

Afterlife — Anybody Want A Better Body?

August 13, 2017

It seems every week or two I hear of someone in the hospital. Cancer, heart disease, a swollen appendix, and depression are a small sampling of the reasons we end up in a hospital. If you are in the medical field, you are in a recession-proof business. Even if, by God's grace, you manage to avoid a major disease, the bad news is our bodies fall apart with age. We develop arthritis in our joints, bunions on our toes, gray hair on our heads and we put Metamucil in our drinks.

Even if you avoid a disease that puts you in the hospital and you are young enough to not worry about age, chances are, you still struggle with your body. Is there anyone satisfied with your figure? Would anyone like to shed a few of the extra pounds? If that is you, you are in good company — 57.3 million Americans have a health club membership for that reason.¹

It seems like everybody wants a better body. This morning, I am going to tell you how to get one. I am going to tell you how to get a body that won't get sick, a body that won't fall apart with age, a body that will stay fit without the gym and a body where your complexion always looks great, even without Mary Kay.

This is going to be a good morning!

If you are new, it is great to have you. My name is Kurt and I am one of the pastors. Last week we began a new series called Afterlife: What Does The Bible Say About Life After Death? Last week we learned what happens to people one

¹ <http://www.ihrsa.org/about-the-industry/>

minute after they die. We learned that while the body goes in the grave, everyone's spirit continues to exist in Sheol and Hades. They are actually the same place, Sheol is the Hebrew name for the place of the dead in the Old Testament. Hades is the Greek name for the place of the dead in the New Testament. Sheol/Hades is a place of torment for those who die apart from Christ. Those who die with faith in Christ are brought directly home to heaven to be with Christ not because of how good they are but because of how good Jesus is. Last week, we saw what happens to people's spirits when they die. This week, we will look at what happens to our bodies after we die. While our bodies are planted in the ground to decay, that is not the end of the body.

As we look at what happens to the body in the afterlife we will trace it out chronologically. We will see what kind of body we get immediately after we die. We will then look at the resurrection body we will eventually receive. Finally, we will look at how this changes the way we live every day.

After death, we get a temporary body.

We covered this briefly last week when we talked about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. In Hades, both of them had what is known as a temporary body or an intermediate-state body. It is not a flesh and blood body like we have. The Bible doesn't give us many details about this intermediate body. From Luke 16, we know it looks similar to our current bodies. In Luke 16, the rich man asked that Lazarus would be able to take the tip of his finger and put a drop of water on the rich man's tongue. Both Lazarus and the rich man were in their intermediate state bodies. In that non-flesh body they had a finger and a tongue. Lazarus and the rich man could also recognize one another. When Moses and Elijah

appeared to Jesus on the Mt. Of Transfiguration, they were recognizable as Moses and Elijah. They were not in physical bodies. They were in their intermediate state bodies. Apparently those bodies bear such a likeness to our current bodies that we are recognizable in those bodies even though they are not flesh and blood bodies.

When Saul in 1 Samuel 28 used a witch to try to speak to the dead prophet Samuel, the witch was shocked when the Samuel actually showed up in a recognizable body. Once again, this was not a flesh and blood body but some kind of intermediate-state body, but it looked like Samuel.

Just to be candid, not all theologians agree that we will have intermediate-state bodies after death. Some theologians feel we may be simply disembodied souls in heaven. Other theologians feel differently on this issue because of the verses I shared with you. They seem to indicate we have some kind of spiritual body. The best way I can understand our intermediate-state body is it must be similar to angelic bodies. Just as angels have bodies but they are not flesh and blood bodies, in a similar way, we must be given intermediate state bodies after death that are not flesh and blood bodies. They are spiritual bodies.

The key thing to remember about our intermediate-state body is it will allow us to be with Christ, which the Bible says is much better. It is better to be with Christ in an intermediate state body than to be apart from Christ in a physical bodies.

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 (ESV)

While this next verse is not conclusive, Paul seems to say that while we are without fleshly bodies, while it will be great to be with Christ, there will be a sense of being naked, that literally means stripped of our outer garment. We will long to have our physical bodies back.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 2 Corinthians 5:2–4 (ESV)

Paul said we were not created to be naked — to be unclothed — to escape our physical bodies, but we will always want to be further clothed, which means to get our bodies back.

Plato was a philosopher that taught a few hundred years before Christ. He taught that the body was bad and the spirit was good. He wanted people to think that separating the spirit from the body was a good thing. Paul said the opposite. Our body and spirit were meant to be united together. Even though being with Christ in our intermediate-state bodies is better than life in this current body, while we are with Christ in our intermediate state body we will still long to get our physical bodies back because we were created to live in a physical body. How we get our bodies back after they are buried in the grave is the next part of our story.

When Christ returns, we get a resurrection body.

The Bible tells us that when Christ returns, Christians will get their bodies back. The way to think about this is that the Bible is clear that Christ's resurrection body was only the first body to rise from the dead.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1 Corinthians 15:20 (ESV)

That means Jesus' resurrection was only the first bodily resurrection.

When Christ returns, our bodies will rise from the grave just like his body rose from the grave. Jesus' resurrection body was the prototype for our resurrection bodies.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2 (ESV)

When Christ returns, we will be just like him.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. John 6:39–40 (ESV)

Everyone who looks to Jesus and believes in him has eternal life. Jesus will raise our bodies from the dead on the last day and we will live in a real body that will be alive forever.

who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

I love this verse. Our bodies will be transformed to be just like Jesus' resurrection body.

The Bible is incredibly clear that all Christians will get their bodies back from the dead when Christ returns. What will our bodies be like when that happens? The best way to answer that question is to look at Jesus' resurrection body to see what we can learn about our resurrection bodies. Remember Jesus' resurrection body was the prototype for our resurrection bodies.

How will our resurrection bodies be similar to the ones we have today?

Our resurrection bodies will have the same DNA.

What is more glorious, to restore an old car or to make a completely new car? Many times it is harder and most costly to restore something old than to create something new. Our God is a restoration specialist. He will not let sin and Satan successfully destroy this earth or our bodies to such a degree that God will be forced to make us a completely new body because he could not restore the old body. The defeat of Satan and sin is more glorious when God takes the dead and rotten old body that was destroyed by sin and rotted in the grave then he completely restores it and vastly improves it. That is why the tomb was empty. Isaiah 59 says Jesus' body was beaten prior to his death on the cross. Isaiah tells us he was beaten so badly he was unrecognizable after the beating. People didn't say, "Who is it?" They said, "What is it?" That same severely beaten and disfigured body was laid in the tomb to rot for three days. Satan and sin would have had a victory if Jesus' body was destroyed beyond repair. There was no victory for the enemy. The very same destroyed and rotting body they laid in the tomb is the body God raised from the dead and brought back to life on resurrection Sunday! Jesus' same DNA was back.

In the same way, when Christ returns and calls our name, just like Lazarus came out of the tomb, we will come out of our graves. It doesn't matter if our bodies have been dead for 20 years, 50 years or more than 2,000 years. Our very same body will be reassembled, restored and vastly improved. We will get it

back when Jesus returns and says our names. Satan and sin will not achieve a victory over our bodies.

What about people whose bodies were incinerated? What about people whose bodies were eaten by sharks and whose DNA was scattered around the sea? Will they get their same bodies back? This is my answer.

The more complete the ruin, the more glorious the restoration.

I know some of you find this hard to believe. Think about this. If Ezekiel in Ezekiel 37 could preach to a valley of dry bones and they reassembled to life and transformed into a vast army, Jesus can raise the dead. If Lazarus came out of the tomb when Jesus simply said his name, God can raise the dead, and it doesn't matter how decayed they are.

A few years ago, when I preached at my mother's funeral, we buried her in the cemetery next her church. I said these words, "The very same body that we plant in the grave in weakness will one day explode from this earth in power when Jesus calls her name." She will get her same body back and it will be better than ever. The Westminster Larger Catechism says it this way:

The self-same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ.

If you have any doubts it is literally the same flesh and blood body we get back from the dead, look what Jesus said to his disciples after he rose from the grave. They also struggled to believe it was literally him.

See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. Luke 24:39 (ESV)

Our resurrection body will have the same memories.

This may be self-evident but it is worth mentioning. Just as we will have our memories in our intermediate state bodies, like Lazarus and the rich man, we will also have our memories in our resurrection bodies. That means we will pick up relationships with friends and family right where we left off. Christ in his resurrection body picked up his relationships right where they left off with Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Peter and the rest of the disciples. In the same way, we will pick up our relationships with our loved ones as if we hadn't left.

Remember God is a restoration specialist. He takes what was ruined by sin and he completely restores it plus vastly improves it. That includes our bodies and our memories.

We will eat in our resurrection bodies.

One of the great pleasures in life is food. God created food. It is not just for nutrition but it was given as a pleasure to enjoy. Three or more times a day we partake in this pleasure. When Cindy and I began seeing one another, she cooked me spaghetti and meat sauce at her parents' home. It was simple but it was fabulous. She makes a killer spaghetti. Even at that early point in our relationship, I began thinking she might be the woman for me because she is a great cook! Food is a God-given pleasure in our physical world.

In our intermediate-state bodies, I don't think we will enjoy food because food is a part of the material world. Our intermediate-state bodies are not part of the physical world. When we get our resurrection bodies, like Jesus' body, we will once again enjoy the pleasures of the material world, like eating!

In John 21, Jesus cooked breakfast for his disciples and ate with them in his resurrection body. Another time Jesus appeared to his disciples in his resurrection body. They were so freaked out they thought they were looking at a ghost. Look what Jesus said:

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. Luke 24:40–43 (ESV)

One of the problems we have in our current bodies is weight gain. All I need to do is look at a carbohydrate and it absorbs into my body. It wasn't always that way. Remember when we were young and we could eat almost anything without gaining a pound? I suspect we will be able to eat in our resurrection bodies and not gain those extra pounds. One of the first things that happens after we get our resurrection bodies is the marriage supper of the lamb in Revelation 19:9. A wedding supper in that culture was a week-long celebration that involved all-you-can-eat food for a week. The Bible doesn't say that after the wedding supper of the lamb Christ's bride was too plump so he took her for a grueling 10K run to burn off the extra calories from the wedding.

What is your favorite food? Steak? Lasagna? Barbecue? Here is the good news. God is a restoration specialist. He restores our bodies that were ruined by sin plus he vastly improves them. This means that if you love the taste of lasagna now, in your resurrection body your taste buds will not just be restored but they are vastly improved. Lasagna in your resurrection body will taste even better than it does today. If you love the taste of chocolate, chocolate will taste even better in our resurrection bodies than it does in our earthly bodies.

Later, food will get even better. We will first get our resurrection bodies and reign with Christ for 1,000 years on this earth. That is called the Millennium. We will talk about the Millennium next week. Eventually God will make a new creation, which we will talk about in two weeks. In our resurrection bodies, since they are new and vastly improved, food will taste better in the Millennium. In the new creation, food will not just taste better but it will be better so the taste will be improved. The cocoa in chocolate will taste better in our resurrection bodies, but in the new creation not only will the cocoa taste better but it will have even more taste. The tomatoes used in Italian food will burst with even more flavor in the new creation than they do in this creation. God is a restoration specialist. He takes our bodies that are ruined by sin then fully restores them plus vastly improves them.

Is anybody getting excited for your resurrection body? Is anybody looking forward to the new creation?

Our resurrection bodies will maintain our genders and races.

On the **Build Your Own Sermon** question cards, some of you wanted to know if you would retain your gender in the afterlife. In our intermediate-state bodies, we learned we are recognizable even though we don't have a physical body. Our gender is part of what makes us recognizable. What was Jesus like in his resurrection body? Jesus kept his gender and his race in his resurrection body. We will keep our gender and race in our resurrection body for all eternity.

Look in the mirror. Get used to it. We will look like us for eternity.

One of the reasons God created race is because God loves variety. He loves variety of races, nations and cultures. While God loves variety. He also loves unity in that variety around Jesus.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands... Revelation 7:9 (ESV)

Different cultures and tribes all worshipping Jesus.

How will our resurrection bodies be different?

Our resurrection bodies will be immortal.

What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 1 Corinthians 15:42 (ESV)

Our bodies are like a carton of milk. We will all eventually expire. Today, we live a relatively short period of time. In the Old Testament genealogies, we see people lived for 700-900 years. People lived a long time in the old creation apart from the Tree of Life. Can you imagine what life will be like in our resurrection bodies that will never grow old? Our strength will never fade. We will have more energy than when we were teenagers but it will last for all of eternity. We will never need to go to the dentist or the doctor because we will never get sick or weak.

Our resurrection body will be filled with power.

It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 1 Corinthians 15:43 (ESV)

Paul's point was simply that as we get older, we get weaker. In our house, I am the first one to bed. I can't stay up late like I used to.

One of the great qualities of our resurrection bodies is they are filled with power. The Greek word for power is the word *dunamis* from which we get our

word dynamite. It means achieving power. It means capability power. Our resurrection bodies will be pulsating with capability and the ability to achieve. Do you like to write? You will have incredible writing abilities that do not fatigue in your resurrection body. Do you like to play racquetball? You will be able to play more than three games and not need to rest. Do you like to jog? Imagine running but never feeling tired. The limitations of all of our fatigue and emotional weakness will be taken away in our resurrection bodies. Can you imagine how much fun that will be?

Our resurrection body will radiate glory.

It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. 1 Corinthians 15:43 (ESV)

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body... Philipians 3:20–21 (ESV)

Christ's resurrected body before he went home to heaven was normal in appearance. Notice what happened to Christ's body when he ascended to heaven.

As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And I answered, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said to me, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting." Acts 22:6–8 (ESV)

Jesus shown with glory. In Revelation 22:23 the Bible tells us that in the new creation there is no need for the sun or moon to give light in the new creation because the glory of Jesus is what illuminates the new creation. Will our resurrection bodies shine like Jesus' body?

We might. Even if we don't naturally glow in our resurrection bodies, I suspect there will be times we will glow. Whenever we spend time in Christ's

presence, I suspect our resurrection bodies will begin to partake of his glory. Just as Moses' face glowed after spending time on Mt. Sinai to get the Ten Commandments from God, in a similar way, we may glow from spending time in the glory of Jesus.

Our resurrection bodies sound almost too good to be true. The million dollar question is when will we get one?

When will we get our resurrection bodies?

The Bible is clear we will get our bodies when Jesus returns.

...and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Acts 1:11 (ESV)

When Christ returns, that is when we get our resurrection bodies.

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:50–54 (ESV)

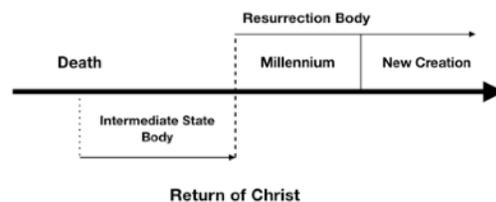
If you can summarize what we learned, it looks something like this. After death, Christians are with Christ in their intermediate-state bodies. When Christ returns, he will resurrect our bodies

and give us our resurrection bodies in the blink of an eye. We will reign with

Christ on this earth for a thousand

years in a period called the Millennium.

Next week, we will look at the millennium and explain it. Ultimately, we keep our



resurrection bodies into the new creation when Jesus doesn't just restore and vastly improve our bodies but he restores and vastly improves this earth as he combines heaven and earth together. How that works is what we will study in the next two weeks. Those are messages you don't want to miss.

For the fun of it, I want to dive a little deeper into the return of Christ and how it works. 1 Thessalonians 4 details how things will unfold.

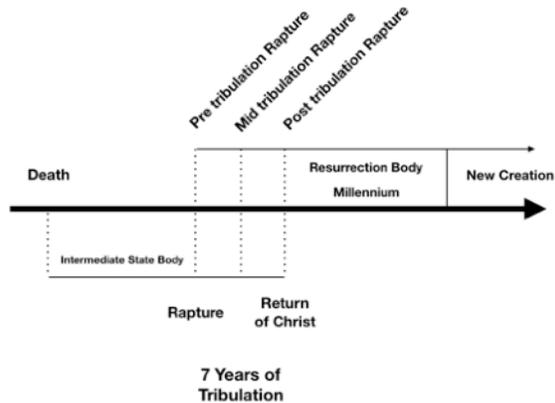
But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17 (ESV)

Christ will return. He will speak the word and the dead in Christ will rise first. The bodies of all Christians will literally explode out of their graves and be instantly transformed into resurrection bodies. Only after the dead have their bodies back will the Christians that are alive follow them to meet Jesus in the air to always be with the Lord.

Here is where it gets a little sticky. The Bible tells us we are caught up in the air in our resurrection bodies to be with Jesus. Where do we go from there? Do we return to the earth or in our resurrection bodies head to heaven?

I will not dive into this too deeply but let me introduce this topic. The Bible tells us before Christ returns, things will get really bad. Revelation talks about two beasts and the antichrist. It talks about one of the beasts setting himself up in the

temple in Jerusalem and the other forcing the world to worship him. The book of Daniel tells us there will be seven years at the end before Christ's second coming when God will pour out his wrath on the earth called the time of tribulation. The



question is, when Christ returns for us and resurrects our bodies, is it before these seven years of tribulation, in the middle of the tribulation or do Christians go through the tribulation and Christ returns at the end of the tribulation? The first thing to tell you is don't be too dogmatic on this particular topic. This picture is a little fuzzy.

I hope the pretribulational view is right and Christians are not on earth during the tribulation because I don't like pain. Some support for a secret rapture of Christians before the tribulation is found in the Bible. For instance, God says he has not destined his people for his wrath.

...and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.](#) 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (ESV)

For [God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...](#) 1 Thessalonians 5:9 (ESV)

In addition, God has a history of rescuing his people from his wrath before he pours out wrath and judgment. God rescued Noah and his family, who were known as the only righteous, before he poured his wrath out on the earth by the flood. God rescued the firstborn of the Israelites in Egypt by them putting the blood of lamb on the sides and top of their doorposts before he unleashed the

angel of death against the firstborn of Egypt. God rescued Lot out of Sodom and Gomorrah before God unleashed his wrath and rained down brimstone and fire on those wicked cities. It wouldn't be inconsistent for God to rescue those who trust in Jesus before he pours his wrath out on this world in the tribulation.

The problem is there is no place where the Bible specifically say there will be a secret rapture of Christians before the time of tribulation. In addition, a secret rapture was never heard of until the 1900s. For almost all of Christian history, Christians understood that we would go through the time of tribulation. Christ's second coming and the transformation of our body to resurrection bodies would be one and the same event at the end of the tribulation.

If you believe in a secret rapture before the time of tribulation, I hope you are right. It is hard to definitely prove from the Bible. A straight forward reading of the Bible leads us to believe Christians may go through the tribulation.

What differences does this make?

Let earthly frailties whet the appetite for resurrection body vitalities.

Every day each of us feels the effects of sin on our bodies. It may simply be the fatigue we experience at the end of the day. It may be the frustration we have at trying to remember something clearly. It may be our battle with cancer, Parkinson's, or MS. Every time we experience those bodily weaknesses, remember our failing body is not the end of this body. Our same body will rise from the dead, be completely restored and vastly improved for all of eternity once Christ returns.

You don't need to have a bucket list.

Many people have a bucket list. Before they die, they want to make sure they climb the Rockies, parasail on the lake or take a European vacation. There is nothing wrong with a bucket list per se but behind the idea of a bucket list is a flawed mentality that says if I don't do certain things in this life before I die, I will never have a chance to do them again. That is false. As Christians, we will get our bodies back. Our bodies will be better than ever. We will reign with Christ on this planet for a thousand years in the Millennium plus the new creation for all of eternity. For the rest of eternity we can enjoy the pleasures of God creation in an even better body and do everything we missed on our bucket list because this life is not the end of the body.

Remember God is a restoration specialist. He wants to begin his work of restoration in your life today.

God loves to take what is completely ruined then restore it and vastly improve it. The more destroyed something is by sin, the more glory given to God when he restores and improves it. That is why God delights in taking the very same bodies that are dead and rotten in the ground and raising them back to life. That is why God will take this very planet when it is ruined by sin and he will complete restore it by removing all the effects of sin upon it.

God as a restoration specialist is not all in the future. It begins today. Some of you walked in this morning and your life was in complete shambles. You find yourself struggling with sin and addiction. You can't stand who you are and what you've become. You came to the right place. God is a restoration specialist. Confess your sin to God and repent of it. Ask Jesus' death on the cross to pay for

your sin and today begin walking with Christ by reading his Word, talking to God in prayer and gathering with his people. The Bible says that the moment we turn to Jesus we are literally born again. God sends his Holy Spirit in our hearts and he begins restoring and vastly improving us today from the inside out. As I close, I ask if you will call out to God, confess your sin and turn to Jesus with all of your heart. Let the restoration specialist begin his good work in your life today.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)

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