

## 1 Corinthians 15:20ff (NLT) – Heaven: A New Body

**Main point:** In heaven, you'll have a new, perfect body.



**Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.**

**Background:** In the early church, some were saying that Jesus was resurrected in spirit only. But Paul says it is “of utmost importance” that Jesus died and came back to life in the flesh. Jesus’ resurrection is a foreshadow of our own bodily resurrection. Here’s how Paul tried to explain this.

### **Focus of study:**

<sup>20</sup> But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. Jesus is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. <sup>21</sup> So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. <sup>22</sup> Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. ...

<sup>48</sup> Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. <sup>49</sup> Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man. <sup>51</sup> ...We will all be transformed! ...<sup>53</sup> For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

<sup>54</sup> Then ... this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

<sup>55</sup> O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

### **Questions:**

1. *In v. 20, what does Paul state as his first fact?*
  - a. “In fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.”
2. *In v. 22, Paul states a second great truth. What is true about every single human body?*
  - a. “Everyone dies because we all belong to Adam.” Human beings, though imprinted with God’s image, have physical bodies that die.
3. *Let’s talk about what it’s like to be a human body. Look at your hands, your legs; touch your face and arms. What do you physically see and feel that you like or enjoy?*
  - a. Breathing, listening to music or birds, eating (ice cream!), smelling good food (baking bread), hugs, petting a dog or cat ...
4. *What physical problems do you see and feel?*
  - a. Unsteady, aches and pains, shortness of breath, weak, bad eyesight, bad hearing ...
5. *Now let’s think about what you can’t see or touch but that’s still part of who you are. For example, can you see the love you have for your family? Can you touch the thoughts you have about God? How would you describe the invisible part of what makes you you?*
  - a. There’s a nonphysical part of human beings that includes thoughts and feelings, like wonder, worship, love. We often call this the soul or spirit.
6. *Does your physical body ever affect your spirit? For example, when you’re feeling achy, what can that do to your mood?*

- a. It's difficult! Physical ailments can cause depression, worry, weariness. How you feel physically can affect your mental and spiritual state because all parts of you are connected.
7. [optional; can skip to question 9] In v. 20, Paul says that Jesus is the "first of a great harvest of all who have died." Let's think about that: What happened to Jesus' body?
- a. Crucified, dead, buried. And then?
  - b. Resurrected, physically. *How do we know Jesus' physical body – not just his spirit – came back to life after the crucifixion?*
    - i. The tomb was empty. (Matt. 28:5-7, Mark 16:1-7, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-10)
    - ii. Jesus showed his followers his hands and feet with the crucifixion wounds, had them touch his body. (Luke 24:39-40, John 20:27)
    - iii. Jesus ate food with his followers. (Luke 24:41-42)
    - iv. Jesus appeared to hundreds of people (1 Cor. 15:5-8).
8. Paul writes that Jesus was the "first of a great harvest" to overcome death, resurrected to life after being dead in a tomb. Who does Paul say is next in this process of death to life?
- a. We are! v. 22: "Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life."
  - b. Those who follow Christ will follow Christ in death and bodily resurrection.
9. Let's think about what resurrection might look like! In verses 51 and 53, what word does Paul use to describe the process of getting our new bodies after our old bodies die?
- a. Transformed. Paul uses this word several times: "We will all be transformed ... For our dying bodies must be *transformed* into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be *transformed* into immortal bodies."
10. I wonder what you think "transformed" means? How do you think our heavenly bodies will be different than the bodies we have now?
- a. Instead of:
    - i. Disease → full health
    - ii. Weakness → strength
    - iii. Sad, mournful → glad, joyful
    - iv. Dying → alive forever
  - b. "You will be yourself in heaven. Not someone who never before existed, but someone who has been transformed into a better person than you've ever been."<sup>1</sup>
11. Wow – we will have resurrected, physical bodies that are beautiful, healthy, and strong. I wonder how that makes you feel? How does Paul react to this truth?
- a. Paul practically bursts into song! Paul quotes scripture<sup>2</sup>: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

For those who believe in Jesus and his physical resurrection, the grave is not the end but the beginning. Right now, our bodies groan, but at Christ's return our bodies will be fully resurrected, joined with our spirits. Like Jesus, we will eat, talk, walk, run, jump, hug, laugh, and never die.

"Inside your body, even if it is failing, is the blueprint for your resurrection body. You may not be satisfied with your current body or mind—but you'll be thrilled with your resurrection upgrades."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn, "We Shall See God"

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 25:8, Hosea 13:14

<sup>3</sup> Randy Alcorn, "We Shall See God"

12. Ask for prayer requests for today.
13. Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
14. End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace.

## 1 Corinthians 15:20ff

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