

Natural Bodies vs. Spiritual Bodies

Introduction

All four of the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – contain accounts of the *resurrection* of Jesus. Basically, after Jesus had been in the grave for three days, God resurrected Jesus – that is, God brought Jesus *back to life*. According to the apostle Paul, that resurrection is the entire **basis** of our faith. (See 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.)

Since the resurrection is such an important concept, I'd like to explore two items about it in more detail.

Is Jesus currently a human being, or a spirit being?

First of all, when God resurrected Jesus, what kind of “being” did Jesus become? In other words, did Jesus remain a **human** being – or did he become a **spirit** being – after his resurrection?

There are a number of verses that are used to support both views. However, here are the two most explicit verses that I have found, which appear to address this question:

1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV):

⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the **man** Christ Jesus,

1 Corinthians 15:45 (ESV):

⁴⁵Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving **spirit**.

The first verse definitely appears to state that Jesus is currently a **human** being - because Paul wrote that verse *after* Jesus had been resurrected. However, the second verse - which was *also* written by Paul - definitely appears to state that Jesus is currently a **spirit** being.

As a result, it *appears* that Scripture “contradicts” itself here. Of course, I do *not* believe that Scripture ever contradicts itself. So, is there some way that we can “reconcile” this apparent contradiction?

Here is the way that I reconcile the above two verses. (Of course, I could be wrong.)

First off, Paul tells us that there are two “types” of bodies - “natural” bodies, and “spiritual” bodies:

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (ESV):

⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a **natural** body; it is raised a **spiritual** body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Paul also tells us that when Jesus returns, he will transform our “lowly” bodies, so that they will become like his “glorious” body:

Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV):

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our **lowly** body to be like his **glorious** body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

I understand three key points from the above passages:

- “natural” bodies and “lowly” bodies are synonyms;
- “spiritual” bodies and “glorious” bodies are synonyms;
- When Jesus returns, he will transform our “lowly” (or “natural”) bodies, to become like his “glorious” (or “spiritual”) body.

The above points tell me that Jesus currently has a **spiritual body** - and when he returns, he will give us spiritual bodies as well.

The reason why this is important is because it seems to “resolve” the apparent contradiction I listed above. Basically, from this information, I have come to the following conclusion:

“When Jesus was originally born on the earth, he was a **man** who had a **natural** body. When God resurrected Jesus, Jesus became a **man** who has a **spiritual** body.”

In my mind, the above conclusion appears to reconcile 1 Timothy 2:5 and 1 Corinthians 15:45. Basically, 1 Timothy 2:5 states that Jesus is currently a **man** - which he is. 1 Corinthians 15:45 states that Jesus became a life-giving **spirit** - which refers to the fact that Jesus currently has a **spiritual** body.

Assuming that the above conclusion is true – that Jesus is currently a **man** who has a **spiritual body** – that causes *another* question to arise.

What, exactly, is a “spiritual body”?

Everyone is quite familiar with natural bodies, of course – because all of us currently have natural bodies. However, some of us may wonder, “What are the characteristics of a *spiritual* body?” In other words, what are the exact “specifics” of spiritual bodies?

Unfortunately, Scripture does not give us all of the “details” about spiritual bodies. In fact, the apostle John appears to *explicitly* state that he does not know what our spiritual bodies will be like:

1 John 3:2 (NIV):

²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

It looks to me like John is saying the following: "When Jesus returns, we will have bodies like the one that he has now - but **I do not know** the exact ‘specifics’ about that kind of body."

So, if even the apostle John does not know all of the details about spiritual bodies, then it seems likely that *we* will not know that information, either – until Jesus returns, of course.

Nevertheless, there are a *few* items that Scripture *does* tell us about spiritual bodies. First off, one of the passages listed above – 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 – gives us a “comparison” between natural bodies and spiritual bodies. From that passage, it appears the following items are true:

- Natural bodies are “perishable” (mortal); while spiritual bodies are “imperishable” (immortal).
- Natural bodies are “dishonorable”; while spiritual bodies are “glorious”. I assume this means that natural bodies are prone to sin, but spiritual bodies are not.
- Natural bodies are “weak”, while spiritual bodies are “powerful”. This *may* mean that natural bodies are vulnerable to injuries, diseases, etc; but spiritual bodies are not. There is *another* possible meaning to this particular comparison, though – and that meaning will be described in more detail later in this document.

Another item to note is that Scripture makes some very explicit statements about blood. Basically, Scripture states that the very life of humans – *and* of animals – is in the blood:

Genesis 9:4 (ESV):

³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

Leviticus 17:11 (ESV):

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

Deuteronomy 12:23 (ESV):

²³ Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.

In addition, a common Scriptural idiom for a person is “flesh and blood”. In other words, that idiom is used to describe people who have natural bodies. For example:

Matthew 16:17 (ESV):

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For **flesh and blood** has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:50 (ESV):

I tell you this, brothers: **flesh and blood** cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV):

For we do not wrestle against **flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

However, take a look at what Jesus said to his disciples, **after** his resurrection:

Luke 24:39 (ESV):

See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have **flesh and bones** as you see that I have."

Notice – Jesus explicitly avoids using the normal idiom of “flesh and blood”. Instead, he refers to himself as having flesh and **bones**, *after* his resurrection.

As noted above, Scripture states that the life of a “natural” body is in its blood. Since Jesus goes out of his way to *avoid* using the normal “flesh and blood” idiom to describe himself, that seems to indicate that Jesus’ life is **not** maintained by blood any longer.

Also, take a look at this passage from the apostle Peter:

2 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV):

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

What does Peter mean, when he says that we will become “partakers of the divine nature”? Well, since the Holy Spirit is God’s own presence and power, he presumably means that we will have Holy Spirit “within” our bodies in some way. The prophet Ezekiel appears to agree with that assessment:

Ezekiel 37:14 (ESV):

¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

So, this may explain why Paul describes spiritual bodies as “powerful” – and natural bodies as “weak”.

Overall, given all of the above information, I will make the following assertion:

“Jesus still has a physical body – because he still refers to himself as having flesh and bones. However, Jesus’ body is **not** kept alive by blood any longer – instead, his body is now kept alive by **Holy Spirit**.”

To put it another way, it seems that the following is true:

“Natural bodies and spiritual bodies both have physical forms. However, natural bodies remain alive by blood flowing through them – while spiritual bodies remain alive by Holy Spirit ‘flowing’ through them”

If the above assertion is true, then the term “spiritual body” makes a lot of sense...