

THE NEW BODY YOU'RE HOPING FOR

Tenth in a series by Dr. Rick Perrin on *The Body of Christ* from Romans 8:5-25
"We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." Romans 8:23

On November 4 the modern world got its first glimpse of the face of King Tut. King Tut, you will remember, was the boy king of Egypt who ruled from the time he was 8 until he died at age 19. Exactly eighty-five years before his new unveiling, on November 4, 1922, archeologist Harold Carter discovered Tut's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. The golden treasures he took from the tomb have astounded the world ever since.

In 2005 scientists carefully lifted King Tut's mummy out of the sarcophagus where it had lain for 3200 years and ran it through a CT scan. Based on those pictures a skilled forensic artist created a model of Tut's face with layers of silicone, and now you can see what he actually looked like. Tut certainly needed the work. His skin had turned dark brown and leathery. His eyeballs have rotted away. His buck teeth grin creepily through his shriveled and receded lips. The people who placed Tut in his tomb all those centuries ago hoped they might preserve his body for future use. They thoughtfully supplied him with everything his no-longer-beating heart might desire. And so he waited. And waited. Now they've put him in a glass climate-controlled box to wait some more. I don't think that scrawny relic of human debris is going to be much use to King Tut, however. In addition to its decrepit state, Harold Carter cut him into eighteen pieces when he removed the golden treasures from King Tut's body.

What about you? Are you hoping for a new body? Research polls show that most of us are not particularly satisfied with our bodies. Plastic surgery is big business. And with the passing of the years we tend to find that we've grown too old, too fat, too tired, too wrinkly, too bald, or have too much pain in our knees and back. New Life Fitness World or Gold's Gym notwithstanding, the idea of a new body begins to sound better and better. Well, there is good news. The Bible says that one day for those who trust in Jesus, there will be a resurrection of our bodies, and the body that emerges from the grave will not be a broken down hulk of what once was, but an entirely new body. That's what I'd like to talk with you about this morning. Please turn to Romans 8:5-25. We're going to look first of all at the **context** of this resurrection, and we'll see three things: **1. Problem and Promise**, **2. Pain and Paternity**, and **3. Patience and Prelude**. Then secondly, we'll think about **what you may expect your new body to be like**.

The context of the resurrection: 1. Problem and Promise. In verse 6 the apostle Paul lays out our problem. *“The mind set on the flesh is death.”* The word *flesh* here does not refer to your body as if there is something wrong with being concerned about how you look or with staying in shape. The word *flesh* refers to the desires of the flesh. It’s another word for *sin*. It’s selfishness. It’s when we focus on what will benefit us in this life--our bodily appetites, our comforts, our luxuries. Paul says if you live only for what this life gives you, you’ve chosen death because the day is coming when your body will die and all the things you’ve given your attention to in this life will die with it.

In verse 10 he says, *“If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.”* We human beings are two-part creatures. We have bodies. And we have souls. When God’s Spirit enters us as we trust Christ for salvation, he transforms our desires and brings us into harmony with his will. The body, Paul says, is still dead. Picture here someone in an adventure movie. The bad guy injects him with poison. “You’re a dead man,” he laughs. The victim doesn’t feel anything at first. He goes on doing what he has to do. But gradually he notices that his limbs are growing heavy. His thinking is becoming sluggish. His vision grows bleary. Then he begins staggering and finally he collapses. All the while he’s moving about he is still a dead man. That’s like us as the years of our life speed by.

But verse 11 says, *“If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through the Spirit who indwells you.”* So, here’s the promise. Your body may be dying, but if you’ve received Christ as your Savior, his resurrection from the dead becomes the guarantee that you likewise will one day rise with a new body.

2. Pain and Paternity. In spite of the promise you can’t just sit back and do nothing. You can’t just wait for your resurrection, and in the meantime keep doing what you’ve always done. Look at verse 13. *“If you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”* In other words, the proof of whether you are ultimately going to live or die is in your actions. If you keep on sinning, if you keep on gratifying the desires of the flesh, that’s proof that nothing has ever happened inside you. You’re still doing what you want to do. It doesn’t matter what you profess to believe. It doesn’t matter if you prayed a prayer for Christ to save you. If Christ has saved you, his Spirit changes you on the inside so that you want to do what God wants you to do. And if you want to please God, it will show up in your behavior. Not all at once. It’s a process. The process can be painful. But if you were once a liar, you’ll start telling the truth. If you once were obsessed with sex, you’ll start cleaning up your act. If you had a problem with anger, you’ll start

bringing your anger under control. Do you get the point? This struggle against sin can cause you pain. As they say, "No pain, no gain!"

We are not talking about external behavior only, however. You are also going to have a desire to know God better. Look at verse 15. "*You have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'*" The little Hebrew child's word for his father was, "Abba." It is very similar to our word, *Daddy*, or *Da-da* that a little child cries out when his father walks in the door after work. This is what the little boy Jesus called Joseph. And it is what he called his heavenly father, the First Person of the Trinity. In theb. 579297(()3.00781()-40()(7()0.83734(4

earth will be set free and will celebrate forever the new life enjoyed by the people of God.

In verse 21 Paul says, *"The creation itself will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."* Nature will be healed completely. There will be no more death, no more broken tectonic plates to shake the earth. No more unbalance in the weather systems to unleash the great storms and the whirlwinds of destruction. The animal kingdom will exist in harmony. But not yet. Verse 22 says, *"The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."* The labor pains are prelude to something more wonderful. We are part of nature. So verse 23 reminds us of what we know, *"Also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."*

I shared Thanksgiving dinner with an old man and his daughter who were experiencing the holiday for the first time after the death of his wife, her mother. The woman could not hold back her tears. From time to time they leaked from her eyes. As we were leaving someone made a joke about decorating for Christmas. The old man said, "I can't even unpack the Christmas decorations." We know what it is like to groan, don't we? God's Spirit may reside in us. We may see the evidence of God's Spirit making changes in us, leading us to be more and more like Jesus. We may hold tight to the promise that God has made us heirs of what is to come. But we continue to groan. We wait for what is coming. Unlike King Tut, however, though we wait for 3000 years, we have hope. The prelude is playing. Soon the ode to joy will burst forth!

What you may expect your new body to be like. Naturally we are curious about what the future will be like. As we think about our new bodies we must say that to a certain extent we cannot know. None of us have experienced it. No one has seen it. We do know that those who have believed in Christ in the past and who have passed over to the other side are presently in that place we call heaven. They are alive and well and enjoying fellowship with God and with each other. But we also know that their bodies still lie in their graves. So even they do not know, and even if we could communicate and inquire of them—which we can't—their insights would not be a great deal of help. We must depend on the word of God and on bits of deductive reasoning. But this tells us only a little compared with what we would like to know. The reason may be that human categories can't carry the freight, so to speak. It's beyond our capability to understand.

Let me point you however to three phrases that the apostle Paul uses in the passage we have just been studying. In verse 21 for example, he talks about

“the glory of the children of God.” That tells us that our future bodies will be better than what we have now. I take it that we will be in the prime of young adulthood, full of strength and vigor. And our bodies will possess a kind of perfection. The second phrase is in verse 23. Paul talks about our *“adoption as sons.”* This does not mean that we will all be male. Rather it is a reference to our status as heirs. In the first century it was the son who inherited the father’s estate when he died. We are heirs along with Christ, so that what he inherits we will inherit. And that, then, tells us something about our new bodies. They will be like Christ’s resurrected body. He ate with his disciples. So we too will eat food and require nourishment. Since our new bodies will be physical, the laws of physics will apply to us. There is every likelihood that we will need sleep and rest.

Then also in verse 23, Paul speaks of *“the redemption of our body.”* That tells us that you will still be you. I’ve often wondered about that person who had a full face transplant some months ago. What would it be like to wake up in the morning and not recognize yourself in the mirror, or to look down at your hands, as you have done a million times, and see not your own fingers but someone else’s? No, after the resurrection you will be in familiar physical packaging, but undoubtedly improved. You will possess the same talents and abilities. Some people believe that they will be able to sing in the choir when they arrive in eternal life. Sorry, if you are like me and cannot keep a beat, or you sing a song using only one note, you will probably be a “lipper” in the heavenly choir. A “lipper” is the one who is asked merely move his lips and make no noise. But you will be able to maximize the other talents you have.

Now, let’s take a few steps beyond this. The creation will be restored. The Bible speaks of a new heaven and a new earth. So heaven will ultimately be a physical world suitable as a home for physical beings. So the new world will be familiar to us. We will be assigned to manage the creation. We’ll work, but it will be fulfilling work. We’ll employ our powers to create and produce beauty beyond what the earth naturally has. That will make you gardeners happy, but also you who are developers and contractors and builders and engineers. You who are scientists will discover things about the creation that have never been thought of before. And you designers and artists—you’ll be busy too. There will be no death or sickness, so for you doctors will be out of work!

What about families? We will be part of families. The book of Revelation talks about tribes and nations and people who speak various languages all coming to worship God. So you won’t lose your family identity, or your ethnic heritage. And Jesus said in Mark 10:29-30 that we will have mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers in the life to come. What about sex and marriage? That’s a little more complicated. In that same passage in Mark, Jesus mentions

wives. God gave Eve to Adam and he married them before the Fall. But in Mark 12:25 Jesus says, *"When they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage."* That means, at the very least, that we won't be having children in heaven. However, God created us male and female, and since you will still be you, you will continue to be either male or female.

What about marriage? The reality is that in heaven things fundamentally change. Throughout Scripture the church is described as the bride of Christ. So in some sense we together will all be Christ's wife. That's why God has put such a high value on marriage here. It's a holy symbol of our relationship with Jesus. In heaven there will be no deceit and nothing hidden, for there will be nothing to hide. There will be nothing to block complete openness and intimacy. So, one part of sex and marriage will no longer be needed. And yet, we obviously prefer the company of some persons more than others. That suggests, to some degree, we will have special friendships in heaven—like a husband and wife enjoy. Being male I realize all too well that I need what my wife brings to me to make me a whole person. And you wives know that you need the peculiar strengths and contributions that your husband brings to you. We can say with certainty that what God has prepared and planned will be far better than anything we now know. You will not be disappointed. But we will also have friendships of men with men and women with women. Who else would you women go shopping with at 5:00 AM on "Black Friday"? And who else, men, would you play sports with, recapturing and exceeding the fabled exploits of your youth? You still think you can do it. But in heaven you will!

There will be laughter. We humans laugh before we can even talk. That tells us something about our Creator. There will be parties and great feasts and quiet meals shared with close friends and family. And the celebration of great cooks! There will be times spent alone, and commemorations together of the great victories God has won. We will retell the stories of God's work on earth and of our share in them. We will not forget the struggles and the battles fought now for the cause of Christ, and we will marvel with new insights into what God was doing behind the scenes. And there will be times of worship, for at heart we are creatures made for worship. We'll enjoy these things fully only in the body God will give us at the resurrection. Does this sound good? Then ask yourself this question: Will you be there? Will you awaken to a new body? If you're not sure, then today come in faith to Christ and put your hope in him. Don't miss out!

Preached by Dr. Rick Perrin on November 25 2007 at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, 5637 Bush River Road, Columbia SC 29212 and Northwest YMCA on Kennerly Road Tel. 803-772-1000
www.DiscoverCornerstonesc.org Copyright 2007