians. Two weeks from today is Easter when we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. We affirm in the creed our belief that Jesus died, was buried and on the third day he rose from the dead. But it is not just that we believe Jesus rose from the dead. We also believe in the resurrection of the body for all of us. Why is this important and what does this mean? That's what we are going to focus on today. Let's recite the creed together: **I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy, apostolic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.**

What happens when we die? That's the question people have been asking since the beginning of time. What's on the other side? People have different ideas of what happens at death. Some believe in annihilation – there is nothing beyond this. Some believe the soul lives on, but as a dis-embodied spirit. Some believe we become one with the universe, just absorbed into the whole. Some believe we become ghosts, phantoms of our former self. Some believe in reincarnation, that we continue to live on in other bodies on earth.

Christians believe in something entirely different. We believe in the resurrection of the body. Why? One reason is because **God created us body, soul and spirit and declared that it was good.** The whole thing. Not just the mind or the spirit or the soul, but the whole person. Our body is part of who we are. Peter Kreeft said we are not souls imprisoned in bodies, but “creatures of body and soul which fall apart at death.” We are body, soul and spirit and they are all interrelated. We have thoughts and feelings perceived through a body. We relate to one another and communicate with each other. How? Through our whole person, not just through thoughts or feelings. We relate to God and communicate with him and worship him. How? Through our whole person. God made us. We are his handiwork. He intends for us to continue to relate to God and each other through our whole person. If as Kreeft said the body and soul

“fall apart at death” they are in some heavenly and greater fashion, reunited at the resurrection.

We believe in the resurrection of the body because our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The early church wrestled against a heresy that called the body evil and the spirit good but God’s plan was to redeem us, body, soul and spirit. The bible says, **“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

There is no reason to believe this to be a temporary arrangement. God made us and then purchased us – again, not just our soul or spirit, but body, soul and spirit. The whole person belongs to the Lord and is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The fact we believe in the resurrection of the body motivates us to “honor God with our body.” It places appropriate value upon our flesh. In other words, what we do with these bodies matters to God and should matter to us. How we treat them, how we treat each other’s bodies, matters to God. It’s why we don’t use or abuse people. It’s why we discipline our bodies, to make sure that what we do with our body honors and glorifies God. The bible says, **“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.” Romans 6:12-13**

It’s why we are to remain sexually pure and chaste, abstaining from sex outside of God ordained marriage, because the body itself is made in God’s image and is a temple of the Holy Spirit. It’s why we treat the dead with respect, because this body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, created by God in his image. Body, soul and spirit. The whole person is being redeemed and God intends the whole person to be with him in heaven and enjoy his presence forever.

We believe in the resurrection of the body because Jesus was resurrected bodily. The bible declares **“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” 1 Corinthians 15:20** Firstfruits were simply that – the first fruits of whatever crop was being harvested. The bible is telling us that Christ’s resurrection was the first of many to follow. Jesus’ resurrection was bodily. After the resurrection the disciples saw him, touched him, spoke with him. Jesus walked with them, ate with them. All things a person - body, soul and spirit would do. He made a point to tell them “a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Luke 24:39 He was not a ghost. He was resurrected bodily.

Hollywood has given us images of Easter with the tomb empty and a bright light shining through the clouds, implying some kind of spiritual resurrection, but not showing a body. “His Spirit lives on in His followers.” Hallmark tries to ease people’s grief with cards that say things about, “your loved one is not really dead, they are in the summer breeze, in the flowers that bloom in spring, in the robins song...” Well, that’s pantheism – we become one with the universe – but it is not Christianity. Jesus didn’t become one with the universe, nor did he reverse the process of the incarnation and go back to being something other than who he is, Jesus the incarnate Son of God.

Jesus rose bodily from the dead and so shall we. I’m not going to become one with the universe, I’m going to stand on two glorified feet on heavenly streets and worship the One who still bears the scars in his body that show he suffered and died for me. Let me say it again, Jesus rose from the dead, bodily. Not a spirit, not a ghost. He ascended bodily into heaven. They watched him go. Spirit’s can just fade away, disappear, but Jesus was caught up into heaven, bodily.

We believe in the resurrection of the body because Jesus was resurrected bodily, however, we know his body was different after the resurrection. He ate fish with the disciples and walked and talked with them, but he also disappeared from their sight and appeared behind locked doors. We believe in the resurrection of the body, but what kind of body will it be? Good question and the answer is: We don’t know exactly. What does the bible say? John writes, **“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” 1 John 3:2**

We shall be like him. We don’t exactly know how that will be, but we shall be like him. The bible says, **“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

He is going to transform these lowly bodies. I don’t know if that means he will reconstitute all the atoms and genetic material that made us, after all, we are constantly changing anyway. I don’t think he will organize piles of dust and say “that pile is Phil Taylor, so don’t let any of it get mixed with that pile of dust that is someone else.” We don’t know how it all works,

but we know we will have a resurrected body like his body, glorified, beyond the reach of death and corruption, earthly and yet at the same time, heavenly. Flesh and bone, totally redeemed, healed, complete, liberated, uniquely prepared to dwell in the house of the Lord and his presence forever. The bible says, **“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.” 1 Corinthians 15:49.**

The apostle Paul asked the question, “How are the dead raised and with what kind of body? He used the analogy of a seed being buried in the ground. **“When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.” 1 Corinthians 15:37**

We have a body that will die and be resurrected, different but the same, like a seed is different but the same as the plant that grows from it. Speaking of our death and resurrection, the bible says, **“The body that is sown is perishable, 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.” 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.**

Our resurrection body will be the same but different. The same in that we will know and be known, but different in that our resurrection body will be totally appropriate and suited for heaven, our spiritual home. The bible says in heaven, **“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away....He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” Revelation 21:4-5** The resurrected body will be designed for the new order of things and Jesus’ resurrection was the first of that new order. C. S. Lewis wrote, **“The New Testament writers speak as if Christ’s achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the ‘first fruits,’ the ‘pioneer of life.’ He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation; a new chapter in cosmic history has opened.” ...C.S. Lewis.**

Jesus, in his flesh, defeated death, the final enemy, and rose triumphant, conquering not only death but sin and hell and Satan and the grave. Because we are now “in Christ” through faith and his saving grace, that means we are united with him in his resurrection. The bible says, **“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as**

Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.” Romans 6:4-5. We believe in the resurrection of the body because we are united with Christ in his resurrection. He rose bodily in glory and victory and so shall we.

The resurrection of our bodies is tied to our salvation. Jesus died to save us, the whole person, not just soul or spirit. In Romans 8 the apostle Paul speaks of the future glory that awaits us when the Lord comes again. The whole planet is longing for redemption and liberation from the consequence and bondage of sin. Paul writes, **“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.” Romans 8:22-24** Paul speaks of the redemption of our bodies as a completion of the adoption process, the salvation that makes us redeemed sons and daughters of God. Our salvation will be complete when we experience this bodily resurrection and we are revealed in glory as his own!

Why is our belief in the resurrection of the body important? **The resurrection of the body is not only about death and the future. Our belief in the resurrection of the body motivates and empowers us now!** Our belief in the resurrection and life after death motivates us to holy living. We are going to live forever somewhere, either heaven or hell. We will either have a body like his glorious body, full of the life of the Spirit, redeemed by his mercy and grace, or we will have forever a body of sin and death. Knowing what is ahead, I want to live a holy life that is pleasing to Christ. I want to live in Christ in this life so I can live with Christ forever in his presence.

The apostle Paul wrote, **“Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry...” Colossians 3:1-5**

Our belief in the resurrection motivates us to keep our mind and our focus upon Christ and heavenly things. We are to live now as though we were already resurrected and in his

presence. We treat our sinful nature as though we were already dead and resurrected to our new life in Christ. Those sinful things won't be in heaven and we don't want them affecting us now. Treat sin as though you were already dead and resurrected. In case you wonder where we can find the power to live that way, look at what the bible tells us in Romans 8.

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Romans 8:11-14

The Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is the Holy Spirit and if you have repented of your sins and made Jesus your Savior and Lord, then the Holy Spirit lives within you. And if He lives within you, then his resurrection power is at work in you, giving life to you, enabling you to live not according to the sinful patterns of your old nature, but to live according to the will of God and the Spirit of God. His resurrection power is at work in your life so you can make choices that lead to life and not death. The resurrection power of the Holy Spirit is given to us now in view of that “new order of things” that will be when we have that glorified, resurrected body.

There is a resurrection coming. We will rise to life in Christ, life with Christ, leaving behind sin and sickness and death. We will have a brand new body like his glorified body. I don't know what it will be like, but I know this: it will be more wonderful than anything we can even begin to conceive. The bible says, **“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9**

He has prepared something amazing for all who love him. Don't miss it! If you aren't walking according to the Spirit, if you aren't sharing in his life now, you won't share in his life then. Surrender to him. Repent of your sins and ask him to save you and give you his new life. Then, when the time for death comes, you will know what lies ahead – a resurrection of your body to eternal life with Christ.