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After The Resurrection

What will you be like in the resurrection? Is Jesus Christ a pattern for our own resurrection? What the Bible teaches is breath-taking!

by James McBride

Jesus Christ, according to Scripture, was raised from the dead. It's an attested historical fact. His mauled body was taken from the tree on which He was hanged. Entombed in a dark sepulcher, three days and three nights later He was raised from the dead! He burst the chains of cold death and became a powerhouse of spiritual energy.

During the next six weeks Jesus frequently appeared to the disciples. They saw Him. They touched Him. They ate with Him. They walked and talked with Him.

Yet - He was *different!* Now clearly no longer simply a human being, He appeared - and He vanished. He walked through solid matter into a locked room. He was seen as "a gardener". He "appeared in a different form" to other disciples. He levitated into Heaven, and now shines brilliantly like the sun. Certainly no ordinary mortal!

Does the resurrected body of Jesus differ from what the Christian can expect? What will *you* be like in the resurrection?

A Heavenly Reward?

Most Christians see themselves going to Heaven in the form of a wraith or disembodied soul or spirit or an angel - perhaps having sprouted a set of wings. Increasingly, Christians subscribe to the eastern notion that they will return to life as another creature - a horse or a mouse, etc. or, with effort ("karma"), as a better human being.

Must we *guess* our future state? Must we stay ignorant? Or, does the Bible describe what we will be like in the resurrection? In fact - God leaves us in no doubt. We *can know* what lies beyond the grave!

In the famous "resurrection chapter" (I Corinthians 15) the apostle Paul says "...We [i.e. Christians] shall all be *changed*" (v.51) at the return of Jesus Christ. Any of the people of God who are alive at that time will put on what the apostle terms a "spiritual body," different, no longer subject to decay or death, untiring, powerful, spiritual.

The apostle John's understanding of this exciting concept is no less dramatic. He writes "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (I John 3:2). Could it be clearer? When we slip the bonds of mortality and are resurrected at the return of Jesus Christ we will *share His nature*, fully reflect His person be "like Him"!

We cannot take our human flesh or our human nature with us into the Kingdom of God. "Flesh and blood" wrote the apostle Paul, "...cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 15:50). He continues, "...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible [our humanity and our human flesh] must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on *immortality*." (v52-53)

Certainly a good and loving Father has given us glimpses of what is life's purpose! Not endless strumming on a harp on cloud nine or gazing blissfully forever at God's face but imbued with boundless life and power. *Like Jesus Christ.*

Co-heirs

In his thrilling exposition of this concept to the Roman Christians Paul wrote: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). And in the book of Hebrews it is recorded "[Jesus] is not ashamed to call them *brethren*" (ch 2:11). Earlier in Romans 8 (v. 16-17) Paul tells us "The Spirit itself bears witness with our own spirits that we are the children of God: and if children then heirs, too - heirs of God and *co-heirs with Christ...*".

Did you catch that? We - now mere flesh and blood and subject to the sufferings and limitations that are part and parcel of the human condition - we are to be *brothers of Jesus Christ, heirs of God!* We, if we overcome, are to "inherit all things" (Revelation 21:7 KJV paraphrased). That means *everything*. That includes the whole of creation, the

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entire vastness of the incomprehensible universe! As Christians, we - if we overcome to the end - will inherit *all there is* as joint-heirs with our Savior.

Humanly, the heir receives the “estate” on the *death* of the benefactor (parent etc.). But such is the love of God our Father for us that (just like the father of “the prodigal son”) He who *never* dies, who has ever been and who ever will be, shares His estate - the whole of creation, all of His powers - with His “sons and daughters” (II Corinthians 6:18).

This explains why Paul ecstatically exclaims “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely *give us all things?*” (Romans 8:31-32). That’s the reward God has laid up for His faithful children!

It’s the fulfillment of the divine purpose of creating man “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26).

Divine Deeds

Would you, with but a word, like to make the blind see? Would you like to heal the deaf ear? Miraculously feed the hungry around the world? Restore to full health the millions of acute and chronically ill? Raise the dead to life? Jesus Christ did. And He said that those who trust Him *will do the same*. He told the disciples “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.” (John 14:12).

We see just an inkling of this in the Body of Christ, in the Church, today. But its supreme fulfillment will be in *tomorrow’s* world. As Paul wrote, “... You were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest [deposit, down-payment] of our inheritance...” (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Coming soon is a utopian time when all that now mars human life will be healed. When Jesus Christ returns as King of kings, with him will be today’s saints resurrected to be with him as *joint-heirs of the Father’s Kingdom*. “Then” prophesied Isaiah “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy...” (Isa 35:5-6).

Miraculous, indeed. But administered at the hands of the resurrected saints as they exercise the powers of God.

Can you imagine a world where God’s healing power surges over the whole earth? Can you imagine *personally sharing* this power? Can you imagine the mighty Spirit of God flowing through you in doing these mighty works? Jesus said “...If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-38).

That thought is almost inconceivable. Out from those who

are co-heirs with Christ will flow to others the very divine life. By this, John says, Jesus “referred to the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive” (John 7:39 paraphrased).

As the angel informed the apostle John, God’s chosen ones “...shall *reign* over the earth” (Revelation 5:10). That means unlimited power to serve with Jesus Christ. It’s but a glimpse of what you will be like in the resurrection!

But...Divine?

Clearly, then, each Christian who is victorious to the end of his or her life is to share the powers exercised by our elder brother Jesus Christ - “the eldest in a vast family of brothers” (Romans 8:29). Upon repentance, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, we enter into a *family* relationship with our heavenly Father and with Jesus Christ - what Paul describes as “the whole family in heaven and on earth” (Ephesians 3:15).

Does that mean, then, that we actually *become* God! It seems a blasphemous assumption, indeed!

Yet the apostle Peter exclaimed that we will be “*partakers of the divine nature*” (II Peter 1:4). Now *that’s* an awe-inspiring thought!

Does Peter’s concept that you will share God’s nature sound abhorrent? It almost seems profane! And the idea lies uncomfortably with most Christians.

Yet - *isn’t that what Peter says?*

Note again what he wrote: “His divine power has given us all things that are needful for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and perfection. Thereby He has given us His exceeding great and precious promises, in order that through them *you may become sharers in the divine nature*” (II Peter 1:3-4 paraphrased).

In each Christian - each person, that is, in whom dwells the Spirit of God - lies the seed of the divine. A seed that will later flower as full membership of the divine Family! The apostle Paul puts it this way: “God has put His Spirit [His divine power and being] in us as a guarantee” (II Corinthians 1:22 paraphrased). If we have Christ’s Spirit in us, our eternal future in the Family of God is guaranteed. If we do not disqualify ourselves.

In fact, Jesus had to straighten out his inquisitors on this matter. Certain Jews who opposed him gathered baskets of stones ready to kill him. Jesus remonstrated with them: “Many good deeds from the Father have I shown you”, he said. “For which of them will you stone me?” The Jews replied. “For no good deed are we going to stone you, but for blasphemy, and because you who are only a man are *making yourself out to be God*” (John 10:31-33 paraphrased).

Jesus reply is startling. He answers, “Does it not stand

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written in your Law 'I said *you are gods* '[Psalm 82:6]? If those [men!] to whom God's word was addressed are called gods (and the Scripture cannot be annulled), how is it that you say to one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming' because I said 'I am God's son'?"

Jesus saw no theological difficulty in the concept of men becoming "gods"!

Is it then blasphemy for me to claim, as a Christian, that I am God's son? Of course not! Constantly throughout the New Testament, Christians are called "sons" and "daughters" and "children" of God. As we have seen there is a *family relationship*. The Godhead, indeed, is a Family.

Notice Paul's words in Romans 8: "All who are led by God's Spirit are *God's sons*" (v.14). He adds (v.23) "...we ourselves, though we possess the Spirit as a foretaste, yet we ourselves inwardly moan *as we wait for full sonship* [KJV - *adoption* is a weak translation] in the redemption of our bodies [i.e. at the resurrection]". Now - though sons and daughters of God - we are lumbered with our physical limitations. *Then*, we shall receive full sonship and enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (*Read* Romans 8:14-21).

Notice what the book of Hebrews teaches: "It was fitting that He [Jesus], for whom and by whom all things exist, *in bringing many sons to glory*, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified *have all one origin*" (Heb 2:10-11).

Why can't we simply accept what the Scriptures teach! Whatever Jesus now is. *Christians will become so* at the resurrection of the just.

"New Age" God

Of course, the idea of the god in man is nothing new! It's a concept planted in man's mind (by Satan) shortly after man's creation. "Disobey the Creator God, acquire your own standards of good and evil - and be god-like" was the Devil's message (see Genesis 3:1-7). It's a path ever since pursued by mankind!

The idea that all humans nurse within themselves a divine spark is a common one. It is fundamental to Hindu belief, to many eastern religions - and to the not-so-modern New Age movement. And is also fundamental to Mormon teaching. Basically it is Satan's lie dressed in modern clothes!

Certainly it isn't what the Bible teaches!

Man is physical and all of us will die. Man has a sinful nature - and *unless that nature is transformed* we will die, be buried and never again see the light of day until his time of Judgment. There's only one way for any human being to live forever (become immortal) and that's through Jesus Christ. Each of us must "die" to our human nature, be converted and cleansed of all sin through the shed blood of

our Savior.

Only then, upon baptism, can a loving Father place in a human being His Holy Spirit. It is that Spirit in us that is the spark of the divine. We are not born with it. And unless we become converted we will die like the animals!

The apostle Paul wrote to his young disciple Timothy "[God] alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light" (I Timothy 6:16). Are men immortal? Of course not - only God is without beginning! But if you have within you the divine seed of God's Spirit you will at the resurrection be, fully, a part of - be born into - the divine Family. Truly "born again"!

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Few will deny that Jesus Christ, while He walked this planet, was unique. But controversy has raged as to His real nature. Was He God dwelling in a shell of human flesh? Was He an ordinary man mightily used by God? Was He an angel? Is He different now from what He was while on earth?

The full answer to these questions is beyond the scope of this article. [Write for the article *Is Jesus God?*]

Clearly, during His life-time Jesus the Messiah was subject to human limitation - though He exercised perfect faith. He was subject to human emotion, He tired and had to rest and sleep, He became hungry and thirsty and had to eat and drink. He on occasion got angry. When wounded He bled and suffered pain. He was at times anguished. He was tempted in every respect just as we are. He constantly struggled against sin.

But when, because He overcame (He never sinned), death could no longer contain Him. Jesus had new powers. He could at will assume a solid body of flesh and bone (Luke 24:34) - yet He could walk through solid walls (John 20:19,26). He walked with His friends - but could instantly disappear (Luke 24:31,36). He appeared in different forms (John 21:4-7). He ate (Luke 24:42). He could ascend to the throne of God and return at the speed of light. He could appear shining as the sun in full strength, His eyes like flames of fire (Revelation 1:12-16).

Now He is alive for evermore. And He has all authority in heaven and earth given into His hands.

And remember - *we will be like Him!*

God All In All

Of course, Jesus has pre-eminence. He has a name above every name. Jesus Christ is "high above all other government and authority and power and dominion, and every title of sovereignty used either in this age or the age to come" (Ephesians 1:21-22). But in essence the reward of the Christian is that *we inherit that same quality of spiritual life and power*. We are to share these divine powers and attributes as Kings and Priests in His Kingdom.

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It is in *this* sense that mortal man may become immortal God! **Divine Sharing**

How can this be? It's because within the true Christian resides that *same Holy Spirit* which was the power on which Jesus Himself totally depended. As we read in Hebrews: "He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin." At conversion we are given the same Holy Spirit - the same Spirit that empowered and motivated Jesus Christ. At our resurrection (on the return of Jesus - Colossians 3:4) all that will remain of us is that same Holy Spirit who now dwells in us!

Ahead of us lies the most exciting thousand years of all time. History has progressed according to God's own inexorable time-table. By best estimates, we have now (1996) entered into the two thousandth year since the birth of Jesus the Messiah, the sixth thousandth year since creation. God's purpose has been "to bring many sons to glory" and the task has, from the beginning, been entrusted to the one we know as Jesus of Nazareth. [Request the title *God's Grand Design*]

The apostle Paul neatly summarizes it for us in the famed "resurrection chapter." He writes "Just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive again. But each in his own order - Christ first. and afterwards Christ's people at His return. After that comes the end when He is to surrender the kingship to God the Father, when He has abolished all other government and all other authority and power. For He must be King until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that is to be abolished is death; for God has put all things under His feet.... But when all things have been put under Him then the Son, Himself will also come under Him who has put all things under Him, in order that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:22-28).

Did that statement somehow pass you by unnoticed? Paul says that the purpose and summation of history is "...in order that *God may be all in all*"!

When that time comes, all that then exists that was human *will be God*.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Clean, the physical "mould" that was Adam and his descendants is a mere shell of that image. But its fullness comes when each and every human life will become the divine. Not an impersonal faceless mass, but a Family of all-powerful divine Beings. Each of us will express our individual character - a character forged in partnership with God's indwelling Spirit during a lifetime of training. Yet we will perfectly reflect the Father, carrying out His sovereign will through all eternity.

The Family of God so loves you that they are prepared to share totally with you their glory, their universe and their incredible power. If this is what you want - and it is indeed the fulfillment of life's purpose - you must here and now fully submit you will to God!

For God gives the precious Holy Spirit *only to those who obey Him* (Acts 5:32)! How you can receive God's Spirit is clearly stated in the Scriptures. The essential fundamental first steps towards fulfilling life's purpose are, in the words of the apostle Peter: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Do you want to share in the climax of God's magnificent plan? Then here and now submit your will to His will as revealed in Jesus. Do you want to know what you will be like in the resurrection? Then look to Jesus Christ and to His resurrection body.

For we will be like Him!

(All Scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted. Exceptions: old English "thee, thou, etc." changed to modern English)

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