

The Nature of Jesus and the Believer's Resurrection Body

The certainty of the apostles was founded on their experience in the factual realm. To them Jesus showed Himself alive 'by many infallible proofs' (Acts 1:3). The term Luke uses is "tekmerion," which indicates a demonstrable proof. The disciples came to their Easter faith through inescapable empirical evidence available to them, and available to us through their written testimony. It is important for us, in an age that calls for evidence to sustain the Christian claim, to answer the call with appropriate historical considerations.¹

As I teach in three different institutions, pastor, and publically speak around the country and abroad, I constantly get asked what kind of resurrected bodies will believers possess. Will it be an incorporeal or corporeal body? If some understand the body made of flesh to be weak or evil, then circumventing this form of existence will not only be desirable but necessary to exist in God's holy presence. Such inquiries have led some to conclude that believers will somehow have a bodiless existence.²

¹ Clark Pinnock, "A Dialogue on Christ's Resurrection," *Christianity Today*, April 12, 1968, 11.

² One writer noting this issues says, "Regarding your question, 'Do saints become a spiritual being or spiritual human in eternity when they receive new bodies at the rapture?' my answer is yes, if 'spiritual being' is understood properly. Paul addressed this issue in I Corinthians 15 when explaining what kind of body we will have in the resurrection. He spoke of a 'spiritual body.' A spiritual body, however, is not the same thing as a spirit body. The former is a perfected physical body, while the latter lacks any physical component. Paul was arguing against the Greek philosophy of the Corinthians, which considered bodily resurrection a disgusting idea. The Greek philosophy emulated freedom from the physical existence, and thus the Corinthian believers were denying a physical resurrection. Paul was emphatic that we will have a physical body. He argued that even Jesus was physically resurrected from the dead, and is the forerunner for our own resurrection (I Corinthians 15:12-23). We will have physical flesh, just as Jesus had physical flesh when He was resurrected." Jason Dulle, "Heavenly or Earthly Bodies?" *Institute for Biblical Studies*, <http://www.onenesspentecostal.com/bodiesheaven.htm> (accessed February 2, 2012). Jehovah's Witnesses are just one of various groups that believe Jesus did not rise physically (see <http://4jehovah.org/jehovahs-witness-resurrection.php>). The view that Jesus could have risen bodiless is not just limited to Jehovah's Witnesses, but various main stream scholars also advocated that such a view would no damage to the Christian faith. James Charlesworth (also a Methodist minister) in symposium held in Jerusalem almost a year after the "Jesus Family Tomb" debate concluded, "I don't think it will undermine belief in the resurrection, only that Jesus rose as a spiritual body, not in the flesh." Furthermore he added, "Christianity is a strong religion, based on faith and experience, and I don't think that any discovery by archaeologists will change that" Tim McGirk, *Jesus 'Tomb' Controversy Reopened* (online: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1704299,00.html>, January 16, 2008, accessed February 14, 2008). See also .David Horowitz, *Editor's Notes: Giving 'Jesus' the Silent Treatment* (online: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1171894551868&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>, March 3, 2007, accessed June 21, 2007).

When the *Jesus Family Tomb* and the *Lost Tomb of Jesus* documentary film aired worldwide (involving James Cameron, Simcha Jacobovici, Charles Pellegrino, and James Tabor) advocates claimed that Jesus rose spiritually.³ They said Christians should venerate the Jesus ossuary found in Talpiot, Jerusalem belonging to His family tomb discovered in 1980, since this did not pose a problem to the Christian faith that is founded on Jesus' resurrection.⁴ However, does a spiritual resurrection present a problem to the Christian faith, or does the validity and eternal salvation for Christians hinge on the physical Resurrection of Jesus and believers? Furthermore, since it is well documented that first-century Judaism believed in a bodily resurrection,⁵ would Jesus' resurrection and that of believers be an exception to the rule? In sum, what is the nature of Jesus and the believer's resurrection body?

Physical Resurrection

The Solution: 1 Corinthians 15:44

Regarding the resurrection bodies of believers Paul wrote, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44).⁶ Interestingly this passage actually says the opposite of what most people claim. Many wrongly interpret the words "spiritual body" to mean an

³ Since I have dealt extensively elsewhere with issues pertaining to the *Jesus Family Tomb* book and film, it will not be necessary to cover it here. For a longer treatment of the subject see René A. López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2008), and for a shorter treatment see *idem*, "Does The Jesus Family Tomb Disprove His Physical Resurrection?" *Bibliotheca sacra* 165 (October-December 2008), 425-446.

⁴ Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 70-71.

⁵ See López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* 147-98. See specifically chapters 10-11 that discusses how the Hebrews viewed (from internal and external biblical documents) the resurrection of the dead.

⁶ Because of time, space and limited scope of this article, I have chosen to deal only with the crucial and most used passage to defend the spiritual resurrection view. For a comprehensive treatment covering other passages (e.g., 2 Cor. 4-5:10), which do not contradict the exegesis and conclusions arrived here, see N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3 (London: SPCK, 2003), 209-309, 361-72.

“immaterial” body (i.e., composed of “spirit”) or a body composed of a semi-spiritual “light substance.”⁷

The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ resurrection show that He possesses a body with continuity and discontinuity of His former state.⁸ Now Paul made the same point in 1 Corinthians 15:1–50. “Jesus’ own appearances, in which he eats and is seen and touched by others, reveal the first-century Christians who held to Christianity held to a resurrection hope. The model was Jesus, the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:15–20). In fact, this clear teaching of the Gospels necessitates a *physical* resurrection.”⁹

Paul argued contextually from what people witnessed in the Gospels about Jesus’ bodily resurrection. They were now witnesses taking the stand to bolster Paul’s argument from 15:1–8. Paul obviously witnessed the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–9). Whether he had other encounters with Jesus cannot be known for sure (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:2). Furthermore Paul contrasted how resurrection overcomes death, which can only mean in Judaism *physical resurrection*, or else Adam’s curse on the

⁷ See Otto Pfliegerer, *Paulinism: A Contribution to the History of Primitive Christian theology*, trans. Edward Peters, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1877), 201; Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30-150*, trans. Frederick C. Grant, vol. 2 (New York: Harper Collins, 1959), 535. “Startling, since all exegetical, theological, and lexicographical evidence is against it, Louw and Nida astonish us by placing 15:44 almost alone in a short sub-category under the heading ‘pertaining to not being physical’” (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000], 1277). See J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament: A Supplement to the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 694, sect. 79–3.

⁸ All four Gospels are known to be selective on the information each writer chooses to include and exclude. However, it is highly important to note that all four Gospels included the removal of the stone (Matt 28:2-4; Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1). If Jesus rose spiritually, why would a stone need to be rolled away? Spirits can penetrate solid objects. Hence, it seems clear that God through the removal of the stone, and the four Gospels emphatically bearing witness of this, conveys that God wanted to show that the body that went into the tomb came out of the tomb, albeit a glorified body but was nevertheless a physical glorified body not subject to effects of the fallen world. For Jesus this would mean that He no longer had to pay by dying as a man for all mankind anymore (cf. Rom 6:1-10; 8:3; 2 Cor 5:15-21; 1 Pet 2:21-25; 3:18) and for mankind this mean that the sinful adamic nature (the sinful predisposition) need not rule us any longer now and guarantees us a future glorified body (a complete disposition of flesh and spirit) that will not be subject to the fallen world. For an analysis of all eleven of Jesus’ post resurrection appearances see López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* 217-226.

⁹ Darrell L. Bock and Daniel B. Wallace, *Dethroning Jesus: Exposing Popular Culture's Quest to Unseat the Biblical Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 211 (italics theirs).

whole creation that brought physical death to mankind has really not been overturned (1 Cor. 15:12–23; Gen. 3:1–22).¹⁰

What Paul seems to clarify to the Corinthian church refers to correcting the influence Platonic thought and culture had on their theology. Platonic thought believed that the flesh was evil and the spirit was good. Hence, they believed God would dispel the evil influence of the body composed of matter and leave all humans as bodiless spirits. Jason Dulle describes accurately the thought Paul attempts to correct in 1 Cor 15:

A true incarnation of God demands that He retain His human existence for all eternity. The same applies to human beings. Part of being human is having a human body. To claim that when we are in the eternal state we will discard this aspect of our humanity is to deny the very essence of what it means to be a human. Our flesh is not some evil substance that we are trying to get rid of. This idea is rooted in Platonic dualism which sees the physical realm as inferior to the spiritual, incorporeal realm. Those who follow Plato's line of thought believe that the ultimate goal of Christianity is to rid ourselves of our flesh. Many people believe that Paul teaches this because of his many negative comments against the "flesh." They misunderstand Paul's references to flesh to refer to the human body, but Paul's meaning of flesh must be concluded from context. In most contexts Paul uses flesh to indicate the fallen carnal nature of man, not the human body.¹¹

Murray J. Harris has also explained the core thought that Paul encounters at Corinth and what kind of the bodily resurrection Christ and the believers will have.

Embodied. In Orphic and Gnostic thought the *summum bonum* consisted of emancipation from the defilement caused by embodiment. *Sôma sêma*, 'the body is a tomb'. It is, of course, incontestable that incorporeal conscious existence is possible (God exists as pure spirit), but in Pauline as in Jewish thought true existence for human beings or a full life either on earth or beyond the grave was inconceivable apart from embodiment. Somatic resurrection was the prerequisite for the resumption of true life after the intervention of death. Paul makes it clear that the object of the Christian's desire is 'the redemption of the body' from its bondage to decay and sin, through its transformation (Rom. 8:23, where *tou sômatatos* is an objective genitive, not a genitive of separation). When he spoke of the 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44), a body animated and

¹⁰ Wright makes this point that creation was redeemed by the new bodily resurrection (*Resurrection of the Son of God*, 313–14). See also Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 185. See López, *The Jesus Family Tomb Examined: Did Jesus Rise Physically?* 181-98.

¹¹ Dulle, "Heavenly or Earthly Bodies?" *Institute for Biblical Studies*, <http://www.onenesspentecostal.com/bodiesheaven.htm> (accessed February 2, 2012).

guided by the redeemed human spirit and revitalized by the divine Spirit, he was implicitly rejecting not merely a materialistic view of resurrection (it was a spiritual body) but also a spiritualistic view of immortality (it was a spiritual body).¹²

Hence, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul corrects any Hellenistic overtones that seek to interpret Christ's and the believer's resurrection as spiritual rather than physical, because such a view does not overturn the curse from the fall, neither does it empower Christians to live holily now and stop sinning (1 Cor 15:34)—a real problem plaguing this church.¹³

Apparent or Actual

Physical Resurrection:

1 Corinthians 15:44

In 1 Corinthians 15:35, Paul rhetorically asked, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” He explains it by a metaphor through the seed sprouting (vv. 36–38) and by numerous contrasting analogies that the resurrection body contains continuity but discontinuity from one's former earthly existence. He says,

All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory (vv. 39–41)

Paul could not mean the resurrection body is “immaterial,” because that would argue against the point he made that all matter is not of the same “kind” of substance. The contrasts in the analogies are not denoting two different substances of human existence (“immaterial-spirit” vs. “material-flesh”) but two different kinds of material substance (“material-spirit-controlled” vs. “material-fleshly-controlled”).¹⁴ All these analogous

¹² Murray J. Harris, “The New Testament View of Life After death,” *Themelios* 11 (January 1986), 50.

¹³ Below this will be discussed further but for a more elaborate account of this issue see René A. López, “The Use and Abuse of 1 Corinthians 15:1-11,” in *Scripture Unlocked* (Spring 2010), 1-4 (or see http://www.scriptureunlocked.org/images/stories/SUM_Newsletter_Spring10.pdf).

¹⁴ “Philosophers made distinctions between different kinds of substance, but they did not draw the line in the same place that modern western thought has done, between ‘physical’ and ‘non-physical’” (Wright, *Resurrection of the Son God*, 348–49).

comparisons have different “kinds” of matter; hence the same is true of the resurrection body. It will not be of the same kind of material substance that we now possess but will nevertheless be of some bodily material substance.

Three parallel negative terms also indicate modes of existence, not substance: “corruption” (decay), “dishonor” (disgrace), and “weakness” (vv. 42–43).¹⁵ Hence Wright observes that “Paul will stress the distinction between a body which is corruptible, i.e., which can and will decay, die and ultimately disintegrate altogether, and a body of which none of this is true (verses 50b, 52b, 53, 54).” Wright is correct in suggesting, “This contrast of corruption/incorruption, it seems, is not just one in a list of differences between the present body and the future one, but remains implicit underneath the rest of the argument, not least between the present humanity in its *choikos* (‘earthly’) state, ready to return to dust, and the new type of humanity which will be provided in the new creation.” Hence, “The fundamental leap of imagination that Paul is asking the puzzled Corinthians to make is to a body which cannot and will not decay or die: something permanent, established, not transient or temporary.”¹⁶

In fact Paul’s use of the adjectives “natural” (ψυχικός) and “spiritual” (πνευματικός) in the Corinthian letter do not refer to objects or persons composed of immaterial or material substance.¹⁷ Instead he employed the terms to emphasize what kinds of powers are controlling a person.¹⁸ Either a person is controlled by a *fleshly*, *carnally*, or *humanly* force, or he is controlled by the *Spirit* (1 Cor. 2:13, 15; 3:1;

¹⁵ Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1276. He notes, “This is confirmed by... the generally accepted modal use of ἐάν in the sets of contrasts.”

¹⁶ Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 347.

¹⁷ In fact, Thiselton observes, “On rare (always non-Pauline) occasions in the New Testament, πνεῦμα may denote a ghost or spirit being (almost exclusively Mark 14:26; Luke 24:37; Acts 23:8), but such a use is generally avoided because of its association with evil spirits (Mark 9:25; cf. Mark 1:34, δαίμων)” (*1 Corinthians*, 1276).

¹⁸ Charles L. Quarles also notes, “In other contexts it is clear that they do not refer to persons or objects as either made or matter or spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:14–15, for example, the terms refer respectively to people influenced by human drives versus people under the control of the Spirit. It is likely that Paul’s use in 1 Corinthians 15:44 is related to this earlier use” (*Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?* (online: https://www.lacollege.edu/ifl/jesus_tomb.pdf, March 4, 2007, accessed October 18, 2007).

14:37).¹⁹ Believers in Corinth were failing to live according to the Spirit.²⁰ And so in 1 Corinthians 15:44 Paul epitomized the ultimate victory over the *fleshly* (ψυχικός) nature that controls unbelievers (2:14) but that can also drive believers to act in similar ways (3:1).²¹ Hence in 1 Corinthians 15:44 Paul seemed to follow his early use of πνευματικός.²² In addition, it seems that if Paul wanted to indicate that the resurrection body was an “immaterial-spiritual” entity, he would have used the adjective πνευματινός, whose ending “νος” emphasizes the body’s spiritual nature.²³

¹⁹ Paul used πνευματικός ten times in 1 Corinthians (2:13, 15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3; 12:1; 14:1, 37; 15:44, 46).

²⁰ They needed to overcome sin and be delivered from “schisms in the church” (1:10–4:21; 11:18–19, from “incest among the brethren” (5), from “contention in legal matters among believers” (6:1–11), from “marital problems” (7), from a “legalistic spirit” (8–11), from “abusing spiritual gifts” (12–14), and finally from “denying the physical Resurrection” that supplies them the power to overcome all other problems (15). Paul left the most important issue for last; because if they deny this, the Corinthians would deny the very power that can allow them to overcome the power (not penalty since they were already saints according to 1 Cor 1:2 and all throughout the letter) of sin in their life.

²¹ Elsewhere in the letter Paul contrasted believers to unbelievers as they are controlled by carnal desires and thus act like unbelievers. See René A. López, “Does the Vice List in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 Describe Believers or Unbelievers?,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 164 (January–March 2007): 59–73. “The overall structure and logic of the chapter thus confirms what we would have guessed from the direction in which the rest of the letter points: that this is intended by Paul as a long argument in favour of a future *bodily* resurrection.... Paul repeatedly indicates earlier in the letter that Christian behaviour in the present life is predicated upon continuity between this life and the future one. It would be surprising if now, addressing the issue head on at last, he were to undermine what he said all along. There was, in any case, no indication in Judaism either before or after Paul that ‘resurrection’ could mean anything other than ‘bodily’; if Paul was going to argue for something so oxymoronic as a ‘*non*-bodily resurrection’ he would have done better not to structure his argument in such a way as to give the appearance of articulating a Pharisaic, indeed biblical, worldview in which the goodness of the present creation is reaffirmed in the age to come. Since that is the kind of argument he has composed, at the conclusion of a letter which constantly points this way, no question should remain. When Paul said ‘resurrection,’ he meant ‘bodily resurrection’” (Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 314).

²² A similar observation is made by Quarles, *Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?* (accessed), 12; and Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1276.

²³ Thiselton clarifies the difference between both of these adjectives. “The widely accepted (although not decisive) lexicographical distinction between –ivos endings, which often, perhaps regularly, denote composition, in distinction from –ικος endings, which regularly denote modes of being or characteristics” (*1 Corinthians*, 1276). See also Quarles, *Buried Hopes or Risen Savior: Is the Talpiot Tomb the Burial Place of Jesus of Nazareth?* (accessed), 12.

All “exegetical, theological, and lexicographical evidence” goes against saying the words “spiritual body” refers to an “immaterial body.”²⁴ Instead, as seen by the overwhelming majority of commentators, “Paul is speaking in v. 44 of a *mode and pattern of intersubjective life directed by the Holy Spirit*.”²⁵ F. F. Bruce points to the fact that verse 45 refers to the life-giving Spirit.²⁶ C. K. Barrett says the “spiritual body” is “the new body animated by the Spirit of God.”²⁷ Two points of contrasts, belonging to two different realms, controlled by two different drives are what Paul conveyed in v 44.²⁸ Harris also concludes,

Details of the anatomy and physiology of the spiritual body were of no more consequence to New Testament writers than was celestial topography. But its basic properties in addition to ‘spirituality’ are clear. It is of divine origin (1 Cor. 15:38), with God as its architect and builder (2 Cor. 5:1-2). It is imperishable, free from any form of decay; glorious, of radiant and unsurpassed beauty; powerful, with limitless energy and perfect health (1 Cor. 15:42-43, 50, 52- 54). It is angel-like, not because it is sexless (sexual identity, an essential element in personality, is retained in the resurrection) but because it is deathless (Lk. 20:36) and without sexual passions or procreative powers (Mt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25; cf. 1 Cor. 6:13-14).²⁹ It is heavenly, perfectly adapted to its natural habitat, heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-2). According to Paul, these were also characteristics of the resurrected body of Jesus,

²⁴ Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1277. See also Eduard Schweizer, “πνευματικός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968; reprint, 1999), 389–455.

²⁵ Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1276 (italics his).

²⁶ F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, Life Application Bible Commentary, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 152.

²⁷ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper's New Testament commentaries. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 372.

²⁸ See David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 734.

²⁹ Whether or not Matt 22:30 refers to the resurrection body that has no procreative powers may be questionable. This may only refer to the “function,” not “nature,” of the believers at the resurrection. Since angels could eat and sleep (Gen 18:5-8; 19:2-16) and depending on one’s interpretation of Gen 6:1-4, they may be able when materialized to have sex; hence, in comparing the believer’s glorified state at the resurrection to that of angels may only refer to their function and not their bodily capabilities, since believers most probably will be able to eat—at least—as Christ did (Luke 24:41-43; John 21:5-13; cf. Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14).

so that Christ now is what redeemed believers will be; the risen Christ is the firstfruits of perfected humanity.³⁰

The “natural body” refers to the complete person composed of matter and spirit that belongs to this fallen Adamic realm where two controlling powers (the “flesh” and the “Spirit” in Gal. 5–6) are fighting to gain control of a believer. Conversely, the “spiritual body” refers to the complete person composed of a uniquely powerful material-sinless body and a renewed spirit (cf. Rom. 6:6)³¹ that is Christlike and belongs to His redeemed realm.³² Thus the resurrection body will be perfectly suited to obey God in everything through a body controlled by the Spirit.³³ That is the goal of the “spiritual body.”

One must note, however, that Paul does not answer here the transition state of the believer upon death (2 Cor. 5:1-9).³⁴ Rather, he emphasizes only the pre-Parousia

³⁰ Harris, “The NT View of Life After death,” 50.

³¹ For an explanation of the “new man” in all regenerate Christians see René A. López, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver*, rev. ed. (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2005; repr., 2009), 129-31.

³² “Body, therefore, affirms the biblical tradition of a positive attitude toward physicality as a condition for experiencing life in its fullness, but also assimilates, subsumes, and transcends the role of the physical in the public domain of the earthly life. Hence it would be appropriate to conceive of the raised body as a form or mode of existence of the whole person including every level of intersubjective communicative experience that guarantees both the continuity of personal identity and enhanced experience of community which facilitates intimate union with God in Christ and with differentiated ‘others’ who also share this union” (Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1278).

³³ Schweizer also makes a similar observation based on the context. “The idea that σῶμα as a form represents the continuum which simply exchanges the carnal substance for the spiritual substance is also quite untenable. The true concern of Paul may be seen in the fact that ψυχικός (v. 44) on the one side is interpreted by φθορά (v. [sic] 42, 50), ἀσθένεια and ἀτιμία (v. 43; cf. Phil. 3:21 ταπείνωσις), and πνευματικός on the other side is interpreted by ἀφθαρσία (v. [sic] 42, 50), δύναμις and δόξα (v. 43; Phil. 3:21). Behind the form of thinking in terms of substance there thus lies the OT distinction between weakness and power. Man is referred to the creative power of his Lord, who will raise him up. Continuity between the earthly and the heavenly body rests on a miracle. The same is to be seen in v. 47, where the first clause with γῆ denotes that stuff from which the first man is made, while the second clause characterises [sic] the second man, not by the substance of which he consists but by his origin. Thus the σῶμα πνευματικόν of either Redeemer or believer is to be understood, not as one which consists of πνεῦμα, but as one which is controlled by the πνεῦμα” (“πνευματικός,” 6:421).

³⁴ First Thessalonians 4:14-16 may indirectly answer the question of whether believers receive their glorified bodies at death, an interim body of some sort, or remain a spirit until the Parousia. Believers who have died prior to the Parousia that come with the Lord together with those who have fallen asleep will rise. But if Bruce’s thesis holds true that believers upon death already receive their glorified bodies, a question still remains regarding this text: “Why would those who come with Christ need to rise

state now in the corrupt body and the need for all to be transformed. How that occurs will not be the same for all. “For some believers the transition to spiritual corporeality will be by way of death and resurrection, but for others by means of a resurrection-type transformation. The distinction is between those who die before the Parousia of Christ and those who are alive at the Parousia.”³⁵ In fact, here is an astonishing thought. Although 1 Cor 15:51-54 only treats those who remain alive at the Parousia, due to “the population explosion of the twentieth century and the expansion of Christianity,” those who will not experience physical death will “in fact outnumber the sum total of believers under the old and the new covenant who experience death!”³⁶ However huge this exception may be, this was not the rule, as Harris notes, “Paul recognizes in the case of Christians who live to witness the Parousia an exception to his rule that death is a prerequisite for resurrection (1 Cor. 15:36). By special revelation (1 Cor. 15:51a) he knew that those who did not, by a pre-Parousia death, qualify for the transformation that was necessary for the inheritance of the kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50) would nevertheless all undergo the required transformation at the Parousia (1 Cor. 15:51-52).” What will be the rule for all is that “both the dead and the living will be transformed, but only the dead are also raised. And for both groups the outcome of the transformation is identical: possession of a spiritual body comparable to Christ’s ‘glorious body’ (Phil. 3:21).”³⁷

A link then exists between Jesus’ resurrected body and the kind of body that believers will possess. That is, “This provides a constructive connection between the salvific and ethical character of the body directed by the Holy Spirit and character of Christ’s own raised body in later traditions of the canonical Gospels as ‘more’ but not ‘less’ than an earthly physical body. In these resurrection traditions Jesus Christ was not

first, since they already have a glorified body?” Or what kind of rising is this if they already possess a glorified body before the resurrection? Will there be yet another body? By no means is this a settled argument. Yet Bruce’s interpretation of 2 Cor 5:1-9 appears to clash with the details in 1 Thess 4:15-16 (*Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977], 311-13).

³⁵ Harris, “The NT View of Life After death,” 50.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

always immediately ‘recognized (John 20:14, 15; 21:12; Luke 24:13–20) but his personal identity was recognized in terms of sociophysical gestures and characteristics (Luke 24:31; John 20:16, 20, 27–28; action, voice, hands, side).’³⁸ Similar to Christ, believers will have a body unique that will function marvelously under the new realm but will also be able to be recognized as the person he or she was before.³⁹

Conclusion

All the witnesses in the NT clearly believed and give evidence that they saw Jesus. Also they touched, ate, and conversed with Him after He rose bodily from the dead. Believers were able to examine Jesus with their five senses. Hence, no doubt should remain in concluding that Jesus possessed a physical body. His resurrected body was similar in some sense to the one in which He was buried, but also it was uniquely different since now time and spatial barriers do not limit it. Similarly Paul argued in 1 Corinthians 15:1–58 that believers will possess a uniquely physical body called a “spiritual body,” because it will be perfectly suited to obey God through the power of the Spirit, not that this body is incorporeal. After one examines the evidence of the Gospel

³⁸ Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1277.

³⁹ Hence Bock concludes, “In experiential form, this is what Paul discusses conceptually in 1 Cor. 15:35–49, especially 15:41–44.... Paul’s point is that another force is the key to the resurrection body; it is a ‘spiritual’ body as opposed to a ‘soulish’ body. This is why it is more than flesh and bone and can be immortal.” Then he points out that the resurrection bodies of believers will be similar in that of Jesus’ body. “The resurrection body is flesh and bone transformed into a form that is able to move through material matter.... There is no way to distinguish the person of Jesus from the risen Christ except that his existence now takes place at an additional dimension of reality. They are basically one and the same. A spirit has not taken his place, nor is he just a spirit. The person buried in the tomb is raised and transformed, but Jesus is sufficiently distinct in appearance that he is not always immediately recognizable. In his resurrected state, he clearly is transformed, though in a way that still leaves traces of his former existence (e.g., the nail prints in his hands and feet)” (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996], 1933–34). Paul Lampe also said, “For him, the term ‘spiritual’ emphasizes that God’s Spirit is the *only* force that creates the new body. The creation of this new body is totally *beyond* all the possibilities of the present nature and creation. That is all that Paul wants to convey with this term. Therefore I do not see how the natural sciences could help us to understand the totally different ‘nature’ of this future body—unless natural science were able to transcend the nature of this universe. Paul asserts that our spiritual body will be very similar, even ‘conformed’ (*symmorphon*), to that of the resurrected Christ (Phil. 3:21). But he refrains from giving further details, which later evangelicals pretend to ‘know’ by describing the resurrected Christ. The apostle only affirms that our spiritual body ‘in heaven’ will be a ‘body of glory’ as opposed to the ‘body of lowliness’ in which we now live (Phil. 3:20–21)” (“Paul’s Concept of a Spiritual Body,” in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, Robert John Russel, and Michael Welker [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002], 109 [italics his]).

accounts of Jesus' resurrection and Paul's explanation of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, the NT clearly validates that Jesus rose physically in a glorified body and so shall all those who simply placed their faith alone in Him. For to understand the Resurrection in any other way than a physically glorified-bodily resurrection will misunderstand and confuse how Jesus can guarantee one's eternal salvation, since without Jesus possessing such a body the foundation remains unmade and purchase and victory over sins remains unpaid (1 Cor 15:17-20; cf. Rom 6:4-5). Thus, the nature of Jesus and the believer's resurrection body is composed of a glorified body not controlled by what characterizes this fallen world.