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Why Does It Matter to Christians That Jesus Was Raised Bodily?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about why it matters to Christians that Jesus was raised bodily and isn't just living on as a spirit and whether Jesus had a fallen body while here on earth.

- * Why does it matter to Christians that Jesus was raised bodily and doesn't just live on as a spirit?
- * Did Jesus have a fallen body while here on earth?

Transcript

[Music] [Bell] You're listening to Stand to Reason's #STRaskPodcast I'm Amy Hall and I'm here with Greg Koukl. Hello Greg? Hi Amy. Are you ready for your first question? Ready to go.

Alright. This one comes from C4TheTruth. Encour this question recently.

Why does Jesus' bodily resurrection matter to Christians? What difference would it make if Jesus simply lives on as a spirit and has no body? Well the way to answer that question, scripturally, is to just go back to the passages that talk about the consequence of the resurrection. Okay. What is the relationship of the resurrection to other issues? I don't have all the verses in front of me but this is an exercise that C4TheTruth could do himself or herself and there's no gender with that particular handle.

So this person can do for this person's self and I do this myself frequently. If I want to get a clear understanding of the biblical teaching on a particular issue, I will just go through every single verse that makes any reference to this. Now in this kind of situation it will require reading the entire New Testament but you don't have to read it slowly.

You can read it quickly or you can skim read it until you find a passage that has to do with the resurrection. You could also look up resurrection and raised in all its various forms, risen so you find all the verses but this is one way to make sure you don't miss

anything where there's kind of a side or off-handed or other worded reference to the resurrection so you get it all. And then copy, paste, whatever, write them down, write these passages down and then look at them.

I mean it's a great way to do a study and I've done a number of things this way and last year I did an article called The Legend of the Social Justice Jesus to see exactly where and how did Jesus campaign for the poor and campaign for the outcast, campaign for the marginalized and it turns out when I read every verse of the New Testament he never did it over the Gospels in this case. He never did it a single time, not a single time. So now I have confidence in my view that my view is biblical, the conclusion I come to in that and the same thing here.

What does the resurrection say? I mean what does the Scriptures say regarding the resurrection? And a couple of things come to mind just off the top of my head. So Romans chapter 1 for example says he was declared with power to be the Son of God through the resurrection. The resurrection is a testimony to the deity of Christ.

If he had just, I don't know what was the thing come back as a ghost or something like that? Why does it matter that he has a body? Why could he not just simply live on as a spirit? Well because, okay good clarification, if he doesn't have a body it's not a resurrection. A spirit without a body is a ghost. And in fact this is what as some have pointed out that the disciples were actually hallucinating and did not see the resurrected Christ which many secularists believe.

They would not think it was a resurrected Christ. They would think it was a ghost. They wouldn't have characterized it as a human body.

But only a resurrection. This is a resuscitation of the body. And you would not have by the way the evidence of the resurrection by the empty tomb.

So this is tied together. I mean that's a practical aspect. I think the question is more theological.

But there is one of the theological elements is that this is a proof that he is the Son of God. Having a disembodied spirit is not evidence that he's the Son of God. Samuel, a strange circumstance in 2 Samuel, appeared to Saul with Saul's illicit appeal to have him come back to the dead with the witch of Endor that did not work out well for Saul or for Jonathan or his brother either.

But in any event that's what a disembodied spirit would have been would have been a ghost. What we would call a ghost. Jesus rose to the dead bodily though to demonstrate his victory over death.

How do you do and this is another verse. So I'm just making general appeal to the verse though I couldn't tell you where it was at. It demonstrates his victory over death.

So is a ghost coming back and talking to anybody demonstration of victory over death? No, the body is still dead. It might prove my body dualism now the body is dead but the person still is alive so there is evidence for the soul. But that doesn't depict victory over death.

Resurrection does. It also since there is going to be a resurrection of all of us. We are following the resurrection of Christ as the first fruits.

He's the first fruits. He's the first one to be resurrected from the dead and that's kind of a not exactly down payment but a validation or verification or substantiation of the fact that we're next. He's first we're next.

Okay. And there is a passage that says he was raised for our justification. He was raised for our justification.

Now that's theological. If he wasn't raised from the dead then there is no justification. Now one might want to parse out exactly how does resurrection accomplish justification.

It's a separate issue. I'm just making the point now that there is a theological tie that's another theological tie to the resurrection. So I think if you if of see for the truth and anyone else for that matter.

This is a great way to get depth and balance in an understanding of a doctrine. Go through the text. The New Testament speed reads finds all those verses lists them.

They're going to get a great enrichment just by speed reading the New Testament. I mean it's amazing. Even though you're kind of skimming and looking for the right thing a whole lot of stuff is sticking while you're skimming.

And it is a nice alternative to when preachers preach and spend you know five years in two verses. Yeah we preach exegetically verse by verse. Yeah but if you do if it takes your five you do one word a month when you're not really getting the the wholeness of the text of the message of the piece.

Those who got the letters themselves read the whole letter. So you're reading it all through and you're getting a different impression I think of the text and a richness that maybe you would when we've talked about Bible reading before I talk about reading slowly you know deliberately so I get a pair a chapter done and you've talked about the benefit of reading more quickly and getting a more holistic sense of the of the book or something like that. So this would be a way of doing it.

But the key thing is it's a way of getting the full counsel of God. It's a way of individuals like see for the truth to answer the question for themselves. Glad to answer the question that's not a problem but I'm trying to disciple here and pass on a skill that I think our listeners are going to find to be immensely profitable.

This is how you avoid the mistake of imbalance. Jerry picking a little here and there and then ending up with a very lopsided understanding of a particular biblical doctrine. This is an interesting question to me because I think this is something that would have been asked by the Greeks and now we're coming back to that same view where the body is not.

Oh yeah. Thought of as something that's good and it's thought of as something that limits us or something that's separate from who we are or corrupts us the Greeks view that there would be a deal, Platonism or Gnosticism for those into those terms. But the reality is that our bodies matter.

Our bodies are good. Our bodies are essential to what we are as human beings. Without our bodies we can't interact with the world around us.

This it's not just something that's added on to us or that's limiting us. It's something that actually we were created to have. So when you think about that if we're not, if Jesus wasn't raised bodily and that means we're not going to be raised bodily and that means we will not be whole human beings.

So in order to be whole human beings we need our bodies because we are bodies and we are spirit. And what I reminded of 2 Corinthians 5, here's what Paul says, for while we are still in this tent we groan being burdened. Not that we would be unclothed but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

In other words while we are in our bodies it's not that we want to be outside of our bodies. It's that we want redeemed bodies that are made perfect. Whole people.

It's interesting that to this broader issue of the role of the body and the mistake people were making as this neoplatonism began to take root in the first century and then later in an explosion of it in the second century in a heresy called Gnosticism. It's interesting what John says and this is another example where people don't read the whole verse and get a misunderstanding. John says test the spirits just of their of God.

Okay, oh we got to test the spirit. That requires a discernment of the spirit. That's a gift of discernment.

Okay, I'm going to zero in here in my mind and I'm going to see if I get the vibe of discernment that this particular teaching is divine or not. That's not what John is talking about. This new doctrine, this neoplatonism which Gnosticism which said the flesh was evil, the physical realm was evil.

Well this means that if God visits the earth and God is good, he could not possibly have a physical body. And so the teaching that came out of that conviction into Christianity is called docetism. Docere means to appear and so Jesus just appeared to have a physical body but it wasn't a real physical body because that would corrupt him on this way of

thinking.

And so here's what John says then. He said don't believe every spirit because remember it was the spirits that were giving new knowledge. Gnosis, okay, and this whole thing was about getting inside knowledge, including revelations from spirits that love it, similarities some things that are going unknown, evangelicalism.

Do not believe every spirit but test the spirit. How do you test the spirit? Any spirit who does not confess that Jesus Messiah has come in the flesh is not of God but of the spirit of Antichrist. And very interesting then, the testing of the spirits there was not a subjective thing where you kind of tune into the supernatural and get the vibe from God that this is not right.

It was an objective test that was tied to the nature of the incarnation because that was what was being challenged at that time. Jesus had a human body and a resurrection is a restoration of that dead body to life. To him is empty.

Where's the body? Jesus appears to the disciples. Oh, it's a ghost. Now look, feel my body.

A ghost doesn't eat. Give me a piece of fish. Give me a big mac.

Now look it. It's me. So that brings me to this.

The second thing I was going to say Greg, exactly. It's not just that we care because there are theological reasons to care. It's that the Bible says that he was raised bodily.

That's why we care. We care because that's what it says. And in addition to all the things you mentioned Greg, there are a couple places in Acts where the apostles were preaching and they talked about how the promises made to David must apply to Jesus because David was put into a grave and he decomposed in the grave.

So that couldn't have referred to Jesus because he did not do that. And so all the things that you mentioned plus that, I think there are, we have good reason to think that's what the Bible is teaching us, that Jesus rose bodily. So those are both good reasons to think.

All right, Greg, let's go into a question from Stephen Batty. Oh, our old friend, Stephen Batty. One of the original, he and his wife, one of the Mindy, original donors, this is the reason they're the very first day we started back in 1993, May 1st.

Great, great family. Yeah, big family. All right, here's his question.

Was Jesus physical body while on earth fallen? For example, would he have died of old age if he was not killed? Settling a bet for me, I believe no blemish, but they believe that his body was like ours fallen. That's why he got tired, tempted, aged, killed, Jesus, Jesus body was mortal. Okay.

And and so I know there is some teaching going on that had Jesus not been executed, then he would have, he would have lived forever. But by the way, just an observation, he was executed. If his body was not mortal, he would not been able to die by execution.

Whether you die by execution or disease or old age, it's still the physical body is vulnerable to dying. So Jesus had a body that was vulnerable to die. And it did.

And then he was raised from the dead. So this kind of goes to the question of what is the nature of the fall on human bodies? And the the fall brought about death. There's there's a lot of nuances to what that entails.

In the day that you eat that thereof, you shall surely die. Well, they didn't die physically the day they ate. So what's going on there? And there's there's some discussion.

I think that's legitimate. And actually Bill Craig thinks that that Jesus that the created bodies were not immortal. The reason for the tree of life is to sustain a mortal body in the garden.

Okay. And I have some sympathies to that. And so at least there's a sensibility to that because I've all even asked myself the question.

What if what if a big boulder fell on Adam, which certainly possible, plate, technonics, things shake, big boulder, crushes him. What now does this mashed body walk around? Does the boulder bounce off an indestructible body? If his head got severed, would his head be talking to his body? They come over here and put me back. You know, I mean, this sounds kind of silly, but it's a genuine question.

And I think it's an anomaly that needs to be solved. But I certainly it's clear certainly to me that whatever death was the consequence of the fall, whatever death was the consequence of the fall, the Jesus had a body that was under that consequence. Now remember, Jesus is one person and two natures, one person and two natures.

That's the Calcedonian formula. It's bedrock orthodoxy. Okay.

He he he had a human nature and a divine nature. Well, where did the person come from? That person is the second person of the Trinity, which is why he has a divine nature. The human nature is what was added to the divine nature and the human nature he got was the nature that he inherited from his mother, who was a fallen human being.

So he gets a human body that has the same limitations as all human bodies have now that we are in a state of physically fallen corruption. To me, that's entirely orthodox and legitimate to say now there may be more to be said. What about what Bill said? What about my concerns? I'm wondering about this.

What about all these other things? Well, what about what about what about? I don't

know. That's some things different people work out different ways. However, it does seem clear to me, given the Calcedonian formula that Jesus doesn't have a fallen divine nature and a fallen person because it is the second person of the Trinity who is the divine nature in the human of Jesus of Nazareth.

The human nature is a nature he got from his mother. She's fallen. It was fallen.

This is the way I would cast that whole thing out. I think I would have to think about that some more because wouldn't we say though that Jesus does not have a fallen human nature and that was a whole purpose for being conceived by the Holy Spirit? Are you just talking about the physical body? I'm talking about the physical body that it has the consequences. Keep in mind, maybe a way to parse this out is we are body and soul.

We have a physical body and we have a soul. The fall has consequences for everything. This is why we call it total depravity.

There is a totality of impact or impact on everything regarding humans and creation as a result of the fall. Nothing is not tainted by the fall. The body is tainted by the fall.

It has the consequences of a fallen body living in its sinful world. It is not the nature. I guess you could say two natures.

He has a human nature. The body that is involved, the physical body, lives with the contingencies of a fallen world. That's what he inherited.

But I don't think he inherited a fallen nature. He has not fallen himself. This is why I don't think Jesus could have sinned.

There is also debates about that. I don't know how God could have sinned. To me, it's pretty straightforward.

My point here is that the body that he had was living with the contingencies of the fall. I think that's all we need to say to answer the question and to conserve that Jesus was not a fallen human being even though his body had the limitations and the influences of the fall. I think some of these questions are really speculative.

They're trying to think through them. I want to throw one thing out there. That's that I don't think in this question, the people who were arguing with him were saying that his body was fallen and that's why he got tired, tempted, age, killed, etc.

I don't think our limitations are necessarily a sign of fallenness. If we're created as limited creatures who rely on other things, food, water, sleep, that's not necessarily fallenness. I think Adam and Eve had to deal with those very same things.

Those aren't necessarily issues with fallenness. The question would be aging, dying, that sort of thing. Vulnerability to death, right, disease and the like.

Because I also have heard people say that on the cross, since he took on our sins, that's what enabled him to die. That's another thing to consider. Again, it's a difficult thing to answer because it's not specifically addressed.

They're probably people out there better than I who know better about this. Well, I've heard people say things and some of this stuff comes from the word faith movement. They have odd Christologies.

Adam, before he's fallen, had a super intellect and he could name all the animals in the whole world in one day because he's moving at light speed. I mean, all kinds of silly things. He's just a real human being.

And so is Jesus. And there are consequences to our physical body in a fallen world, but it is not real easy to parse out all those things. But what you mentioned, I think, is really true and I hadn't mentioned myself, but there are some limitations that are native to being a physical human irrespective of the nature of the fall.

And I would say too, even if your body is not, even if you're not a fallen human being, your body is not even your body's not fallen. If you're in a fallen world, there are things in the fallen world that can affect your body regardless of your whether or not you would have had those problems in an unfallen world. Do you think that's fair to say? Yeah.

And part of my speculation is maybe they would have had those problems in an unfallen world too, like the decapitation illustration. It's extreme, but it does raise the question. What was the nature of the human body before the fall? And what was the nature of immortality or death coming into the human race, etc? And I just mentioned Bill Craig.

He said one of the things that surprised him when he is doing his very intense study on the historical Adam is that he came to the conclusion that he didn't think that Adam was immortal. He was physically immortal. He could continue to go on living and he thinks because that's the tree of life was there for.

But once he was separated from the tree of life, which was a result of the fall, then his body took its normal course, you know, and was able to age and eventually die. Now, I don't know if I agree with that. There's a whole lot of people who probably are going to be really upset at that possibility.

But I think it's fair to admit there are ambiguities about what that was before the fall and therefore what the human body was like. Excuse me after the fall. But it's clear Jesus was sinless.

He did not participate in sin and that he had a mortal body. And I don't have any reason to think that he only became mortal when God put sin on him as it were. That was a judicial act that was not ontological.

It isn't like he and that well, there's a verse that says he became sin for us, but that's can't be ontological because God can't become literally turn into sin. It means the punishment was placed upon him. That's the point.

And since God turned his back on Jesus, the father did. Well, the father didn't have a back and he doesn't turn left or right. It's a way of speaking to try to capture something true about the incarnation and the atonement.

And so there's a pouring out there. But Jesus didn't become sin in that sense. Anyway, there are some real mysteries about this.

And this is why for hundreds and hundreds of years, the first 600 years or so, four to 500 years, the debates in the church of the theology world, all Christological. They were all whether it's Nicaea or Calcedon or Ephesus, all these different people. Grand readings of the church are trying to parse this all out.

Well, thank you, Greg. And thank you for your question. See for the truth and Stephen Baddy.

We appreciate hearing from you. And we look forward to hearing from you with your question on Twitter with the hashtag #strask. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason.

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(upbeat music)