

## Thoughts From Other Minds:

The questions, 'How are the dead raised?' and 'With what kind of body?' most likely come from those who are doubting or denying the resurrection of the body. ... The first requires no reply. God will raise the dead by his irresistible power. The second question ('What kind of body?') is echoed by many today. Some, for example, simply cannot imagine a 'dead man walking', that is, a re-animated corpse. Paul anticipates that question by insisting that resurrection means transformation. ...

Paul rather abruptly addresses the one who asks such question as 'Fool, the answer to your question stares you in the face.' In an agricultural age, when everyone depended on sowing and reaping, two things were obvious. On the one hand, the seed you sow 'dies' in the ground before it sprouts with life (verse 36), and on the other, the plant that rises from the soil has a different 'body' from the 'naked' seed that was sown. The self-same seed that 'dies' in the ground is 'raised' in a transformed 'body'. The same is true of the resurrection of the dead. I who die will be raised alive, but changed into a different form.

He further illustrates the difference between the seed and the plant by two sets of contrasts, between various kinds of 'flesh' and between 'earthly' and 'heavenly' 'bodies'. The seed has one 'body', the plant another 'body', just as there are different kinds of 'flesh', whether of humans, animals, birds or fish (verses 3g-39).

Paul also raises ideas here which he will develop later. To prepare us for the promise that the resurrection body is 'raised in glory' (verse 43), he contrasts the 'glory' of 'earthly bodies' with the 'heavenly bodies', the sun, moon and stars, which have 'different glory' (verses 40-41). ...

### 1. 'Sown Soulsh, Raised Spiritual'

... Paul now uses the words 'sown' and 'raised' in a rapid fire sequence of contrasts that springs from the second analogy, the distinction between 'the earthly' and 'the heavenly' (verse 40).

The 'body' of a deceased believer is the antecedent of the repeated pronoun, 'it':

It is sown in corruption, it is raised imperishable;  
It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory;  
It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;  
It is sown a 'soulsh' body, it is raised a spiritual body.  
If there is a 'soulsh' body, there is also a spiritual body.

Believers share with other descendants of Adam the frailties of life in this present age, its corruption, dishonour, weakness and 'soulshness'. Nowhere is the 'fallenness' of this age more apparent than in the feebleness and powerlessness of death .... From this fallible 'fallen' existence, however, believers will be 'raised' alive into the imperishability, glory, power and spirituality of the coming age.

Paul Barnett, *1 Corinthians, Holiness and Hope of a Rescued People*, pp. 292-94.

## Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

27 March 2016—Easter Day

**Sermon:** "*Grappling with the reality of Jesus' resurrection*"

**Scripture:** John 20:1-20, 19-31

### Sermon Notes

Someone said Easter with its 'idea' of resurrection was everything for the Christian faith; I agreed, not just because of the 'idea' of the resurrection, but because of its reality; if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then he was a fraud, for he said he would rise (Matt 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Jn 10:17-18). And so his apostles treat his resurrection as foundational to the faith (Rom 1:4, 1 Pet 1:3, 1 Cor 15:17-18).

Easter invites us to reflect on the bodily resurrection of Jesus as something that really happened; to strengthen our faith in him as the first-fruits of the resurrection of the dead; to consider how we might prepare to defend the faith and to encourage others to believe in him, for there are many people in need of the living hope that comes through trusting him as the resurrected saviour of sinners.

The 2009 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes revealed that while about one third of Australians do believe that Jesus resurrection was an actual historical event, another third are uncertain, and another third do not believe. Not surprisingly, committed church attenders expressed the strongest belief, with 87% of those attending church weekly strongly agreeing or agreeing.

This means that 13% of those attending church weekly do not believe—a cause of concern, especially taking into account the 'push' for recognition as legitimate Christians by so-called 'Progressive Christians'. 'Progressive Christianity' has now joined forces with retired American Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong to promote their mutual rejection of the supernatural, their unbelief in the scriptures as the Word of God, and their refusal to believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Their hostility to the supernatural is evident in their recent web-site article '*Why I Don't Believe in the Physical Resurrection of Jesus*': the author writes: 'In a conversation [with an atheist] one of his main rebuttals of Christianity was that "dead people do not come back to life." And besides a situation like a standard medical resuscitation, and even though I'm all for mysticism, I agree 100% with him – especially after three days. But it illustrated again that this literalized mythology we continue to embrace is really killing any credibility we may have had.'

How can people who claim to belong to a family whose holy book plainly teaches that Jesus did rise bodily on the third day after he was dead and buried say that this belief is 'literalised mythology'? 1. By attempting to discredit the gospels by assuming they were written at the end of the first century, long after the time of Jesus and his apostles; and 2. by saying that the earliest written account of his resurrection is in Paul's letters, and he knew nothing of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

They say Paul believed that Christ's resurrected body was not a physical body, but 'a new body of a spiritual/celestial nature'. The misrepresent his teaching that the body that is sown a natural body is raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44), and they say that 1 Cor 15:50 means that Paul did not believe that the earthly body becomes immortal; that Jesus' earthly body 'rotted in the grave.'

They are wrong: the 'spiritual body' is not an immaterial body; it is the body that was buried transformed by the resurrection power of God (1 Cor 15:42-44); Paul does teach that the earthly body becomes immortal; 1 Cor 15:50 is followed by his teaching that the bodies of believers alive when Jesus returns will be changed, for we must put on immortality (cf. also Phil 3:2-21).

They attempt to discredit the witness of the gospels to the bodily resurrection of Jesus by assuming that at first his resurrection was only regarded as 'a resurrected spiritual body'. Then they say that after the Jewish Roman war of AD 66-70 anonymous authors who were not eyewitnesses and without access to eyewitnesses wrote works of fiction based on what they thought would have happened to fulfil the Old Testament scriptures, or to meet the needs of the Church at the time. So the gospel accounts of Jesus resurrection are not truthful, but myths.

This scenario is impossible, for it contradicts the Acts—and Acts stands as the work of a careful historian who can be relied upon (Sir William Ramsay: Luke is a historian of the first rank). Luke tells us that within 50 days of Jesus' burial there was a raging controversy in Jerusalem between Jesus' disciples and the Jews, and that at the heart of this was their claim that God had raised Jesus from the dead, proving that he was the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 2:22-23, 3:15, 4:9-10).

But what if they meant a 'spiritual' resurrection? Acts is the second volume of a two volume work—and the first volume is Luke's gospel (cf. Acts 1:1, Luke 1:3-4). So if Luke's gospel teaches that Jesus rose bodily, as it does, then it is perfectly reasonable to believe that Acts also teaches that Jesus rose bodily—as it does!

Some might say, "Surely anything, however unlikely, is more likely than Jesus bodily resurrection from the dead; I'm with our friendly atheist: 'Dead people do not come back to life'! But what are the alternatives? A conspiracy by the disciples? Impossible; that Joseph or the authorities removed the body? But why would they do it at night, first removing the grave clothes? And why not produce the body to silence the apostles' preaching of the resurrection? That Jesus didn't really die? Impossible!

The proclamation of the bodily resurrection causes division because some believe and others do not—but it doesn't distract from our message, for the gospel is not 'love others as I have loved you', but 'trust Jesus who was declared to the Lord by his resurrection from the dead' (Acts 16:31, Rom 10:10). It has never been easy to believe that Jesus rose from the dead (cf. Matt 28:17, 'some doubted'); but God has given sufficient evidence to bring the sincere to faith, and to leave unbelievers without excuse; may we have the blessing of believing without seeing! (Jn 20:28-29).

## ***My Notes:***

### ***Questions for Reflection:***

1. Read and reflect upon Matthew 22:23-31. How does this passage show that as far as the Jews of Jesus' day 'resurrection' means 'of the body' and not 'of the spirit'? Consider also John 11:17-27; how do Martha and Jesus think of 'resurrection'?
2. Read and reflect upon Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19 and John 10:17-18; if Jesus body rotted in his grave, what would be a fair estimate of what sort of person he was?
3. What bearing do the following passages of scripture have on what attitude we ought to be to claims for the miraculous: Isaiah 35:4-5; Luke 7:18-23; John 2:6-11, 12:37; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:1-4?
4. If we have difficulty in believing that Jesus rose from the dead, how might we be encouraged and helped by his disciples' reaction? (Lk 24:11, 25, 37, 41; John 20:24-29)
5. Read Romans 4:24-25, 6:4, 9, 7:4, 8:11, 34 and 10:9; is it possible to be saved while not believing that Jesus rose from the dead? If not, why not?