Sermon Series: What Does It Mean to Be Saved?
Sermon Title: Resurrected Bodies

Text: **1 Corinthians 15:42-58 -- So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. 50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**

Introduction: **Did you ever wonder what's with all THE FASCINATION regarding zombies lately**? An article in **the *Wall Street Journal*** says, "***By all observable metrics, zombies are totally hot right now***." Another article claims that zombies have become "***outrageously, staggeringly, mind-blowingly popular … Not only do they top best-seller lists and video games and the iPad, the undead dominate television, too***." Some examples are **AMC's *The Walking Dead*, *World War Z*, 2020s *Alive*, 2021s *Don't Kill Me*, and *Resident Evil*** (and its 7 sequels, which grossed over $1.2 billion). **So, what's the big deal with this zombie craze?** One expert on zombie lore, **Dr. John Ulrich, Professor of English at Mansfield University**, says, "***At its most elemental level, of course, the zombie represents our fear of death***." **Stephen Marche, a cultural critic who writes for *Esquire* magazine,** agrees, but as an atheist, Marche offers some honest thoughts about zombies and our death fears. In his article titled "**Why Zombies Are Everywhere Now**," Marche writes: **After seeing dozens of zombie movies, I'm convinced that the reason zombies are so powerful is that they capture an atheistic fear of the dead. I don't just mean the fear of dead bodies, though that fear is there, too … MATERIALISTIC ATHEISM … does not provide a very comforting way to deal with the dead. Christians and others have prayer and visions of an afterlife … Atheists like myself have rotting corpses and oblivion. And zombie movies**. (*Declan Gallagher et. al, "The 10 Best Zombie Movies on Netflix Right Now, Entertainment (8-14-24)*

Of course, there is truth in what **Stephen Marche** is saying. **Unbelievers really don't have a comforting way to deal with the dead. Death is so final for them. The grave marks the end of us all, with nothing left to hope for**. Perhaps that's why they create shows that bring the dead back to life, even if it's only as zombies who, it turns out, can be sent back to the grave once more.

Christians, on the other hand, see the end of life very differently. As I shared last week, we read in Scripture that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:8**). **This means that when we die, our souls go immediately to be with the Lord. That should comfort all of us**. BUT HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR BODIES WHEN OUR SOULS GO TO BE WITH THE LORD? In most cases, we bury them in graves or cremate them, and that SEEMS to be the end of it. But does this mean we are destined to be running around naked (without a body) for the rest of eternity? That's how the Apostle Paul

describes it in **2 Corinthians 5:2-3** -- **For in this tent** (our physical body) **we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked** (i.e., a soul without a body).

For centuries, people have wondered what happens to our bodies when we die. **Some thought a bodily resurrection was too impossible to believe** -- (To King Agrippa, Paul said this in **Acts 26:8 -- Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?**). Others questioned how it could happen -- **1 Corinthians 15:35-36 -- But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?".** **To these and others, Paul replied** in **1 Corinthians 15:36-38 -- "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.** **WHAT IS HE SAYING? He is using the analogy of a seed that is buried and then rises again in a very different form, though in some way it is the same seed. Now, when it comes to our physical bodies that are in the process of decaying, Paul declares that the grave is their final resting place, but he also wants us to know with certainty that they will be raised and transformed into new heavenly bodies, similar yet different from those that were buried**. THIS PROCESS IS CALLED THE GLORIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER. Here's how it is defined in the book, Systematic Theology: **Glorification occurs when God raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers perfect resurrection bodies**.

In the time that remains, I would like to ask and answer some questions that will help us understand **this final aspect of our salvation in Christ**. Let's start with this one.

When do we get our resurrection bodies? Christians hold to a couple of views on the timing, though we all agree that we will receive them.

- **First, let's look at those of us who hold to a rapture of the Church** (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 -- The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And the people who have died and were in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive at that time will be gathered up with those who have died. We will be taken up in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever**). **We believe that those who are in Christ (the church) will receive their new bodies in heaven following the rapture, and before the Lord's second coming**. **As for believers who come to know the Lord during the seven years of Tribulation on earth, they will receive their resurrection bodies at the Lord's second coming**. **The last remaining group, Old Testament saints and those believers who die during the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth** (**See Revelation 20:1-6**), **will receive their new heavenly bodies at the end of the current age**.
- **For those who do not believe in a rapture of the church**, **most agree that every believer will receive a new resurrection body at the same time … when Christ returns at the end of the current age** (**See Revelation 20:11-15**). THAT ANSWERS THE QUESTION, "WHEN?"

What is the Biblical evidence for resurrection bodies?

- **From the Old Testament**. Before Jesus was raised from the dead, many Jews had hope of a future bodily resurrection (**John 11:23-24 -- Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day**"; **Acts 24:15 –** Paul speaking to Governor Felix about the Pharisees **-- these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust**). **They came to this belief through passages FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT like …** (**1**) **Job 19:25-26 -- For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God;** (**2**) **Psalm 49:15 -- But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself**; (**3**) **Isaiah 26:19 -- Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy**; and (**4**) **Daniel 12:2 -- And many of those**

who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

- **From the New Testament**. **(1) Romans 8:23** -- **And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies**; **(2) 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 -- But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive; (3) John 5:28-29 -- Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned**. THERE ARE MANY MORE, BUT THESE VERSES PAINT A PICTURE OF WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES.

What will our resurrection bodies be like? We know that Christ will **transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body** according to **Philippians 3:21**. This means that whatever remains in the grave from our old bodies will be taken by God and TRANSFROMED into a new resurrection body.

- **It will be similar to our current bodies**.
  - **Our bodies will be changed, not replaced** (**1 Corinthians 15:51-53 -- Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality**). **This means there will be some kind of continuity with our physical bodies**. This is evident in that … (**1**) **People will recognize one another, implying that we will be familiar in appearance** (**John 20:19-20** – **After His resurrection** -- **Jesus came and stood among the disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord**); (**2**) **We will be able to eat, speak, and move about just like Christ did following His resurrection,** and (**3**) **We will continue to have minds that can reason** (**1 Corinthians 13:12 -- Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known**).
- **It will be different from our current bodies**. Our resurrection bodies will show God's perfect wisdom in creating us as human beings who, as image-bearers, are the pinnacle of His creation.
  - **Our resurrection bodies will be raised IMPERISHABLE** (**1 Corinthians 15:42**). They will not wear out or grow old or suffer from any kind of disease or infirmity. In our new bodies, we will be healthy and strong forever.
  - **Our resurrection bodies will be raised IN GLORY** (**1 Corinthians 15:43**). Since the contrast is with "**dishonor**", this seems to imply that our bodies will be beautiful – NOT MARRED IN ANY WAY BY SIN. And since the word "**glory**" is often used to describe the radiance that surrounds the presence of God Himself, there may be a kind of "**brightness**" surrounding our bodies that is similar to the glory that radiated from our Lord at His transfiguration (**Luke 9:29).** After all, **Matthew 13:43 says, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father**."
  - **Our resurrection bodies will be raised IN POWER** (**1 Corinthians 15:43**)**.** They will not be weak, nor will they be all-powerful, but our resurrected bodies will possess the strength and power that God intended us to have when He created us. They will be sufficient to do everything God directs us to do.
  - **Our resurrection bodies will be raised a SPIRITUAL BODY** (**1 Corinthians 15:44**). It will be a body that can accommodate the spiritual realm. In our natural bodies, we were subject to our fallen human natures (**Jude 18-19 -- In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." 19 These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit**). Now our spiritual bodies will be completely subject to the will of the Holy Spirit. **We will never again have to battle the flesh! I'M SURE I SPEAK FOR ALL OF US WHEN I SAY THAT WE LOOK FORWARD TO THAT DAY.**

In Preaching Today, Stuart Brisco tries to illustrate what this is like for us with an observation about the cuckoo bird: It is a common bird in England. The first sign of spring is that bird's call. The cuckoo never builds its own nest. When it feels an egg coming on, it finds another nest with eggs and no parent bird. The cuckoo lands, hurriedly lays its egg, and takes off again. That's all the cuckoo does in terms of parenting. The thrush, whose nest has now been invaded, comes back, circles, and comes into the wind to land. Not being very good at arithmetic, it can't imagine why it immediately begins to list to starboard. It gets to work hatching the eggs. Four little thrushes and one large cuckoo eventually hatch. The cuckoo is two or three times the size of the thrushes. Mrs. Thrush, having hatched the five little birds, goes off early in the morning to get the worm. She comes back, circles the nest to see four petite thrush mouths and one cavernous cuckoo mouth. Who gets the worm? The cuckoo. Guess what happens. The cuckoo gets bigger and bigger; the little thrushes get smaller and smaller. To find a baby cuckoo in a nest, simply walk along a hedge row until you find little dead thrushes. The cuckoo throws them out one at a time. Here's an adult thrush feeding a baby cuckoo that is three times as big as the thrush. **And the moral of the story is this**: you have two natures in one nest and the nature you go on feeding will grow, and the nature you go on starving will diminish. If there's going to be anything resembling that which God has in mind for us, it is going to come not through an annual attempt at the spirit of Christmas but a **perpetual recognition of the Spirit of Christ**. THIS WILL BE OUR REALITY WHEN WE RECEIVE OUR RESURRECTION BODIES THAT WILL NEVER AGAIN BE SUBJECT TO SIN.

What about the rest of creation? It will be renewed too (**Romans 8:19-22 -- For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God**). **Wayne Grudem writes this about the renewed creation: There will be no more thorns or thistles, no more floods or droughts, no more deserts or uninhabitable jungles, no more earthquakes or tornadoes, no more poisonous snakes or bees that sting or mushrooms that kill. There will be a productive earth, an earth that will blossom and produce food abundantly for our enjoyment**. YOU THINK YOU'LL LIKE THAT?

We've attempted to answer three questions this morning about our resurrection bodies: **When do we get them? Where's the biblical evidence for this belief? And what will they be like**? Then we threw in one about **the renewal of the rest of creation**. I hope this helps you understand the **final step in the process of salvation** – THE GLORIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER. Here's one more thought about what our bodies might be like from **C. S. Lewis**.

Conclusion: In his book ***The Great Divorce***, a fictional look at Christian perceptions of life after death, **C.S. Lewis** imagines what our new bodies might be like. He describes them this way: **I saw people coming to meet us. Because they were bright, I saw them while they were still very distant, and at first, I did not know that they were people at all …. The earth shook under their tread as their strong feet sank into the wet turf. A tiny haze and a sweet smell went up where they crushed the grass and scattered the dew. Some were naked, some robed. But the naked ones did not seem less adorned, and the robes did not disguise in those who wore them the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh. Some were bearded, but no one in that company struck me as being of any particular age. One gets glimpses, even in our country, of that which is ageless—heavy thought in the face of an infant, and a frolicking childhood in that of a very old man. Here it was all like that**. THAT SURE SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO.