

Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead



John 5:28-29 ²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

Parts 1 & 2

In Conjunction with A Holy Calling Radio Ministry, the radio arm of School of the Called Seminary.

1.) An Elementary Truth:

This doctrine is an elementary truth which every Christian should know. It is clearly stated and listed with repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. However, there is a sad lack of knowledge concerning this foundational doctrine of the Church.¹

¹ Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. Hebrews 6:1-2

One remark I cannot help making; the doctrine of the resurrection appears to have been thought of much more consequence among the primitive Christians than it is now! How is this? The apostles were continually insisting on it, and exciting the followers of God to diligence, obedience, and cheerfulness through it. And their successors in the present day seldom mention it! So apostles preached, and so primitive Christians believed; so we preach, and so our hearers believe. There is not a doctrine in the Gospel on which more stress is laid; and there is not a doctrine in the present system of preaching which is treated with more neglect! — Adam Clarke, Commentary, 1 Cor. 15:58 (public domain).

I Corinthians 15:12-22

¹² Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up— if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

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¹Sadly I must add my own ignorance of the doctrine through all my growing up years, for even though I was raised in a conservative church, I knew next to nothing of this elementary doctrine. In fact, as far as I can recall, I can remember hearing the doctrine expressly spoken of only once during that time, and that was in a Sunday School class and not a sermon. Now it is possible that my memory or attention span in my youth may be in part to blame for my ignorance. But I cannot help but think it had a lot more to do with the doctrine not being addressed as it should have been. Whatever the case may be, I knew next to nothing of it as I grew up in the church. In fact, as a young minister I did not fully grasp its wonder and the blessed place it holds in Scripture until reading Spurgeon and searching out the Scriptures myself. It was then that this wonderful doctrine became forever mine to cherish and to proclaim. Clearly the doctrine is inseparable from the Gospel message itself. There is far too little proclamation of this doctrine. Point in case, as far as I can recall, the first time I heard a sermon preached on the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was when I preached one as a young minister.

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man [Adam] came death, by Man [Jesus] also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

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“Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.”

— The Sadducees —

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." 33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. Matthew 22:28-33

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9-10

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead has been the doctrine of the faithful all throughout the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. To ungodly mockers who doubt it, we may find our appropriate response to them in the following words:

“You are therefore greatly mistaken.” Mark 12:27

“... not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” Matthew 22:29

“Why should it be thought incredible by you that **GOD RAISES THE DEAD?**” Acts 26:8

The resurrection of Christ cannot be separated from the Gospel:

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 1 Cor. 15:1-4

Christ’s resurrection (and thus, what that means concerning our own resurrection) was at the very heart of apostolic preaching:

1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, **2** being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Acts 4:1-2

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2.) The Bodily Resurrection of the Dead, the Hope of Both New and Old Testament Saints:

New King James Version: And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2

Young's Literal Translation: And the multitude of those sleeping in the dust of the ground do awake, some to life age-during, and some to reproaches—to abhorrence age-during. Daniel 12:2

In the footnote below (appearing on this page and the next) additional information has been included from the Old Testament witness—clear evidence for the resurrection of the dead by which the faithful have been able to discern the doctrine.²

² In the Old Testament we can find evidence for the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, even in places where we are only able to show it as a related truth. Consider Isaiah 26:19:

Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead. Isaiah 26:19 (NKJV)

I love Adam Clarke's comments on Isaiah 26:19, which sums up well how there is an abundance of evidence for the doctrine in such verses, Clarke writes:

The deliverance of the people of God from a state of the lowest depression is explained by images plainly taken from the resurrection of the dead. In the same manner the Prophet Ezekiel represents the restoration of the Jewish nation from a state of utter dissolution by the restoring of the dry bones to life, exhibited to him in a vision, chap. 37, which is directly thus applied and explained, verses 11-13. And this deliverance is expressed with a manifest opposition to what is here said above, verse 14, of the great lords and tyrants, under whom they had groaned:— "They are dead, they shall not live; They are deceased tyrants, they shall not rise:" that they should be destroyed utterly, and should never be restored to their former power and glory. It appears from hence, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was at that time a popular and common doctrine; for an image which is assumed in order to express or represent any thing in the way of allegory or metaphor, whether poetical or prophetic, must be an image commonly known and understood; otherwise it will not answer the purpose for which it is assumed. —Adam Clarke's Commentary, Isaiah 26:19 (public domain).

Consider the following quote from C.H. Spurgeon, although rather lengthy, it clearly reveals a strong foundation for belief in the doctrine from the Old Testament.

There shall be A RESURRECTION OF THE JUST. The first proof I will offer of this, is, that it has been the *constant and unvarying faith of the saints from the earliest periods of time*. Abraham believed the resurrection of the dead, for it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter xi. Verse 19, that he "accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." I have no doubt that Joseph believed in the resurrection, for he gave commandment concerning his bones, and surely he would not have been so careful of his body if he had not believed that it should be raised from the dead. The Patriarch Job was a firm believer in it, for he said in that oft repeated text, Job. xix. 25, 26: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter-day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." David believed it beyond the shadow of a doubt, for he sang of Christ, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Daniel believed it, for he said, that "Many who sleep in the dust shall rise, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt." Souls do not sleep in the dust; bodies do. It will do you good to turn to one or two passages and see what these holy men thought. For instance, in Isaiah, ch. xxvi. 19, you read: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." We will offer no explanation.

23 brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." John 11:23-24

39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. John 6:39

40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:40

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44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:44

54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:54

The hope of the resurrection of the dead cannot be separated from apostolic preaching, as Paul said:

I have *hope* in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. Acts 24:15

Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; *concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead* I am being judged! Acts 23:6

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The text is positive and sure. Let another prophet speak — Hosea, ch. vi. verses 1 and 2: “Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” Although this does not declare the resurrection, yet it uses it as a figure which it would not do were it not regarded as a settled truth. It is declared by Paul, also, in Hebrews xi. 35, that such was the constant faith of the martyrs; for he says, “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” All those holy men and women, who, during the time of the Maccabees, stood fast by their faith, and endured the fire and sword, and tortures unutterable, believed in the resurrection, and that resurrection stimulated them to give their bodies to the flames, not caring even for death, but believing that thereby they should attain to a blessed resurrection. But our Savior brought the resurrection to light in the most excellent manner, for he explicitly and frequently declared it. “Marvel not,” said he, “at what I have said unto you. Behold the hour cometh when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of God.” “The hour is coming when he will call the dead to judgment, and they shall stand before his throne.” Indeed, throughout his preaching, there was one continued flow of firm belief, and a public and positive declaration of the resurrection of the dead. – C.H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 2, 1856, p.99 (public domain).

There are a number of verses in the Old Testament by which the faithful have been able to discern the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. By use of THE TREASURY of SCRIPTURE KNOWLEDGE reference system (or no doubt other chain reference systems), an abundance of verses, both Old and New Testament, can be produced.

A hope that keeps us from grieving as those who have no hope, and a reason to comfort one another: For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 1 Thess. 4:16

Likewise, we are told that these very bodies shall also be redeemed: "...we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." Rom. 8:23

There is nothing like Christian teaching which calls for the consecration of the body now in this life as a living sacrifice, and declares salvation for the total man, even of man's body, saying: And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? 1 Cor. 6:14-15

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will *transform our lowly body* that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. Php. 3:20-21

Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? Acts 26:8

Only a Small and Faint Foretaste of the Coming Resurrection:

Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. Matthew 27:51-53

A Wonderful Truth for the Saved:

For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

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3.) Problems of a Resurrection Considered (which prove to be no problem at all):

1 Corinthians 15 34-44

³⁵ But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" ³⁶ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. ³⁹ All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. ⁴⁰ There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

⁴⁵ And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 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. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

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Now, do not stumble over the term spiritual body as if the two words, "spiritual" and "body" in the text cancel out each other – *for these words do not cancel out each other in the text any more than the words "natural" and "body" are not redundant.* A spiritual body is a body adapted to that part of man which is immortal even as a natural body is adapted to that part of man which is finite.

For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 2 Corinthians 5:4

...we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body... Philippians 3:20-21

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28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. John 5:28-29

4.) The Meaning for the Saved:

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1 Corinthians 15:50-58

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength 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 brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Then I heard a voice from Heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

Revelation 14:13

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5.) The Meaning for the Lost:

"...and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." John 5:29

When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, And the hope of the unjust perishes. Prov. 11:7 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matt. 10:28 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. Matt. 5:29-30 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men... 2 Cor. 5:11 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Mark 8:36

It is a sober message that those who enter eternity lost will be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels in a resurrected body, which the immortal spirit can never escape from through death — for death will be forever destroyed in that day, a day in which soul and body are cast into Gehenna, the final hell.

6.) The Doctrines of the Resurrection of the Dead, the Day of Judgment and Final State All Go Together:

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15

7.) He who Believes in the Resurrection of Christ Believes the Sign for the Proof of all that He Did:

So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. John 2:18-22

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." Romans 10:9-11

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^{5:17} Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. ^{6:1} We then, as workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says: *"In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you."* Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2

The resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the righteous is a doctrine which we believe, but which we too seldom preach or care to read about. Though I have inquired of several booksellers for a book specially upon the subject of the resurrection, I have not yet been able to purchase one of any sort whatever; and when I turned to Dr. Owen's works, which are a most invaluable storehouse of divine knowledge, containing much that is valuable on almost every subject; I could find, even there, scarcely more than the slightest mention of the resurrection. It has been set down as a well known truth, and therefore has never been discussed. Heresies have not risen up respecting it; it would almost have been a mercy if there had been, for whenever a truth is contested by heretics, the orthodox fight strongly for it, and the pulpit resounds with it every day. I am persuaded, however, that there is much power in this doctrine; and if I preach it this morning you will see that God will own the apostolic preaching, and there will be conversions. – C.H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 2, 1856, p.99 (p. domain).

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.
Philippians 3:20-21

28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. John 5:28-29

Various Quotes from John Wesley's 1732 Sermon on the Resurrection of the Dead:

"God can form this dust, so gathered together, into the same body it was before. And that it is possible, all must own who believe that God made Adam out of the dust of the earth. Therefore, the bodies of men being dust after death, it is no other than it was before; and the same power that at the first made it of dust, may as easily re-make it, when it is turned into dust again."

"...were it not so common a thing, we should be as hardly brought to think it possible that such a beautiful fabric as the body of man is, with nerves and bones, flesh and veins, blood, and the several other parts whereof it consists, should be formed as we know it is; as now we are, that hereafter it should be rebuilt when it has been crumbled into dust. Had we only heard of the wonderful production of the bodies of men, we should have been as ready to ask, 'How are men made, and with what bodies are they born?' as now, when we hear of the resurrection, 'How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?'"

"Now, these words, *immortal* and *incorruptible*, not only signify that we shall die no more, (for in that sense the damned are immortal and incorruptible,) but that we shall be perfectly free from all the bodily evils which sin brought into the world; that our bodies shall not be subject to sickness, or pain, or any other inconveniences we are daily exposed to. This the Scripture calls 'the redemption of our bodies,' — the freeing them from all their maladies. Were we to receive them again, subject to all the frailties and miseries which we are forced to wrestle with, I much doubt whether a wise man, were he left to his choice, would willingly take his again; — whether he would not choose to let his still lie rotting in the grave, rather than to be again chained to such a cumbersome clod of earth."

"Our bodies shall be raised in glory. 'Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' A resemblance of this we have in the luster of Moses's face, when he had conversed with God on the mount. His face shone so bright, that the children of Israel were afraid to come near him, till he threw a veil over it. And that extraordinary majesty of Stephen's face seemed to be an earnest of his glory. 'All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.' How then, if it shone so gloriously even on earth, will it shine in the other world, when his, and the bodies of all the saints, are made like unto Christ's glorious body! How glorious the body of Christ is, we may guess from his transfiguration. St. Peter, when he saw this, when our Lord's face shone as the sun, and his raiment became shining and white as snow, was so transported with joy and admiration, that he knew not what he said. When our Savior discovered but a little of that glory which he now possesses, and which in due time he will impart to his followers, yet that little of it made the place seem a paradise; and the disciples thought that they could wish for nothing better than always to live in such pure light, and enjoy so beautiful a sight. 'It is good for us to be here: Let us make three tabernacles;' — here let us fix our abode for ever. And if they thought it so happy only to be present with such heavenly bodies, and to behold them with their eyes, how much happier must it be to dwell in such glorious mansions, and to be themselves clothed with so much brightness!"

"Our bodies shall be raised spiritual bodies. Our spirits are now forced to serve our bodies, and to attend their leisure, and do greatly depend upon them for most of their actions. But our bodies shall then wholly serve our spirits, and minister to them, and depend upon them. So that, as by 'a natural body' we understand one fitted for this lower, sensible world for this earthly state; so 'a spiritual body' is one that is suited to a spiritual state, to an invisible world to the life of angels. And, indeed, this is the principal difference between a mortal and a glorified body."