

Fruit of the Collective Body Tree

Resurrection Series (Part 2)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Aug 25, 2013

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Welcome! Thanks for joining us here on Then and Now.
- B. Last time we began our study of the **resurrection** issue by looking at the **death** which entered the world through the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. We saw what Adam's original condition was at creation, the ultimate destiny of mankind, the function of the two trees in the Garden, the kind of death that God threatened and which they actually experienced on that day, as well as the promise of redemption from that death by resurrection when a Son of Adam would come to crush the Serpent's head.
- C. This time we will critically examine some of the arguments and claims of the Collective Body View of the Resurrection, which is one of the two major resurrection views within the Preterist Movement. We need to inspect the fruit of its Tree to see what kind of fruit it is producing.
- D. Let's pray before we begin --
Our Holy and Glorious Father in Heaven, we exalt you for your sovereign acts of creation, and for providing an inspired and absolutely authoritative record of it, to guide us down the path to your Holy Presence. Help us here as we look at what Scripture says about this amazing subject of the Resurrection. Help us always to handle your Word with reverence and respect, and to make a diligent effort to rightly divide it. We know that it can only be understood rightly and fully if your Spirit enlightens us and guides us. Help us to discern truth from error, especially here in this subject of the Resurrection. May we take great pains to interpret Your Word in a way that honors and exalts and glorifies YOU, and not give any credit to the foolishness of human knowledge and wisdom. All of our knowledge comes from you. We have nothing to boast about. Your ways are so far above ours that they are past finding out. Be with us now as we study Your Word, and help us understand it and put it into practice in our lives. We pray this in Your Glorious Son Jesus' matchless Name. Amen.

Email Question About the Collective Body View

I want to share another email question that I received this week from one of our listeners over in the Northwest part of the country, which is asking about the beliefs of the Collective Body View. We will use that question as a launching pad to critically examine some of the logical implications, fallacies, and fruit that has come out of the Collective Body Tree. Here is the question that I received. I have edited it a little bit for clarity and poignancy. In a nutshell, here is what this dear brother was asking:

[QUESTION] Greetings brother Ed! In my studies, I have now come to the point where I need to better understand the Resurrection event from the Individual Body perspective. My question is this: **How does the Collective Body View explain the afterlife experience of the individual saint after AD 70 when he or she dies and goes to heaven?** Seems to me that as Preterists, they would have to see the collective-body concept as **"fully fulfilled" once-for-all at AD 70**, just like the Cross was "fully fulfilled" in AD 30, but with **extended benefits to individual saints throughout history afterwards**. Do they believe there are any further benefits of the once-for-all resurrection event for individual saints living today after AD 70?

[ED'S REPLY] That is an excellent question! You clearly see the implications of the Collective Body view that I have been pointing out here in the last four podcasts. In this session we will take a further look at those implications and see how they stack up against Scripture.

1. In regard to how the Collective Body View (CBV) explains the afterlife experience of individual saints who die and go to heaven after AD 70, their positions on that are various. All of them, however, would assert that the afterlife experience of individual saints is only as a part of the collective body which is already in "heaven now" and has its "immortal body now." When asked what kind of individual bodies we will have in the afterlife, they obfuscate further by saying: We were already raised in the collective body in AD 70, so we already have our share in the new immortal (collective) body. There is nothing new, different, or better to be received at physical death beyond what we already have now. Our afterlife will be disembodied, and pure spirit, and we will be merged into the one big spiritual collective body with no individual bodily form or experience. You can see how they are trying to avoid dealing with this question from the individual body perspective, and how they immediately jump over into their collective body paradigm to answer the question about the individual experience of the afterlife. But that immediately raises red flags about their view when they refuse to answer the questions we are asking from an individual body perspective.

2. Apostle Paul shuddered at the thought of being disembodied in the afterlife, like the Greeks and the Gnostics were teaching in his day (2 Cor 5:1-4). Paul adamantly refuted that Greek and Gnostic idea of an individual disembodied afterlife when he taught that "each of the seeds (individuals) get a new body of its own" at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:37-38). Yet, here we are today in the Preterist movement with the Collective Body guys asserting that this (disembodied pure spirit) is the very kind of afterlife we will have after we die physically. They are saying that we are not going to have an individual body in our afterlife. They are saying that it is going to be a disembodied pure spirit existence, just like the Greeks and Gnostics were teaching back in the first century. Now, who are we going to believe? Apostle Paul (who said it would be an individual bodily existence), or the Collective Body guys who assert that our individual afterlife experience will be in a disembodied pure spirit form like the Greeks and Gnostics taught? As for me and my house, I choose Apostle Paul's view of an individual bodily afterlife.

3. When pressed to explain it from an individual perspective, some of them will admit that there is an individual experience of the afterlife, which is different than their bodily experience on earth, because it is in a disembodied pure spirit form merged into the collective body in heaven. They do not like to use the words "new" or "better" in reference to that afterlife experience, since that would imply that individual saints are getting something at death which is new, additional, or better than what they already have now in this life on earth. One of the CBV guys described the change at physical death as "not acquiring any new or better things, but rather simply discarding the fleshly body which prevented the full enjoyment of what we already have." Thus our individual afterlife experience is different than our life here on earth, but not because we get something new or better, but rather because we get rid of something that was holding us back from enjoying all the benefits that were already given to us at the resurrection in AD 70.

4. Some of the Collective Body advocates will admit that there might have been a resurrection of dead saints out of Hades at AD 70, but that they do not know of a single Biblical text that talks about it. As far as they know, all the resurrection texts are talking about the Collective Body being raised out of Old Covenant death into New Covenant life (i.e., a covenantal resurrection). In other words, they pay lipservice to the concept of individual saints being raised out of Hades in AD 70, but will not identify any biblical texts which support that concept. Do you see the problem with that? How can you really believe something is true if there are no scriptures to support it? No wonder they have such a hard time believing in an individual bodily afterlife! They don't think there are any biblical texts which teach it.

5. However, you can see the dilemma that they are working overtime to avoid. They are admitting that the resurrection was a once-for-all event that was "fully fulfilled" at the Parousia. They believe that ALL the benefits of that "fully fulfilled" resurrection were fully given AND fully received then at AD 70. They will not allow any saint after AD 70 to receive any of those benefits at his conversion or physical death. They think that would make them futurists if they allowed any benefits of the resurrection to be received by anyone after AD 70. That is why they accuse me of being a futurist when I say that individual saints today receive the ongoing benefits of the once-for-all resurrection at the time of their physical death.

6. But that accusation is hypocritical and disingenuous. Here's why: I could easily agree with them and say that we are not RECEIVING any new or better benefits that were not already reserved in heaven for us at AD 70. So, therefore I am not a futurist. But that agreement does not satisfy the Collective Body guys.

7. They go further to assert that if the individual gets a new immortal body when he dies, that is RECEIVING something new, different, or better than what we already have now. That is why they describe the individual afterlife in terms of a disembodied pure spirit existence that is fully merged into the collective body in heaven. They are trying to avoid getting anything new, different, or better after physical death, because they think that would make them futurists. They do not grasp the concept of those benefits being

reserved in heaven for us at the Parousia, and then getting to experience the benefits of it after physical death. They cannot allow that idea, because that would allow me to be a Full Preterist, and they just cannot bring themselves to grant that privilege to me! They have set themselves up as judges of who is a "full preterist" and who is not. That is like the stunt that Max King's son Tim pulled fifteen years ago when he tried to trademark the term *Transmillennialism* and force everyone to define it the way he does, or face legal action against them. He defined Transmillennialism and Covenant Eschatology very narrowly and exclusively as ONLY including those who took the Collective Body view. In other words, if you wanted to be in good graces with Max and Tim King and get all the perks and benefits that they were offering as bait, and wear the Transmillennial or Covenant Eschatology label, then you had to agree with the Collective Body view. Otherwise, you were out of the club. That is the same stunt some of these Collective Body disciples of Max King are trying to pull today. They are trying to take over the label of "full preterist" and say that it only applies to those who are in the Collective Body View. They are trying to define the Individual Body View out of the Full Preterist movement. They are trying to exclude us and marginalize us if we do not agree with their Collective Body View. It is a different label this time, but it is the same high-handed exclusiveness and divisiveness that Max and Tim King tried to impose on us fifteen years ago! It did not work then, and it sure is not going to work this time either!

8. Moreover, they assert that the Individual Body view is futurist because they think we are teaching that the individual saint gets a "resurrection" and a new "resurrection body" at his physical death. Since that "**resurrection at death**" is occurring after AD 70, and is another resurrection besides the "fully fulfilled" resurrection at AD 70, it is therefore a futurist resurrection. They assert that believing in an additional resurrection of individual saints at their death after AD 70 makes us futurists, since it is teaching that there are more resurrections in the future after AD 70 every time an individual saint dies and is raised to get a new "**resurrection body**." Now, on first glance, that really sounds like a winner argument, doesn't it?

9. However, their argument is fatally flawed for the following reasons: They fail to notice how we Individual Body advocates are using the "resurrection" terminology. For instance, we define the word "resurrection" as referring to the **resurrection of the dead disembodied saints out of Hades in AD 70**. Hades was emptied of saints at that time, and no more saints have gone into Hades since then (cf. Rev. 20). Instead, all saints now after AD 70, go immediately to heaven at physical death. They do not go to Hades and then get resurrected back out again! So, the word "resurrection" does not apply to individual saints after AD 70. There is no "**resurrection at death**" like the Collective Body guys are accusing us of believing.

10. Nor is the immortal body that we receive at the time of physical death correctly labeled as a "**resurrection body**." We do not describe the new immortal body that way, and neither does scripture. That terminology was invented by futurists based on their faulty understanding of the resurrection. We reject that futurist terminology as unbiblical. Instead, we would say that we receive our new immortal bodies that have been reserved in heaven for us ever since the AD 70 resurrection event. It is NOT a "**resurrection body**" because that new immortal body was NOT raised out of the

ground and given to us. It was already there in heaven waiting for us. Nor do we individual saints get a "**resurrection at death**" out of Hades in order to put on those new immortal bodies that are reserved in heaven for us.

11. So, their use of that terminology ("resurrection at death" and "resurrection body") is nothing more than a strawman misrepresentation of our view, with the express purpose of making us look like futurists for having another resurrection after AD 70, when in fact we do not. But, as we have shown, there are NO MORE resurrections of saints out of Hades after AD 70. We saints today are not "**resurrected at death**," nor are our physical "**bodies resurrected**" or changed at death. Instead we shed this mortal body at death, it returns to dust permanently, and we receive our new immortal bodies that are reserved in heaven for us. That is NOT a "resurrection at death," nor are we getting a "resurrected body" at death. So, the accusation of being futurist does not apply to us. It is a false accusation and misrepresentation of the Individual Body View.

12. Furthermore, the charge of futurism can just as easily be applied to them if we are allowed to define our terms in our own way. For instance: The Cross and the Parousia were both once-for-all events, never to be repeated, but with benefits for all future generations of Christians. When a person today after AD 70 is "born again," "regenerated," "saved," "converted," "puts on Christ," or is "baptized into Christ," is he crucifying Christ again, or is he/she merely receiving the benefits of the once-for-all Cross? Even a caveman knows the answer to that question! If we are *futurists* for believing that we don't get to enjoy the full experiential benefits of the resurrection until we die and go to heaven, then the Collective Body guys are *futurists* also for believing that we today after AD 70 don't get to experience any of the benefits of the Cross until after our conversion/regeneration! So, why is it so difficult for the Collective Body guys to understand that when saints today die and receive the benefits of the once-for-all resurrection, that they are not experiencing another resurrection? Instead, we are simply getting the benefits of that once-for-all resurrection in AD 70.

13. They simply do not understand the principle of once-for-all resurrection with ongoing benefits afterwards, as we discussed in a previous session. They do not allow that principle to apply here, because they know it would refute their false accusation against us. That is disingenuous. It means that they are misrepresenting us in order to make us look like futurists, so they can discredit us, and scare fellow preterists away from us, to build themselves up by knocking us down. Again, that is the same divisive and exclusive stunt that Tim King tried to pull fifteen years ago, and we Individual Body advocates are not going to let them get away with it this time either.

14. Moreover, the Collective Body guys need to explain their position on a few things pertaining to our afterlife hope. If they say we do get something new, different or better after physical death, then they are just as much *futurist* as they claim we are. But if they deny that we get anything new, different or better after physical death, then it leaves them in the unenviable position of teaching "heaven now," "immortal body now," and "perfection now," and ongoing temptation and sin in the afterlife. So, which is it? If they believe all the benefits were given once-for-all at AD 70, with nothing new, different, or

better to be received or experienced at conversion or physical death, how is that different from the hyper-cessationist view of Chris Camillo, or the "sin no longer exists" idea of some Collective Body advocates, or the "continuing to sin in heaven" view of some of the other Collective Body guys? Do you see their dilemma here? Do we get something new, different, or better? Or, do we not? Which is it?

15. Are we already in the sinless perfection state (like some Collective Body guys assert), or is this state of sinful imperfection that we suffer here in this life going to continue on into the afterlife with no changes of any kind (like other Collective Body guys are asserting)? *Or, is Chris Camillo correct when he asserts that everything was indeed all "fully fulfilled" in AD 70 just like the Collective Body guys are saying, and that all the benefits were fully dispensed at that time, with no other benefits of any kind yet to be given after AD 70? Do you see the problem here? Do you see how Camillo is only building upon the "fully fulfilled" foundation laid by the Collective Body View? If the Collective Body View is true, then Chris Camillo appears to be the most consistent one of the bunch (but consistently in error). Are we really in "heaven now" with our new "immortal bodies now" and experiencing "sinless perfection now" and seeing all things clearly "face to face" and "knowing fully as we have been fully known by God" (right now while we are still in our fleshly bodies on earth)?*

16. Do you see any problems with that? I surely do. It destroys my afterlife hope for sinless perfection in a new immortal body in heaven after I die. It means that what we have right now is all we are going to get. Nothing new, different or better awaits us after this fleeting life of flesh is over. Nothing but a disembodied pure spirit existence which is still subject to temptation and sin, even though it is not in an individual body. That implies that the experience of temptation and sin will be in the Collective Body somehow, even though Revelation teaches that the Bride in heaven is in a state of sinless perfection. Something is drastically wrong with the Collective Body View. It is destroying our afterlife hope, and it is empowering heretics like Chris Camillo to confuse and destroy the faith of fellow preterists.

17. Jesus told us that we can judge the nature of a tree by the kind of fruit that it produces. He was talking about the practical results of our doctrines and beliefs. He said, "By their fruit you shall know them!" Back in the days when Max King planted his Collective Body Tree, none of us had any idea what kind of fruit it was going to produce. We never imagined that it would become the source for all kinds of deviant doctrines, and such a fertile field in which all the cults could sow their heretical seeds.

18. The fruit of the Collective Body Tree has begun to show up, and it is rotten to the core! We now know what kind of tree it is! It has produced the bad fruit of Universalism, Annihilationism, Antinomianism, Soul-sleep, Anglo-Israelism, Christian Identity, Seed of the Serpent doctrine, Satan is not a real angelic being, Covenant Creationism with its claim that Adam and Eve were not the first two human beings, along with its associated ideas of a local flood, an anti-miraculous and anti-supernatural bias, and old earth evolutionary thinking. And the list keeps growing day after day. Now we have heretics like Chris Camillo using the Collective Body View's "fully fulfilled" idea as a foundation

for his hyper-cessationism. Then there is the "sin no longer exists" fruit, and the "continuation of temptation and sin in heaven" fruit, and the "heaven now" and "immortal body now" fruit. What kind of fruit will show up next? Who could have imagined that two totally opposite ideas such as "sinless perfection NOW" and "sinless perfection NEVER" could come from the same Collective Body Tree? Only a bad tree could produce such inconsistent and diametrically-opposed fruit. That is the same kind of polar opposite ideology that was produced by the Gnostic Tree. Gnosticism had glaring contradictions and paradoxes like that, with their extremely ascetic groups versus their extremely licentious and immoral groups. Both extremes came out of the same Gnostic tree.

19. We are only left to wonder what rotten fruit of the Collective Body Tree will show up next! How much bad fruit will have to show up before we finally realize that the tree is bad? How can it be good when it produces such bad fruit? It was some of this bad fruit which caused several former full preterists to leave the Full Preterist movement. How many more will have to leave Full Preterism before we wake up and smell the coffee?

20. The Individual Body View has not produced that kind of bad fruit. It instead teaches the plenary inspiration, inerrancy, and absolute authority of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. It affirms the Deity of Christ and the Trinity. It desperately clings to our hope for an individual afterlife in a new immortal body in heaven. It has the same hope for a bodily afterlife that saints of all generations have longed for and sacrificed their lives for. It does not compromise with evolution or universalism or Anglo-Israelism or any of the other cultic or occultic doctrines that have invaded the Full Preterist community with a vengeance and taken advantage of the inconsistencies of the Collective Body View.

CONCLUSION:

And so, I would heartily recommend that you take a serious look at the Individual Body View of the Resurrection. It has produced good fruit that does not destroy our faith, nor rob us of our hope for an individual afterlife.

We will be talking more about the Individual Body View in future sessions. We will explain a lot more about what the Individual Body View actually teaches, and supporting it with correctly exegeted Scripture.

So, that will wrap it up for this time. I trust this has been helpful for you to better understand the differences between the two different major views of Resurrection within the Full Preterist movement. It is important for us to know what each of these two views are teaching, and what kind of fruit they are producing. It is always wise to inspect a piece of fruit before we bite into it and discover that the fruit is rotten to the core.

That will do it for this time. Thank you so much for listening!