

What was Jesus' physical body like after His resurrection?

Question I have been asked

Jesus told Mary not to touch Him because Jesus had "*not yet returned to His Father*" (John 20:17). He could walk through closed doors yet could eat fish. Does this point to what our resurrection body will be like?

1. Jesus sought to give many proofs of the reality of His physical resurrection and one of these was through eating, drinking and being touched. He invited people to touch Him because He said a ghost does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). This is an important scripture as it demonstrates the reality of the "*bodily*" resurrection. Jesus did not have simply a "*spirit*". There was much that was genuinely physical about Him. He would not have invited people to touch Him if He was not physical.

In 1 John 1:1 we read of John witnessing to this event when he says, "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life...*". John remembered the important fact that they had "*touched*" Jesus both before and after His resurrection.

2. In John 20:17 where Jesus addresses Mary we read, "*Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold me'*", although a different Greek word is used, it is not the term but the construction that is so important. In Greek there are different forms of construction for exhortations, commands. The Aorist Subjunctive used with a negative ($\mu\eta\ \mu\epsilon$) denotes a command not to begin an action. Whereas, the Present Imperative used with the negative ($\mu\eta\ \epsilon$) denotes a command to cease to do an action already begun. In John 20:17 the latter construction is used.

Therefore, it seems as if Jesus is saying to Mary, "*Do not continue to hold me*". The implication being that Mary was holding on to Jesus and not letting Him go. Jesus has to say in effect "*I cannot stay, don't hold on to me like this, I have yet to ascend to my Father, I just can't stay*". Jesus was not prohibiting Mary from merely touching, for He later commanded the disciples to do this as we have seen from the Luke passage. Mary, in her eagerness seemed to want to hang on to Jesus and not let Him go lest she should lose Him as she did at the cross. One can sympathise with Mary's eagerness. But, this was not in Jesus' plan. He knew that shortly (after forty days) He must ascend to his father.

3. Jesus' resurrection body was obviously different from His pre-resurrection body. It contained the properties of flesh and blood (Luke 24:39), yet at the same time it could pass through solid matter (ibid. vs 36, see also John 20:26). We talk of Jesus' glorified body. It is important for us to hold these two concepts together. He was now raised from the dead, He could not die again, there would be no ageing process, His body could not wear out. He was glorified in His body.

4. In 1 Corinthians 15:42ff Paul talks of our resurrection body in detail. Without going into too much detail, Paul seems to be saying that:-
- i) The resurrected body will be a "*glorified body*" ("*raised in glory*" vs 43) in that there will be nothing perishable about it (vs 42-43). This means that they will not wear out or grow old. Notice, the constant reference here to "*body*". We will definitely have a body; we will not be body-less spirits.
 - ii) The resurrected body will be a "*spiritual body*", in that it will be able to sustain the spiritual realm. This does not mean "*non-physical*". The body is a "*spiritual **body***", it remains a real body. Perhaps spiritual in this sense is that the body will no longer be tempted by sin, or brought under the control of sin. There will be nothing about our bodies which will bring dishonour to God; it will no longer be *un-spiritual*. We will, at last, be completely spiritual. For our future complete holiness after death see Hebrews 12:23.
5. We are distinctly told that our resurrected bodies will be like the body of Jesus, "*Who will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body.....*" (Phil 3:21); and "*...when He appears we shall be like Him.....*" (1 John 3:2). Consequently, just as the body of Jesus was visual, touchable and really physical, so our bodies will be the same. We will be recognisable, able to communicate, and yet be totally different in that we will then be "*glorified*" and "*spiritual*". We are going to be changed, "*we shall all be changed*" (1 Cor 15:51), but the change will be improvement, not the loss of our own self identity. Jesus never lost his own personal self identity.

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