

Resurrection is Reconnection

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What Christians celebrate at Easter is the resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection demonstrates God's power over death. But God already demonstrated that power when Jesus raised people from the dead, such as Lazarus. If God's power over death had been established, then why did Jesus need to rise from the dead?

First, let's start with a new definition: Death is separation. When a person dies, they are separated from their body. Also, they are separated from their loved ones, which is a type of death or loss experienced by both parties, the deceased and those left behind. The soul continues for the deceased, but without a body.

When Jesus died, He could have gone straight to heaven. In that case, He would have continued His existence as a spirit, just as God the Father is a spirit. Why resurrect at all? Why come back for your body? Why not shed this frail, mortal body and be done with it? Why not remain a spirit and be free from the confines and limitations of a physical body? I'm not sure I would want my body back.

Firstborn from the Dead

The Bible says that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18). That means that He is the first to rise from the dead with a new, imperishable body (1 Corinthians 15:42). When Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, Lazarus' old body was revived and he eventually died of natural causes. Lazarus was not given a new body like the resurrection body Jesus received. The Bible says that all the dead will resurrect and stand before the throne of God (Revelation 20:6,12).

Jesus' resurrection foreshadows this event, because all of us, every human who lived, will rise from the dead, just as He did. No exceptions. Like Jesus, we will be given new, imperishable bodies. "The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'" (1 Corinthians 15:52-55).

Since Jesus is given the title, "the firstborn from the dead," that means He is the first of many, the forerunner for all of us. If it weren't for His resurrection, I doubt it would be possible for us to be given new bodies. He paved the way for us. At the resurrection of the dead, we will get an upgrade: myBody 2.0. God will give us brand new bodies that will never die or age.

Reconnection at All Levels

Most portrayals of heaven describe people as spirits or angelic beings, without solid bodies. But God has promised to reconnect us to physical bodies that inhabit a physical world. What this tells me is that God values reconnection. If death is separation, then God is all about reconnection. Not only does He promise to reconnect us to bodies, He desires to reconnect us to each other, and, most importantly, to reconnect us to Himself. The reason Jesus died in the first place is to reconnect us to God to restore us to relationship with Him (Romans 5:10).

We are fractured beings, disconnected in so many ways. We are disconnected from ourselves. We have little sense of who we truly are or what our souls are like. We are disconnected from our spirits, having little understanding of our spiritual abilities or how the spiritual world operates. Some of us are disconnected from our emotions. Some have compartmentalized themselves into discrete parts, some of which they have locked away in deep storage or put into a freezer for the long term. We are disconnected from each other to varying degrees. But God seeks to connect or reconnect us with all those things. Jesus' resurrection demonstrates that. God's desire is for reconnection at all levels.

Our Final Destination

It drives me crazy when people talk about going to heaven. Everyone has it wrong. Our final destination is not heaven, but Earth. God promises to create a new Earth (Isaiah 65:17, Revelation 21:1). We will dwell on this new, pristine Earth in our new, imperishable bodies. It will be a physical existence, not a spiritual one. We will live on the land and interact with nature and each other. We will be reconnected with our home planet and with our families and friends.

I've always viewed myself as "just passing through." I look forward to heaven, seeing it as a better environment than Earth. But knowing that my final destination is Earth, I have to reconsider my indifference toward physical existence. Many religious traditions eschew "the flesh" and emphasize the spirit over the body, but God's plan of a future physical existence for us seems to validate and bless the physical. Perhaps, the physical body isn't as "dirty" and despised as some make it out to be.

If heaven is defined as where God dwells, then Earth will become the new heaven because the Earth will become God's dwelling place. It says in Revelation 21:3-5, "I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death (separation); there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Eternal Life is a Relationship

Eternal life is more than living forever. It is not measured by quantity of years, but quality of experience. One of my favorite scriptures is John 17:3 where Jesus says, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." I love that definition of eternal life for two reasons. First, eternal life is defined as a relationship with God. To live forever without knowing God is not eternal life, according to Jesus. Second, for those who have a relationship with God, eternal life is something we are experiencing now, and forever. What makes it eternal is not the prolongation of life, but the relationship we have with God that never ends. Nothing can take it away. Because that relationship never ends, we have assurance that our life in God will never end, even after death.

This eternal life begins when we choose to believe in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die." (John 11:25). When I insert this new vocabulary, the words become: "I am the **reconnection** and the life. The

one who believes in me will live forever in relationship with God, even though they become separated from their body."

Separation from our body (death) is not to be feared, because our relationship with God continues in spite of that separation. Our relationship with God is our anchor as we face any future separation or loss, because we have confidence we will never be separated from God.

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