

What kind of body will I have – upon resurrection day?

- Will I have all my hair?
- Will I get my 2 hips and my left knee back? (I certainly don’t want them the way they were when they were replaced!)
- What about teeth?
- And what about those people who have had limbs amputated? Do they go through eternity that way?
- Oh, and if I am cremated, how is God going to put all those scattered ashes back together?
- Hey, what about multiple bodies in a grave – how will God know which parts belong to which?

Have you ever heard questions like these? More importantly – have you ever HAD questions like these? These kinds of questions are an example, first of our limited, earthly knowledge of God, and second of our great ability to question and try to limit the power and greatness of Almighty God. Today’s Gospel really helps to clarify some of the misconceptions about the resurrection body – and more importantly about the promise of eternal life; you see **death is not the end... for believers in Jesus as the Christ – it is just the beginning!**

In the very beginning of today’s Gospel Luke tells us that suddenly “*Jesus himself stood among them.*” He appeared among them behind locked doors. Jesus could do this because His resurrection and glorification had altered His bodily form. In this new body He was able to transcend all physical barriers.

Jesus’ first words to this group of confused, disbelieving and bewildered followers and disciples, all of whom had run and deserted Him in His time of greatest need, were: “*Peace be with you.*” While this might have been a standard Hebrew greeting, here it was filled with far greater meaning. Jesus brought not only a greeting of peace, but His presence brought peace.

He’s Not A Ghost!

All of these people in the locked room had been wrestling with the fact that Jesus’ body was missing from the tomb, and then they were hearing amazing stories of his appearances to several people of their group. There was the incident on the Road to Emmaus when the Risen Jesus met two men, explained the Scriptures and broke bread with them – and then disappeared! They had not yet even begun to consider that *if* Jesus really was alive, what would his body would be like. And now suddenly the missing body was there; Jesus appeared among them suddenly, and “*they were startled and terrified, thinking they were seeing a ghost.*” **Jesus’ body was not a figment of the imagination; this was not merely a case of resuscitation, or the results of a swoon, and they surely were not seeing a ghost!** Jesus invited and encouraged them to look and touch. He had “*flesh and bones*” and could even eat food. On the other hand, His body wasn’t a restored human body like Lazarus’s – instead He was able to appear and disappear. Jesus’ resurrected body was immortal – and was able to spend time in both heaven and earth. His body was a preview for each of us – of what our resurrection bodies will be like – and a remembrance that we can only spend time on earth – while the resurrection body is able to exist in both.

You see the new body that we will be given upon the resurrection day **will not be identical to our previous one**. In an act of new creation - parallel only to the original creation itself, God will make a new type of material – no longer subject to decay and death – with no arthritis, no degeneration of nerves or bones, no disease, no cancer, no pain and no suffering. It will be a body made of a “new” flesh and bone – essence and structure – making us whole again – as we were meant to be. In Jesus’ case – His body was transformed – because there was no time for decay. Our human bodies will indeed decay; some might be burnt; some may have turned back to dust; for those it will take a complete act of new creation. This new body that we will be given will belong in both dimensions of God’s world – **heaven and earth** – which, as we are told in Revelation 21: will be joined together as one forever – a new heaven and a new earth. **It will appear to be the end of all things, but instead it will just be the beginning – a new beginning!**

The Old is not the end --- :

Next we see that Jesus showed His followers that all of the Holy Scriptures written up to that very point in time - was not the end, but indeed just the beginning! He showed them that **all of the facts written in the Old Testament about the Messiah**, from **The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms** were **about Him**. In other words He showed them from different parts of the Old Testament of His mission - like:

- **Deuteronomy 18:15** “*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.*” Or
- **Psalms 2:7** “*I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you,”* the words of **Isaiah 53** and
- **Isaiah 61:1** “*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners.*”

These words loudly proclaim to the disciples and even to us that **Jesus is the Messiah** and that He had to suffer and rise from the dead. Through His death and resurrection, the message of **repentance and forgiveness of sins could be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem**. They were **witnesses of His death and His rising from the dead** – and they ate with Him after His death. It would somehow be up to them to carry this to the world.

Luke was writing to the people of the Greek-speaking world. He took these words in Christ’s message seriously - as a means of spreading God’s love and forgiveness to all the world—and that this had been God’s plan from the very beginning. The message of Christ’s Gospel has a worldwide scope – as it is the only means for the salvation of the world - and God wants the whole world to hear His good news of salvation.

The apostle Paul, a former Pharisee and a student of the Old Testament, who encountered Jesus himself in a miraculous revelation - later testified of God’s plan for the whole world:

- In the words of Acts 26:22-23 “*I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.*”

The Prophet Isaiah foretold of the expansion of the kingdom to include the Gentiles:

- from 42:6: “*I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.*”

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- He repeated this refrain again in chapter 49: “*It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth*” (Isaiah 49:6).

God’s Promises Never Fail:

God’s covenant with Abraham said that “*in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*” (Genesis 12:3). In His covenant with David God said, “*I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*” (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

Jesus opened His disciple’s minds to what God had already accomplished in the New Covenant and how this powerful message would sweep throughout all creation.

- He told His disciples that His Holy Name would be preached to all nations.
- The seed that would become the church would be planted right where they were. They would begin in Jerusalem—and then “*in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

Jesus revealed to them that the entire intent of the Old Testament and the purpose of His life, ministry, death, and resurrection, pointed to the missionary purpose of His followers - which He would send out to **proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sin in His name**. “The Great Commission” – the sending out into the world is not an activity that has been just tacked on to the gospel, but reflects the very purpose of God from eternity. Jesus’ Great Commission to the church is not just a passage of Scripture, like Matthew 28:18-20, but is a message that is found throughout Holy Scripture. The beginning point for missions is right where we are, but our missionary task extends to the ends of the earth – and until the end of the world. This Gospel message also leaves the disciples waiting for the power to accept and carry out this Commission —the power of the Holy Spirit. Spreading the Gospel, proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins - is too great a task for human power, and God would provide believers to be clothed in the power of the Holy Spirit - enabled and empowered for the task of mission evangelism.

We Are Witnesses of A New Body:

We are witnesses to that fact today – and can see the very evidence through the lesson of today’s Holy Gospel. This lesson appears at the **very end** of the Gospel of Luke – but is remarkably also the starting point of Luke’s second book – The Acts of the Apostles. You see – **it’s not the end – it’s just the beginning!** The beginning of the life of the empowered church – alive in the Holy Spirit. Through both the Gospel of Luke and The Book of Acts - we are told of the ascension of Christ and the waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Had Jesus not gone back to heaven, the Holy Spirit could not have come on the Day of Pentecost.

In today’s Gospel – Jesus’ time with His beloved Disciples was coming to an end – but the coming of the Holy Spirit would be just the beginning. From the seed of the old, a new body would come forth and Christ’s One, Holy, Apostolic Church would emerge.