

I believe in the resurrection of the body

Human reason has a problem with the resurrection of the body. It says, "How can a dead body rise again?" Bodies disintegrate. They are destroyed by fire. They are eaten by animals. They are blown to smithereens by explosives. Parts of bodies are strewn in different locations. Reason says, "How will a dead body ever rise again?" This is the problem that Paul faced in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). The people were willing to listen to him until he mentioned the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. At that point many in the crowd sneered. The resurrection of the body was not part of the Greek thought. Homer, the Greek poet, spoke of souls coming back as disembodied shades. Some of the Greeks believed in reincarnation, the soul coming back in other bodies (Pythagoras, Plato). But the goal in the afterlife was to stay free of the body. Some, like the Epicureans, believed that death ended everything. The body disintegrated, and that was it. Such was the problem that Paul also faced in Corinth, where the Greek philosophy on the afterlife caused some Corinthian Christians to question the resurrection of the body, in spite of the fact that they knew Christ had risen from the dead.

People today also question the resurrection of the body. People will speak of a person's good deeds living on in the lives of others. They will speak of the good memories of the deceased as living on in the memories of others. By nature, human beings cannot accept a resurrection of the body. It runs counter to what their reason tells them.

Yet the Bible is very clear. God will raise the dead bodies back to life. He will reunite soul and body. Job believed it. He said, "*I myself know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last He will stand on the dust. After this, my skin will surround this body, and from my flesh I shall see God. I myself shall see Him for myself. My own eyes will see, and not as a stranger,*" (Job 19:25-27). Isaiah wrote, "*Your dead will return to life. They will rise together with my dead body. Wake up and sing for joy, you who dwell in the dust!*" (Is. 26:19). The Lord used the picture of dead bodies coming back to life to give Ezekiel a picture of how he would return Israel from captivity in Babylon. Hosea believed in the resurrection. He wrote, "*Death, where are your stings? Sheol, where is your destruction?*" (Hos. 13:14; cf. 1 Cor. 15:55).

Daniel was told, "*Many of those who are asleep in the land of dust will wake up, some to everlasting life and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence,*" (12:2). Jesus echoed these words, "*...an hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and will come out,*" (John 5:28-29). Martha knew her brother would rise again on the Last Day (John 11:24). Paul spoke of the resurrection in his sermons (Ac 13:30-37; 17:31). He wrote about it in his epistles (1 Cor. 15; Phil. 3:21). Scripture teaches us to confess with certainty as we do in the creeds, "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

How can we be so sure? The answer is, Christ has risen from the dead. His resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection. If Christ had remained dead, then we would have no certainty of the resurrection of the body. Yes, Jesus raised the youth of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus from the dead. But they all died again. If there were no empty tomb, we would have no hope of a resurrection from the dead. But Paul asserts, "*However, now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,*" (1 Cor. 15:20). Our Saviour lives. He will raise our bodies from the dead. He arose with the same body. He is called the firstfruits. He will raise us with the same bodies. Who will rise again? All people will be raised. Paul stated, "*I have hope in God, which these men also wait for, that there is going to be a resurrection of both those who are righteous and those who are wicked,*" (Acts 24:15). No one will be exempt. No one will be overlooked. All the dead will rise, whether believer or unbeliever.

Believers can look forward to having a glorified body in the resurrection. This body which is ravaged by sin in this life will be raised in glory in the next. It will be patterned after the glorious resurrection body of Jesus.