

I Believe in Bodily Resurrection and Everlasting Life

DAVE BAST

The book of Job is a profound meditation on the meaning of suffering. In it, Job raises one of the ultimate questions of human existence: If someone dies, will they live again? Most people hope the answer is yes. Christians confess with assurance that the answer *is* yes. We believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Think about that with us today on *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and Scott, we finally come to the end of this 12-part series on the Apostles' Creed. We have covered the section on God, the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth; and then Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, and all his life from conception through the coming again; and then finally we have been looking at the section on the Holy Spirit, which includes what we believe about the Church and about forgiveness; and today, about the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is important to note, and maybe it is obvious, but when we confess at the very end of the Creed, the resurrection of the body, we are not talking about Jesus' resurrection. We already confessed that in part two of the Apostles' Creed: On the third day he rose again from the dead. That is Jesus' resurrection. Now we are in the work of the Holy Spirit in the era of the Church; so when we say we believe in the resurrection of the body, that is each of our bodies, in what will be...what many theologians have described as a grand, grand miracle...to think that at the end every body of every believer, every God-fearer who ever lived across thousands...we don't know how long it will be by the time Jesus comes again, but it has already been thousands of years since Adam and Eve...bodies that long since turned to dust...bodies that were lost at sea...burned in fires...decomposed in a grave...God is going to somehow find a way to bring them all back together in a new resurrection form...we will be talking about that in this program. It is staggering when you think about what a miracle that is going to be.

DAVE BAST

And actually, as we start to look at scripture, we would acknowledge that in the Old Testament, this was not clearly expected...

SCOTT HOEZEE

No.

DAVE BAST

This was not fully understood. God had not really revealed that yet; except, we mentioned the book of Job, and that may be one of the later writings, actually, of the Old Testament...probably is...and we don't know anything, really, about the writer, except that he or she was a person of profound genius; but in Job, there is

tucked away in Chapter 19 this wonderful testimony, which some of us cannot help but hear in the old King James Version as it comes from Handel's *Messiah*, where Job says:

²⁵For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. ²⁶And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

It is a pointer toward resurrection...the resurrection of the body.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and there are a few texts in Ezekiel and in Daniel, and this one in Job...a few Old Testament whispers and intimations of what will be more fully taught in the New Testament after Jesus' body is resurrected as the first fruits; but this is definitely an Old Testament sneak preview...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

If you will, of the idea that we might fall into decay. Worms will destroy our body. I was just saying that; you know, most people who have ever lived...there is probably not a skeleton left of many of them anymore, and yet, we will have a flesh, Job seems to say. We will see God at the last day, but we won't be Casper the friendly ghost. We are going to have a real body; and by the way, I think even some of us Christians who know better, we sometimes also picture ourselves in heaven, if you will, as kind of wispy people who live on clouds. No; flesh and blood, renewed, but real.

DAVE BAST

We really cannot overstress this point, because frankly, most people in the world...if you took a poll of anyone and everyone, whatever their religion or no religion, they have an expectation of living forever. There are very few pure materialists who just think when you're dead, you're dead and that is it. There are some, but most people expect, no, we go on with some kind of spiritual existence; but the Christian hope is really rather different. We don't confess in the Creed: I believe in the immortality of the soul, and that we go to heaven when we die. We confess: No; I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. So, we have actually dealt with that issue of going to heaven in another program. We are not denying that, but what we want to focus on is this is our true hope.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and it is a gift. You just said we do not believe in the immortality of the soul. There was a time when our souls never existed. God created each of us at some point; and we do not naturally continue on forever as human beings. We are finite. If we are given a new body that can live in an everlasting way, that is a gift—that is a gift of God; and the natural question people ask is: What is that body going to be like?

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What exactly was Jesus' body like? We know that after the resurrection, when people took a good look at Jesus they said: Oh, it is Jesus; but they didn't always recognize him right off; and he could do some things in that body that he didn't do in his pre-resurrection body, like pop in and out of rooms and pass through locked doors. Paul talks about this, Dave, in 1 Corinthians 15; probably the landmark text in the whole New Testament, where Paul tackles this idea of bodily resurrection, because some in Corinth were influenced by the Greeks, who were kind of anti-body, and so the idea that you might get your body back someday...the Greeks kind of thought: Ew, gross. We are looking forward to getting rid of this prison and let our souls feel free and fly free from the body; but Paul says: No; we are going to get a body back; and he talks about it extensively in that 15th chapter.

DAVE BAST

Yes; so, Paul writes: ³⁵But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised?” (That is exactly what we are talking about: How in the world can this work? He goes on to use an analogy.) ³⁶What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

So, what he is suggesting here...I mean, it is not a perfect analogy, maybe, but you put a seed in the ground and what comes up is something quite different, but continuous with the seed. We are encouraged to think of the resurrection of the body as not necessarily a direct physical reordering of the same matter, which may have disappeared; but of continuity with change, really.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I think I have told this story before on a *Groundwork* program, but years ago archeologists...I think it was in Japan...they found some ancient tomb of an emperor or a king, and next to the body in this tomb was a jar of seeds. Scientists looked at the seeds and they said: I wonder what kind of seed that is? What is this seed? Finally, somebody said: Well, why don't you plant one? So, they did; they planted it, and it grew into this very rare, like seven-petalled chrysanthemum. You don't know what the seed is going to look like when it blooms until you plant it and let it bloom; and Paul says that is what our bodies are like now. They are recognizable as a body, but they are going to get planted and something else is going to come up; and then Paul uses an oxymoron there in 1 Corinthians 15. He says it will be a “psychical” * body—a spiritual body; which is sort of like saying, you know, jumbo scrimp or elementary algebra; it is two words that don't usually go together; there is spirit, there is body; and Paul says, well they are going to be together. It will be a “psychical” body.

DAVE BAST

And he uses a series of other terms here in this chapter: It will be imperishable; it will be glorious...in other words, not subject to decay; it is not going to run downhill like our current bodies. It is going to be glorious; it is not going to be shameful or embarrassing. It is going to be powerful. All of these things that just sort of stagger our imagination; but this is the future for those who are in Christ; and Paul ends that great chapter with: ⁵¹Listen, I tell you a mystery: A trumpet will sound and we will all be changed...whether we are alive at that time or whether we are dead.

So, thanks be to God for this wonderful truth; but what about, then, the life everlasting? What is that going to be like? We will talk about that next.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast, and we are talking in this last program on the Creed about the last two phrases in the Apostles' Creed: I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. So, we talked, Scott, a little bit about the resurrection of the body, and how unimaginable but unimaginably glorious that will be; and now, let's say a little bit about everlasting life or eternal life, or perhaps we should call it life of the world to come.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; God alone is eternal. Eternal technically means extemporal. You are out of time. You always existed. There was never a time when you didn't exist. There could never be a time when you wouldn't exist. That is not technically true. Each human being...you, Dave, I...we came into existence at some point, and were it not for God's grace, we would go out of existence...not just our bodies, but our souls, too. By grace God extends us; and *everlastingness* is something that applies to human beings. Once we are created by grace, we

will ever last—we will continue to last. So, that is a technical distinction, but the truth is, the Bible mixes up eternal life and everlasting life all the time, so we won't worry about it. They both mean the same thing. By grace we are going to go on; and as we just established in the previous segment, Dave, not just as ghosts, but as newly embodied people in the new creation—in the kingdom of God.

DAVE BAST

And of course, the classical passages that address the nature of this eternal life, or everlasting life, are at the end of the book of Revelation—the climax of John's visions of heaven and of the end of this world come when he sees a new heaven and a new earth, as he writes, for example, in Revelation 21:

^{1b}for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away, ⁵and the one who is seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new!"

SCOTT HOEZEE

And as we pointed out in a program a while back here on *Groundwork*, it is significant to see there at the end of that passage you just read from Revelation 21, Dave, God does not say: See, I am making all new things, as though he is starting all over; he is saying: I am making all things new. *This* creation...*our* bodies...mountains and streams and so forth...God is making *this* creation new, not making a whole new creation. God has salvaged this creation from the destructive forces of evil and of Satan himself; and our bodies are part of that; and we will then live with God forever, which is mindboggling...it is hard for us to imagine; in those resurrected bodies, we are going to go on and on with God—God will dwell with us, we will dwell with God.

DAVE BAST

Right, yes; and again, it is probably proper to see by analogy that just as with our resurrected bodies, there will be continuity...but change...so with the new heavens and the new earth...a new earth, a new sun, a new moon, new stars...continuity, but change, in a way that perhaps we cannot fully grasp; nevertheless, this is all in God's plan. Interestingly, what especially defines John's description of it are the things that *aren't* there. He proceeds by way of negatives: So, there is no more sea, which of course is deeply meaningful in the Hebrew mindset because the sea was the place of chaos, the sea was the birthplace of everything evil and wrong. Just in terms of the book of Revelation, the beast of the Antichrist and the false prophet, they all came out of the sea. So, the fact that the sea is gone doesn't mean you won't get a nice ocean view property, it just means that everything evil will be absent.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; we don't want to take...I mean, if you love snorkeling over coral reefs and seeing God's beauty in creation, it will be renewed too. It is a symbol, right? Chaos—the life-threatening thing about the ocean. No more night. It doesn't mean we will never see the stars again...

DAVE BAST

Right, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It just means the bad things that go bump in the night will no longer exist; they will be banished. It will be all new. It is hard to imagine this; and Paul knows that, and the New Testament knows that. So, you think of a line from 1 Corinthians 2 that (^{9b} paraphrased) No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. In other words, you ain't seen nothing yet...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And your best wishes, your fondest hopes for what life in God's new creation will look like are probably not wild enough. It is going to be glorious.

DAVE BAST

Yes; you know, people often ask: Well, will my dog be there, or my cat or will there be animals? I think the best way to respond to that is I don't know, but whatever it is that you love about your dog, the true reality will be in the new creation, too. So, go ahead, if that is what you long for or dream of.

You know, Scott, I think one of my favorite descriptions...in a way, it is poetic...but it is the way C. S. Lewis ends the final Narnia story, *The Last Battle*. As the children kind of pass through death into life, this is how he closed that story: The things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them; and for us, this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after; but for them, it was only the beginning of the *real* story. All their life in this world and all of their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page. Now at last, they were beginning Chapter 1 of the *great* story, which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I like that. It reminds me of Hebrews...the book of Hebrews, Dave, often presents Jesus as the ultimate priest, the ultimate sacrifice, and says, you know, that everything that happened in the Old Testament and in Israel, that was just a sneak preview. That was not the real thing; that was the preview. It seemed real, right? But what is really real is coming in Christ; and as Lewis says here, you almost cannot describe it; and as real as this world is, as beautiful as it sometimes is, it is just the title page. The real story begins when we go into our Father's kingdom, or in this case, the new Narnia, as Lewis imagined it; but that is a very, very lovely and stirring idea that our real stories might yet begin. It kind of reminds me of something also from the book of Revelation, this mysterious image that I first had my attention called to it by Frederick Buechner, where we are told that God is going to give each of us a white stone, and that is our real name. We are going to find out our real name only when we get to heaven. God alone knows it. This is the beginning of the real story.

DAVE BAST

Well, there is one more thing we want to say about everlasting life, and we will turn to that as we wrap up this program and this series.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*...the longest series, I think, we have ever done on *Groundwork* is this one—12 parts on the Apostles' Creed, and this is the last program...the last segment...the last part of it; and we are concluding it appropriately enough with the resurrection of the body, the life everlasting, and amen at the end of the Creed, we might say.

So, we want to say that our hope for the life everlasting is more than just pie in the sky by and by, as the old sneer sometimes goes. The everlasting life of the kingdom is, as Paul put it in Romans, righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. It is not only a life, Dave, that is just going to go on and on and on...and sometimes, by the way...sometimes when you're children...and maybe even when you are not a child...every once in a while you hear somebody say: Boy, I hope it is not boring. I mean, is it just going to be like an endless worship service? I mean, oh... No, as we just saw that lyric quote from C. S. Lewis' *Chronics of Narnia*, this is the beginning of the story. It is going to be endlessly interesting, because it is not just like we are going on and on and on and on, but it is also that we are going on and on in a world of shalom—the world of delight and flourishing—the world where everything that has ever gone wrong will no longer be there, and everybody is going to be contributing to the life of everybody else, which sounds pretty wonderful.

DAVE BAST

Yes; I remember my beloved professor of theology, Eugene Osterhaven, saying: Well, I want to spend at least the first 100,000 years studying geology. Yes, it will be amazing...but here is the thing about eternal life, especially in the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John. We often like to quote Dale Bruner, the great commentator on Matthew and John, and Bruner points out that John has a whole separate word for eternal life or everlasting life. It is the Greek word *zoe*...so, *bios* means physical life, like biology...the science of life...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

But, *zoe* isn't just life that is unending, it is life that is real...that is deep. It is true life, it is real life, it is the kind of life we long for. It is what we mean when we say: I want to live. I want real life; and John is all about that, and especially in John 5, Jesus says some amazing things about life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus says: ²⁶For as the Father has life in himself (that is *zoe*) so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. ^{30b}My judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself, but him who sent me. And then he goes on to say more, Dave.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, he is talking about the resurrection at the last day, and we have dealt with that already. The trumpet will sound, or here Jesus says: My voice will call out, and the dead in their graves will rise; but listen to this; very interestingly, just before that he says: ²⁴Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life (*zoe*), and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵Very truly I tell you, a time is coming, and has now come, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

I think it is extremely important to notice the present tense here. Jesus says right now the dead are hearing my voice and they are living. So, he is not talking about the physical dead at the last time, he is talking about a different kind of spiritual death, and how people can come to have life right here and now if they listen to him—if they hear his voice.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that brings us to another incident six chapters on in John's Gospel, in John 11, the raising of Lazarus; and right before then, Jesus has the most famous probably, maybe the most powerful of all of his I AM sayings in John's Gospel. He says to Martha: ²⁵I am the resurrection and the life.

Present tense again: I *am* the resurrection and the life; and if you believe in me you will never die. Of course, he doesn't mean that our physical bodies...the *bios* life that we have...the bio...the biological life won't come to an end; but the moment that is done, the *zoe* will take right over. So, you don't really die; not spiritually. You wake up to the new reality of a life that cannot be taken from you, which is sometimes why people point out that when Christians who almost die...we say it is a near-death experience...and some of the Christians say: It felt to me like a near-*life* experience because I saw Jesus on the other side. I didn't think I was dying, I thought I was coming alive.

DAVE BAST

Yes; we passed already from death to life. We don't have to worry about the judgment, because in responding to the voice of Jesus...the invitation of Jesus...you know: Come to me...we said that earlier in the last program...something happens such that eternal life is now ours. It is not just something we get finally

at the end when we die. You can have eternal life right here and now, and we do in Christ; it is a wonderful truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is indeed a great, great, great gift of grace; and it is in some ways the crowning gift, Dave, which is probably why the Apostles' Creed ends here. We began with our belief in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth—we began with the original creation; and now we end the Creed flash-forwarding to the new creation, when life everlasting will flood us; and then we end with that word: Amen...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which is a great standard of the Reformed tradition...one of the standard confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism says: Why do we end, you know, with amen? What does amen mean? Amen means this shall truly and surely be. Amen often means *true*...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen is a way of saying that is true...that is true...this is absolutely going to happen.

DAVE BAST

In fact, when Jesus says in those passages we read from John: Very truly I tell you...the way our translation said it...what he literally said was: Amen, amen, I tell you. You can count on this...you can bank on it...this is most certainly true, because I am telling you, and I know what I am talking about. So, amen; we end the Creed. I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen and amen!

DAVE BAST

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Dave Bast with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue to look at scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

*Note: “Psychical” is a word Paul coined when he used it in 1 Corinthians 15 to describe Jesus’ resurrection body; it is a real body, but also a spiritual body. The Greek word for “spiritual” is literally “psychical.”

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