

**4983.** σῶμα *sōma*; gen. *sōmatos*, neut. noun. Body, an organized whole made up of parts and members.

**(I)** Generally of any material body, as plants (1 Cor. 15:37, 38); bodies celestial and terrestrial, the sun, moon, stars (1 Cor. 15:40, 41).

**(II)** Specifically of creatures, living or dead.

**(A)** Of a human body different from *sárx* (4561), flesh, which word denotes the material body. **(1)** A living body (Matt. 5:29, 30; 6:25; 26:12; Mark 5:29; 14:8; Luke 12:22, 23; John 2:21; Rom. 1:24; 4:19; 1 Cor. 6:13; 15:44; 2 Cor. 4:10; 10:10; Col. 2:23; Heb. 10:5; 1 Pet. 2:24). In Col. 1:22 the expression “in the body of his flesh [*sárx*]” means in his body incarnate, flesh that forms an organized whole. This is the antithesis of *hē psuché* (5590), the soul (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4), and *tó pneúma* (4151), the spirit (Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 5:3; 7:34); or where *sōma*, *psuché* and *pneúma* make a periphrasis for the whole man (1 Thess. 5:23). See Sept.: Gen. 47:18; Lev. 6:10; 14:10; Dan. 4:30; 10:6. As the seat of sinful affections and appetites (cf. *sárx* [4561], II, C). See Rom. 6:6; 7:23, 24; 8:13; Col. 2:11. **(2)** A dead body, corpse, generally (Matt. 14:12; 27:52, 58, 59; Luke 23:52, 55; 24:3, 23; John 19:31; Acts 9:40; Jude 1:9). Specifically of the communion bread, as representing the body of Christ crucified for the salvation of man (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24, 27, 29).

**(B)** Spoken of living beasts (James 3:3); a dead body of a beast, meaning a carcass (Luke 17:37 [cf. Matt. 24:28 where the word *ptōma* {4430}, corpse, is used]); of victims slain as sacrifices (Heb. 13:11 [cf. Ex. 29:14; Num. 19:3, 5]).

**(III)** Metonymically referring to the body as the external man, to which is ascribed that which strictly belongs to the person, man, individual; with a gen. of person forming a periphrasis for the person himself (Matt. 6:22, “thy whole body” means your whole person [see also

6:23]; Luke 11:34, 36; Rom. 12:1, “your bodies,” i.e., yourselves [cf. 6:13]; Eph. 5:28; Phil. 1:20). Used generally and in an absolute sense (1 Cor. 6:16 [in antithesis with *tó pneúma*, the spirit, in 6:17]) in allusion to Gen. 2:24 where the Sept. has *eis sárka mían* (*eis* [1519], unto; *sárka* [4561], flesh; *mían* [3391], one), one flesh (cf. *sárx* III). Used in an absolute sense (Sept.: Gen. 47:12, meaning according to the number of persons). In later usage in NT for a slave, *tá sómata*, slaves (Rev. 18:13).

(IV) Metaphorically for a body, meaning a whole, aggregate, collective mass, as spoken of the Christian church, the whole body of Christians collectively, of which Christ is the head (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13, 27; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30; Col. 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15).

(V) Figuratively meaning body, substance, reality as opposed *hē skiá* (4639), the shadow or type of future things.

(VI) The Greek philosophers treated the human body with disparagement. For this reason in Homer (and frequently Attic Gr.) *sóma* meant a dead body, in which sense the word is occasionally used in the Gospels (Matt. 14:12; 27:52, 58, 59; Luke 17:37). The usual meaning, however, in the NT and ordinary Gr. usage, is a living body (Matt. 6:22; 26:12; Mark 5:29). The NT does not share in the philosophic disparagement of the human body. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Lord Jesus neither practiced nor preached asceticism—“The Son of Man came eating” (Matt. 11:19). However, we find Jesus teaching a clear recognition of a duality in human nature—a distinction drawn between body and soul (with the latter referring to man’s immaterial part); flesh and spirit (Matt. 6:25; 26:41). He emphasizes the antithesis between man’s unredeemed body as the lower part of his being, and his soul as the higher part. While He presents the body as a true part of our humanity and does not disparage it, nevertheless He stresses that its value, in its sinful condition, is not to be compared for a moment with that of the spiritual

part ([Matt. 10:28](#)). Those who follow Jesus must be prepared, if need be, to surrender their bodies to the sword and the cross ([Matt. 23:34](#)); “what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” ([Matt. 16:26](#)).

**(VII)** Jesus associated the resurrection body with the future judgment ([Luke 14:14](#); [20:35](#); [John 5:28, 29](#)).

**(VIII)** The Lord Jesus as the God-Man possessed a true body as well as a human soul. The Son, eternal, infinite and ever-present with the Father and Holy Spirit, took upon Himself human flesh by the mystical operation of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin Mary ([Matt. 1:18](#) [[cf. Gal. 4:4](#)]). In due time, according to the laws of human life, He was born at Bethlehem ([Luke 2:5, 7](#)). The child thus born was seen in His infancy by the shepherds and the wise men, and when He was eight days old by Simeon and Anna ([Luke 2:25, 36](#)). From His conception and birth His body developed in the manner usual to human beings. “The child grew,” we are told ([Luke 2:40](#)), arrived at “twelve years old,” and still “increased in wisdom and stature” ([Luke 2:42, 52](#)).

The Lord Jesus possessed a human body similar to ours (except that He did not have a sinful nature [[Heb. 4:15](#)]). As such He suffered hunger ([Matt. 4:2](#)); He was wearied with journeying ([John 4:6](#)); He experienced pain ([Matt. 27:26](#)); He underwent death ([Matt. 27:50](#)). His power of motion, with one exception ([Matt. 14:25](#)), was limited to that which men in general possess. After death, His body was delivered by Pilate to Joseph of Arimathaea, who wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his new tomb ([Matt. 27:58f.](#)) where it rested until the moment of the resurrection.

**(IX)** Christ’s body after the resurrection appeared to be, in most respects, the same body as before His death. His disciples may have doubted and hesitated at first ([Luke 24:16, 37](#); [John 20:14](#)), but they did not fail to recognize Him ([Luke 24:31, 52](#); [John 20:16, 20, 28](#); [21:7, 12](#); [Acts](#)

1:3; 2:32). We find the Lord eating and drinking as a man (Luke 24:43), making use of the natural process of breathing (John 20:22), declaring to His disciples that He had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), showing them His hands and His feet (Luke 24:40), and giving them the assurance that His body was the identical body which they had seen stretched upon the cross by inviting Thomas, who doubted, to put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into the wound in His side (John 20:27).

Our Lord's resurrection body, however, was freed from previous material conditions and possessed altogether new capabilities. It is indicated that He could pass at will through material objects (John 20:26); and was not bound as before to the laws of movement (Luke 24:36), visibility (Luke 24:31), or gravitation (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51). These new powers constituted the difference between His pre-resurrection and His glorified body. It was in His glorified body, thus differentiated, that He ascended into heaven; and in that same glorified body He is to be expected in His final coming (Acts 1:9, 11).

During his earthly post-resurrection life, for forty days He moved along the borders of two worlds. For the sake of His disciples and His future Church, He made use of the natural in order that He might reveal the spiritual. It was one way of revealing to us what our spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44) will be capable of doing. It is in this manner that we must explain His asking for and receiving food (Luke 24:41ff.; Acts 10:41). He did not depend on this food for His bodily support. His purpose in taking it was to convince His disciples that He was still a living man, in body as well as in spirit—that same Jesus who had so often, in past days, partaken with them of their simple meals.

In respect to His body, the risen Jesus now belonged to the same mysterious regions of the invisible world, and it was only when He chose to reveal Himself that His disciples were aware of His presence. It is to be

noticed that John describes His appearances as manifestations using the word *phanerōō* (5319), to manifest (John 21:1, 14). He could hide His identity at will and again He could manifest His identity (Mark 16:12, 13; Luke 24:13–35). His resurrection body was a spiritual body, but it had the power of materializing itself to the natural senses, and Jesus made use of this power from time to time in order to convince His disciples, by the actual evidence of sight, sound and touch, that His victory over death via the resurrection was real.

When this work was accomplished, the Lord parted from His disciples for the last time and ascended to the right hand of the Father where He was appointed Lord and Savior. His lordship encompasses the entire universe in time and space.

In the body of Christ's glory, both Paul and John find the model after which the believer's resurrection body is to be fashioned (Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2). We will be like our Lord possessing a human body so fully imbued by the spiritual that it will be transformed into a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:42–49).

**(X)** *Sōma* is also used in reference to Christ's mystical body, His church (1 Cor. 12:12ff. [cf. Rom. 12:5]). Paul uses the figure of a body and its members to describe the relationship of Christians to Christ and to one another. Then in 1 Cor. 12:27 he definitely applies to the Corinthian church the name *sōma Christou*, body of Christ. Every local Christian church, i.e., regenerated believers who have been baptized into the body of Christ, constitutes part of His total universal body. In Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:12; Col. 1:18, 24 we have the universal Church called the body of Christ, with the *def. art.* He Himself is presented as the Head of the whole Church which is His body (Eph. 5:23, 24; Col. 2:19), the head being the vital and organic center of the whole body.

**(XI)** The word *sōma* is used symbolically of Christ's body. On the night

on which He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus, in instituting the memorial feast of the sacrifice of His body and the shedding of His blood, said of the bread which He took and broke and gave to His disciples, “this is My body” ([Matt. 26:26](#); [Mark 14:22](#); [Luke 22:19](#); [1 Cor. 11:24](#)). Similarly Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says of the bread which is broken at the Lord’s Supper, “Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” ([1 Cor. 10:16](#)). Then in [1 Cor. 11:27](#) he describes the person who eats the memorial bread unworthily as “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” and says that a man eats and drinks judgment unto himself “if he discern not the body” (a.t. [[1 Cor. 11:29](#)]). Those who partake of the elements of the Lord’s Supper must recognize the reality which they signify.

The Lord Jesus, subsequent to the feeding of the 5,000 ([John 6:53–63](#)), gave the discourse on the bread of life (which some interpreters have classified as Eucharistic). It is significant that the word *sōma* does not occur in this teaching. However, words *sárx* ([\[4561\]](#), flesh) and *haíma* ([\[129\]](#), blood) are used. Furthermore, *sárx* is never employed anywhere in the NT to describe the memorial bread of the Lord’s Supper. If Jesus had intended this to be a discourse related to the Lord’s Supper, He would most likely have used the word *sōma*. The spiritual significance of the use of the words flesh and blood in [John 6:63](#) is indicated by [6:63](#) which states, “It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” The life that Jesus Christ gives is spiritual and is bestowed through the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave His flesh and shed His blood, and the efficacy of that sacrifice which imparts spiritual life is applied to a believer through the Holy Spirit ([John 16:5–15](#)).

**Deriv.:** *sússōmos* ([4954](#)), belonging to the same body, of the same body; *sōmatikós* ([4984](#)), corporeal, physical.

**Syn.:** *chrós* ([5559](#)), the surface of a body, especially of a human body;

*ptōma* (4430), a corpse; *kōlon* (2966), a member of a body; *sárx* (4561), flesh.

**Ant.:** *pneúma* (4151), spirit; *phántasma* (5326), a phantasm, an appearance, a spectre, apparition; *psuché* (5590), soul.