

What Is the Nature of the Constitution of Jesus' Today?

I'll be using the words "celestial" and "terrestrial" some: by "celestial" I'm referring to the spiritual realm of existence, and by "terrestrial" I refer to the physical realm of existence. All Christians agree that Jesus was for sure once a terrestrial being, but the questions before us currently are these: *Is Jesus still a terrestrial/biological being today? If "no," at what point did He change to become a celestial/non-biological being? If "yes," then, since He didn't change, why do most Christians assert that resurrected saints must change? Oh, but after talking to someone recently, another question is this: Is Jesus now both terrestrial AND celestial?*

This was a very difficult lesson to formulate with any sort of logical organization, but let's "give it a whirl," as they say, and bear with me to see if some sense can be made of this topic. {And, by the way, since I want this to be a 35-minute or a 4-page study, there'll be tons of supporting material upon which I won't be able to touch, so I refer you to Alan Bondar's book *The Journey Between the Veils* for a much more in-depth examination of this subject; he actually does it in about 160 pages. This is an extremely informative book as well as a great companion to my *Hebrews Fulfilled* book.}

Here's the crux of the matter: In the famous resurrection chapter of First Corinthians 15, the general view in Christendom is that Paul was teaching that, since Jesus resurrected biologically (vv. 3-8) and was called the firstfruit of the resurrection (vv. 20 & 23), all His saints must also be resurrected biologically. Furthermore, on the other side of the coin, since, also according to First Corinthians 15, the saints must change from terrestrial to celestial, then Jesus must have also gone through this change after His resurrection. Oh, but, then again, apparently according to some as I alluded to in the initial questions, when Jesus' body was changed, it changed into a combination of celestial and terrestrial, making Him a celestial terrestrial. So why would all this have been necessary for the Lord? And how does this correspond to John 17:5 in which Jesus indicated how He was looking forward to being glorified together with His Father with the glory He had with Him before the world existed? Was Jesus always a celestial terrestrial which would also mean that His Father, our Father, is also a celestial terrestrial? Or does the glory Jesus mentioned in John 17:5 not contrast with His humiliation in becoming human per Philippians 2: 5-8? If not, then to what was Jesus making a contrast? Anyway, for the most part it's clear that...

Very few Christians have ever thought through all of this, but have merely taken for granted and accepted the general ideology that Jesus is still today (at least in part) biological in nature since that's how He was raised from the grave with His wounds and such still intact; i.e., they just assume He ascended to the Father with that body through which they believe He gained victory over physical death for us and in which He must presumably remain in order to be our Mediator, based mainly upon this statement by Paul: "There's ... one Mediator between God and men—the Man Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 2:5); i.e., they're implying that Jesus couldn't be called a "man" if He weren't still human, even though, according to Hebrews, it was the humanity of the high priests that made them imperfect mediators (5:3). Well, let's start at the beginning:

Hebrews 10:5 & 7 have the Son saying to the Father, "a body You prepared for Me ... in order to fulfill Your will." And we know from Philippians 2:5-8 that that body was a regular old human form like you and I see in the mirror everyday. Further on in Hebrews 10, we read in verses 19-20 how this body given to Jesus was foreshadowed in the temple: Paul called the way into the most holy place of God's eternal presence as being "through the veil, that is Christ's flesh." So...

Relative to Hebrews 10:5 about the body prepared for the Messiah, listen to a few related passages: "God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16); speaking of Jesus, John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1); "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14); and "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes ... and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of Life—the life was manifested" (1 John 1:1-2).

Relative to Hebrews 10:7 about His body being provided in order to fulfill God's will, listen to a few related passages: "He was manifested to take away our sins" (1 John 3:5); "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the enemy" (1 John 3:8); and "In this the love of God was manifested toward us that God has sent His only begotten Son ... that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). I.e., Jesus needed to live a perfect life, die a perfect sacrifice, and be raised—all in a terrestrial body to fulfill God's redemptive plan, and every Christian is on the same page with all of this ... so far. So now...

Relative to Hebrews 10:19-20 about Christ's fleshly body being the veil through which we have the honor to enter into the eternal presence of God, this is where it gets a controversial, and this next question is the heart of the issue: *Was His fleshly body meant to remain intact upon the opening of the way into the most holy place?* Before answering that question...

Let's consider Jesus between His resurrection and ascension: *Was His body still nothing more than what He possessed before His crucifixion?* I simply must answer in the affirmative, but of course there are thousands who answer in the negative, taking the stand that Christ's body was changed at some point in time between His resurrection and ascension. What reasons do they provide? Well, here are the ones I can recall:

According to Mark 16:12, Jesus was able to transform Himself after some supposed post-resurrection change His body experienced. Firstly, Mark 16:12 doesn't necessitate that He miraculously altered His face or entire body; it could merely mean that He disguised Himself, something I might have wanted to do as well after what He had just gone thru! Secondly, A. T. Robertson's *Harmony of the Gospels* charts the lengthy story of Luke 24:13-33 as being the incident to which Mark had brief reference, and in that passage it clearly states (v. 16) that the eyes of those with whom Jesus visited were prevented from recognizing Him; that could've been done miraculously or by His merely having a veil over His face, which in itself could've been a sign. The next argument is that...

According to Luke 24:31 & 36, Jesus was able to just disappear and then reappear out of thin air after some supposed post-resurrection change His body experienced. Isn't this something He could do before His resurrection? Isn't this the same sort of thing indicated in Luke 4:29-30, John 8:59, & 10:39 when crowds were pressing upon Him, even trying to kill Him, when suddenly He was nowhere to be found in their midst because He just disappeared? Sounds like it to me. Lastly and related is the argument is that...

According to John 20:26, Jesus was able to just appear out of nowhere in a locked room after some supposed post-resurrection change His body experienced. But, again, here's my question: Why would someone imply with such an argument that this was something Jesus couldn't do before His death? Didn't he walk on water (Mat. 14:29), calm storms (Mat. 8:23-27), and move an entire ship of men from one place on a lake to another (John 6:16-21)? Certainly. So why would He need a changed body to appear in a locked room? And, for those celestial-terrestrial body folks, *if He needed a changed body to do that, wouldn't that mean He was no longer human at all?* (And all of this of course applies to His floating up into the sky per Acts 1:9-11.) So, as far as His pre-ascension body is concerned...

I've read/heard nothing that debunks any passage like First Corinthians 15:1-8 which speaks of Jesus as having simply resurrected in the same body He had before He died! In fact, if we take Paul's statement that "flesh/blood can have no share in God's kingdom" (1 Cor. 15:50) to mean that biological bodies cannot enter heaven, then there's that; if we take his statement that he "no longer knew Jesus according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16) to mean what it sounds like, then there's that; and if we take his allusion to the days when Jesus was "in His flesh" (Heb. 5:7) to mean what it sounds like it means, then there's also that. Even further...

When seen by some disciples after His resurrection, Jesus emphatically stated, "See My hands; see My feet; *it's I, even I Myself*. Feel Me, and see for yourself, for a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones as I have" (Luke 24:39); then for even further proof, He went on to eat/drink something (vv. 41-43; Acts 10:41). You know, because of this passage, most believe Jesus today still has His wounds and such. So, for those who believe we'll be recognizable in the hereafter, what about those whose faces were blown off with shotguns or destroyed by Muslim acid? You know, personally, I'd very much hope that my "glorified" body wouldn't still be short, fat, bald, wounded, and scarred! Anyway, here are two reasons posed by folks for why Jesus must still be terrestrial (at least in part) today.

According to First Timothy 2:5, Jesus—after His ascension—was called a "man," hence a human. Really? So is His Father, Yahweh, also a human since He was called a "man" by Moses in Exodus 15:3? No, for it's merely anthropomorphic language, i.e. when a human uses his own lingo in relation to something or someone not human, such as when a man or even God Himself speaks of God's hands. Aside from that, however, in this verse Paul may have very well been employing covenant-man language such as he did in contrasting the first Adam with the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:42-49). OR perhaps, as we just noticed in Hebrews 5:7, Paul was merely referring to Jesus as He previously existed. Why? Because in the very next verse he wrote of Him as having given Himself a ransom for all. Next...

According to Romans 6:9, Paul wrote that "Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him." Guess the problem with this argument: Well, this may surprise ya, but Paul wasn't talking about Jesus' inability to die physically, but to His inability to die again in relation to sin and the Law with its inherent sin-death, because "sin"—which Paul wrote resulted in separation from God (i.e. death) by finding its power to do so in the Law (1 Cor. 15:56)—was forever abolished "in Him." We don't have time for an exegesis or Romans 6; just know that the teaching of that chapter is bound up in Paul's summary statement of First Corinthians 15 in verse 56. Besides all of this...

It just couldn't be the case that Paul's main point in First Corinthians 15 was Jesus' biological resurrection (that which was merely a sign of something greater, John 20:26-31), because he wrote of the resurrection of Jesus that he actually had in mind as being the firstfruit, meaning the first of its kind (harvest), and we all know Jesus was not the first to rise from the dead biologically, for even He Himself raised some from death biologically, right? But see folks say this:

"When Paul wrote in First Corinthians 15:22 that in Adam all die, he was saying that, as Adam brought physical death to all men, so Jesus brings physical life to all men." But when pressed with problems with that they'll add, "But I mean that Jesus was the first to arise to immortality, i.e. that He's the first to arise to die no more per Romans 6:9."

OK. So let me see if I have this straight: Due to Jesus' physical resurrection, all will be raised physically, but only the saints will be changed because Jesus was changed, right? OK, but I thought the change that Jesus experienced was that which made Him immortal and that which will make His saints immortal (per 1 Cor. 15:50-54). So wouldn't that then mean that the unrighteous who were raised to be judged as unworthy of that change would not be made immortal and would therefore die again?

"Yes," most will reply, "they'll die the second death of Revelation 20."

OK, so the second death is biological death, the death of bodies without the gift of the change which provides immortality?

"No!," they'll say, "It's an everlasting death of ongoing punishment."

OK, so they ARE gifted with immortality, just put into eternal punishment! What a mess, a mess that just doesn't work! Why? Because Paul praised God for immortality as being *death swallowed up*, therefore leaving it *no more sting* (1 Cor. 15:54-56)! So if most are going to perpetual torment, then it sounds to me like there's plenty of sting left! Oh well...

Let's get back to our earlier—perhaps most pertinent—question: *Was Jesus' fleshly body meant to remain intact upon the opening of the way into the most holy place?* I.e., since Jesus did indeed arise in/with the body in/with which He died, and since that body was perishable/mortal, then we should attempt to ascertain what happened to it, and I believe that will in turn explain why He was raised in/with that beaten, wounded, and perishable form.

In Matthew 5:17-18 Jesus (who came to fulfill all the work His Father gave Him, John 4:34 & 17:4) promised that He was going to fulfill every i-dot and t-cross of the Law, making Him "the consummation of the Law" (Rom. 10:4). So in His "short work" between His birth and His return (Rom. 9:28) to fulfill every prophecy in the demise of Judaism (Luke 21:22), I believe Jesus did exactly what He said He'd do. Why do I mention this? Two reasons: {1} Jesus was the one/only sacrificial body of atonement which God said was to be drained of blood and then burned outside the city (Lev. 16:27); and {2}, Jesus, who taught that He Himself would be the temple (John 2:19-22) of His bride the church which He promised to build (Mat. 16:18), was also the dedication body that was consumed by fire in what rabbis call the *sheki'nah* (aka "presence") glory-cloud of the Lord (cf. 2 Chr. 5:11-14, 6:1-2, & 7:1; cf. Lev. 9:22-24); so this was when the night-time sign of Yahweh's presence—the *fire*—was combined with the day-time sign of His presence—the *cloud*. Do ya see the point?

Since Jesus completed His earthly work, His terrestrialness was discarded, like the high priests who removed their clothing of colors that represented earthly things before they were allowed into the most holy place (Lev. 16). I.e., the flesh God provided Jesus was consumed by/within the cloud that the Father sent for Him at His ascension, thereby satisfying both the burning up of His body of atonement as well as the dedication body for the New Covenant tabernacle which began with Him and opened the door for the beginning of the building of His temple-people ten days later on Pentecost. Let's expand on this a tad:

After Jesus spoke of the soon-to-come Holy Spirit ... in John 7:39 John followed that up by saying that "the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet exalted." What is it we've believed/taught concerning what the Spirit did upon His arrival? Right: He commenced the building of the Lord's bride-church. And when exactly did He arrive? Right: on the Pentecost of Acts 2, which followed what? Right again: the ascension of the Lord into the *sheki'nah* glory-cloud of Acts 1; as Paul said, He was "received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). And what did Peter say about Jesus in the first sermon that day? He said that Jesus whom they killed had been "exalted to God's right hand" (Acts 2:33a), which is why they had received "the promise of the Spirit which you now see/hear" (v. 33b). Then after 3,000 were convicted by Peter's words (v. 37), they were added to the church (v. 47), the foundation of which were the apostles (Eph. 2:20); following that they began offering up sacrifices of praise (v. 46). How beautifully this all corresponds to the thoughts found in Hebrews 13:10-16, a fitting conclusory passage for this study today! Well...

There's so very much more that could be delved into, but you'll need to consult Alan Bondar's book for deeper study if you're interested; again it's called *The Journey Between the Veils*.